

**Ballistic Missile Defense in Japan:  
Process-Tracing a Historical Trajectory**

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## **Abstract**

Why did Japan deploy ballistic missile defense when and how it did? The prevailing view characterizes Japan's BMD decision as a response to North Korea's 1998 Taepodong missile launch. But "Ballistic Missile Defense in Japan: Process-Tracing a Historical Trajectory" contests this simple assumption of causation. The thesis first pieces together a more comprehensive historical narrative from contemporary sources and interviews with formal officials. Analysis of this newly revised timeline then demonstrates that focusing events like the Taepodong incident were but one of several factors driving BMD; others included alliance pressures, bureaucratic leadership, and defense industry profitability. These findings are more important now than ever as the United States pivots towards Asia and transitions to relying on Japan as an equal military partner. Understanding the history of missile defense in Japan leads to the heart of how and why the United States' close ally makes its national security decisions, and thus allows both parties to forge a better alliance.

## **Introduction**

Shortly after noon on August 31, 1998, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) – otherwise known as North Korea – test-fired a two-stage Taepodong-1 missile over the Japanese mainland. The first-stage booster rocket fell into the Sea of Japan, while the rest of the missile overflowed the northern part of Honshu and fell 300 miles east of the island into the Pacific Ocean.<sup>1</sup> Japanese reaction, which has since been called “Taepodong shock,” came swift and fierce. Senior officials immediately denounced North Korea's intrusion of Japanese sovereign air space as “a very dangerous act” that would “have a serious impact on the security of Northeast Asia.”<sup>2</sup> The Government of Japan withdrew its funds from the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), an initiative established to help North Korea build two light-water nuclear power reactors in exchange for Pyongyang's promise to end its nuclear weapons program.<sup>3</sup> It stopped all food and humanitarian assistance to North Korea, and froze talks to normalize relations with the country. But most importantly for the purposes of this analysis, it led the Japanese Defense Agency (JDA) to suggest that North Korea, in highlighting Japan's vulnerability to attack, would push the Japanese government further into talks with collaborating on the United States on a missile defense program.<sup>4</sup> Less than one year later, on August 16, 1999, the United States and Japan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishing that the two countries would pursue joint research of the nosecone, seeker, kinetic warhead, and second-stage rocket motor of the SM-3 BlockIIA interceptor missile.<sup>5</sup>

The timing of these events has led to the general presumption that North Korea's 1998 Taepodong missile launch over the Japanese archipelago truly began Tokyo's engagement with the United States on ballistic missile defense (BMD). That is to say, the prevailing view is that, although discussions between the United States and Japan had begun over a decade before the Taepodong launch, it was this particular focusing event that cemented Japan's commitment to BMD. Such a view matches the conventional wisdom that an external shock would reasonably lead Japan to reinterpret its “exclusively defensive defense” posture, as outlined in Article 9 of the country's Constitution, so as to include a policy that would address similar future threats. The tenets of this crucial legal provision, by which Japan ostensibly renounces its right to offensive capabilities, are as follows:

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding

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<sup>1</sup> “North Korean test missile flies over Japan into Pacific.” *CNN*. Aug. 31, 1998. Available at: <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/asiapcf/9808/31/nkorea.missile.02/>

<sup>2</sup> Gittings, John. “North Korea fires missile over Japan.” *The Guardian*. Sept. 1, 1998. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/1998/sep/01/northkorea>

<sup>3</sup> Wit, Joel. “The Korean peninsula energy development organization: Achievements and challenges.” *The Nonproliferation Review* 6.2 (1999): 59-69. Available at: <http://cns.miis.edu/npr/pdfs/wit62.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> See Gittings.

<sup>5</sup> Japanese Ministry of Defense. “Japan's BMD.” Available at: [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/bmd/bmd.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/bmd/bmd.pdf)

paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.<sup>6</sup>

According to the reasoning of the existing assumption, then, Japan would expand this legal definition and its related security policy in reaction to enemy actions.

