

MISSILE DEFENCE DEPLOYMENT IN ASIA: A NEW ARMS RACE

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International Conference on Gandhi, Disarmament and Development

Indore, India

October 2013

The Missile Defence Programme is part of the planning for the weaponisation of space. Ever since President Reagan announced the Strategic Defense Initiative Programme, popularly called "Star Wars", on 23rd March 1983, the Weaponisation of Space and Missile Defence Deployment Programmes are both making headway. The protagonists of Ballistic Missile Defences argue that it is for deterrence against incoming Nuclear Missiles but the hidden agenda is to use BMD against other countries which are often called "rough states" and sometimes it is said that they are needed to defend friendly Countries of the United States of America & NATO against terrorists. In Asia there are hardly any nuclear threats between states even though 5 of the 8 Nuclear Nations are in Asia: China, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel.

The planning of BMD deployment in Asian Countries had its origin in the US. The US is abetting Japan and South Korea to opt for Ballistic Missile Defences. This provokes China and North Korea and the US is even trying to rope India in to collaborate with its plans. The Indian BMD programme will definitely attract retaliation by Pakistan and China will not lag behind. The US is trying to surround both Russian and China. Patriot missile defence systems have been deployed in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan by the US. According to a Chinese Military strategist Air Force Colonel Dai Yu "China is in a crescent shaped ring of encirclement. The ring begins in Japan, stretches through nations in the South China Sea to India and ends in Afghanistan. Washington's deployment of anti missile systems around China's periphery forms a crescent shaped encirclement".

In it's plan to encircle China, the US is trying to entice the members of ASEAN Countries: Vietnam, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand and convert them into an Asian NATO against China. But most of these countries are victims of US Imperialism and to what extent US plans materialize will have to be seen.

US attempts to encircle China will not remain one-sided. China will definitely try to protect itself with counter measures. A fierce arms race will erupt. The US is trying to drag India into its plans. There are no indications that India will fall into this US trap, but India is trying to develop Missile Defence capabilities with the collaboration of the US and Israel.

It appears that India is changing its position on BMD deployment. On 24 July 2000 Jaswant Singh, former external Minister of India said that "we have consistently held a view that opposes the militarization of outer space. The National Missile Defence will adversely influence the larger movement towards disarmament of which India is staunch advocate. We believe that technology superiority will result in a reaction in other parts of the world, thus reviving the possibility of yet another and newer arms race. We cannot support this"

From 2006 India began testing a missile defence version of the Prithvi medium range ballistic missile. This test is just one sign that India is keen to develop multi-layer complex that can defend against Pakistan's nuclear missiles. According to A. K. Anthony, Defence Minister of India, India has already reached an appreciable level of competence of 3500 kms and is developing a 5000 km range for the Agni ballistic missile). On the 15th of this month India successfully tested the Inter Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) Agni-V for its full range of 5,000 km.

South Korea is also on the move to develop Missile Defence programme because of the tension with North Korea and also due to the pressure and instigation of the US. It already has cruise missiles with a range of 1000 km. and North Korea has short range Scud and Rodong Missiles with a range of 1,300 km and is also developing long range Taepodong Missiles.

When India started developing missile defences, Pakistan did not like to lag behind. With the assistance of China it developed the "Babur" cruise missile delivery programme. Ghauri Saheen missiles with a range of 1000 and 2000 km have been developed and it also test fired a nuclear capable missile. It may seek a Chinese Inter Copter missile defence system. Pakistan is also looking to purchase a High altitude missile air defence system

Japan has signed a Joint Co-operation Research (JCR) agreement on missile defence related technology with the US in 1999. In December 2003 Japan decided to acquire a missile defence capability. In 2005 it concluded a "Joint Analysis Study" on future areas of US-Japan Ballistic Missile Defence Co-operation, as well as an umbrella agreement on joint projects known as the BMD Frame Work Memorandum of Understanding. Japan procured ground based Patriot Advanced Capability 3 (PAC-3) system fitted on its four Aegis air defence system equipped warships with BMD capable standard Missile-3 (SM-3) plus related software programmes and upgrades to existing air defence sensor and command/control networks.

In Asia any country which adopts missile defences will become instrumental in ushering in an avoidable arms race. Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, which are under pressure from the US and are amenable to US moves, must stand against missile defences.

Another dangerous triangle is China, India and Pakistan. There is a danger of a missile defence race in this area. India feels threatened by China and Pakistan feels threatened by India. These three Countries will have to build up confidence measures otherwise an arms race will become a reality in this area. The Missile Defence Programme initiated by India is likely to fuel an arms race in South Asia. US Defence contractors like Lockheed Martin and Raytheon look at India's domestic missile defence programme as a ready made market for them.

Mr. Rajesh M. Basrur of S. Rajarainam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore in a paper presented at the 11th Asian Security Conference in New Delhi on February 3-4 2009, states that:

1. The basic argument is that the possession of a missile defence capability (or a superior capability) by one side in a hostile nuclear dyad tilts the nuclear balance in its favour. This causes crisis instability because it provides the advantaged side with an incentive to strike first and consequently the disadvantaged side with an even stronger incentive to do so on "use them or lose them" grounds.
2. In non-crisis times, the awareness of imbalance compels the disadvantaged side to try and redress the balance by enhancing its offensive capability as well as by seeking a new or stronger defensive capability. In short, stable deterrence is replaced by at least one and possibly two processes of arms racing, offensive and defensive. This will complicate the problem of obtaining stable arms control in the regions.
3. An effort to build a BMD system against the threat from Pakistan will lead to an adverse impact on a wider scale: China will be antagonized and therefore India will face an added problem in the North.