Yet a closer examination of the facts within the existing literature, contemporary newspaper articles, and government documents – combined with interviews from officials present for negotiations with Japan at the time – shows that this understanding vastly oversimplifies the history of missile defense in Japan. First, it glosses over the conceptual talks between Japan and the United States that predated 1998. It minimizes the internal decisions that laid the foundations for the 1999 MOU. Second, and most importantly, it overstates the outcomes that immediately followed the launch. It mistakes the MOU for joint research as Japan’s implicit agreement to pursue the actual deployment of a BMD system. In fact, Japan did not formally decide to deploy until 2003, under very different circumstances – and thus, it was not until 2003 that Japan made an official commitment to missile defense that it essentially could not reverse.

These assumptions mischaracterize how and why Japan makes national security decisions. They imply that this one “shock” prompted Japan into comprehensive action, and that focusing events in the security environment are of overwhelming importance in Japan’s considerations. They also therefore imply – incorrectly, as this thesis later shows – that the Taepodong launch and focusing events like it may have enough of a rallying effect to overcome significant hurdles endemic to Japanese culture and the US-Japan bilateral security alliance.

The reality is: Japan’s deployment of BMD would not have happened when and how it did had North Korea’s actions in 1998 not focused Japan on the issue. Yet the Taepodong launch was ultimately a push, not a shove. It moved Japan one step forward along a process that had begun as many as five years prior, by making what was previously conceptual practical and real. But ultimately, “Taepodong shock” produced neither a formal policy commitment nor major procurement funding. Questions surrounding Japan’s constitutional restrictions, the United States’ commitment to BMD, and the technological feasibility and cost of missile defense all remained unanswered after August 1999. These factors continued to inhibit forward movement. As such, the MOU was merely a continuation of the process – not a leap forward – and it failed to address the concerns that lay at the heart of why the discussions on BMD were proceeding at a glacial pace in the first place. The Taepodong incident did not erase these issues for Japan. To suggest that it did might yield unrealistic expectations for Japan in the future. Clarifying the history of Japan with BMD thus becomes of greater importance – because the Taepodong incident must be seen within the context of the larger discussions that preceded it, as well as the outcomes that followed it.

This thesis traces Japan’s development of ballistic missile defense capabilities, to answer the question of what other factors – if not the Taepodong launch alone – spurred Japan’s development of BMD. It follows the BMD discussions between Japan and the United States

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<sup>6</sup> Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet. “The Constitution of Japan.” 1947. Available at: [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution\\_and\\_government\\_of\\_japan/constitution\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html)

from the late 1980s through to deployment, detailing the extensive history – in particular, the outcomes of the talks and working groups during the early to mid-1990s – that has in the past been neglected by the literature. It draws from the perspectives of those present at that time to show the problems that these initiatives encountered. The thesis demonstrates that the Taepodong launch did not sweep these problems away, and then describes how they were addressed before Japan’s BMD deployment in 2003.

By process-tracing an area of Japanese national security history that is not of general knowledge, the analysis reveals previously unexplored insight into Japan’s security strategy. But more specifically, it serves as an example of what Japan can and will do in the face of external threats and alliance pressures. It shows how the United States might better cooperate with Japan within the bilateral relationship. Understanding Japan and recalibrating expectations for what it can do for the United States militarily is today more important than ever, given the US’ pivot to Asia. There are a number of policy concerns for the United States in that region – and Japan has always been, and remains for the foreseeable future, the United States’ central point in Asia from which to address those problems. But lingering unrealistic expectations and tepid relations – caused partially by disconnects on security issues like BMD – will impede cooperation. Wanting more from Japan in the future pivot, without considering its past limitations and concerns, could hurt the alliance at a time when Japan is absolutely necessary to the United States’ strategy in Asia.

First, this thesis begins by examining the existing body of literature. Second, it outlines four propositions of which factors likely mattered and why. It follows with the historical narrative of BMD deployment in Japan, and then ends with an analysis of the propositions in light of this expanded history.

## **Literature**

Due to the highly specific nature of the topic, the community that has published works on Japanese missile defense progress in the 1990s and early 2000s is extremely small, consisting of only a few authors. The more thorough of the analyses available emphasize the importance of the Taepodong launch as a primary factor behind Japanese BMD, and then follow with other potential driving variables. Yet, for the most part, those who have written about the issue have usually demonstrated little interest in delving into the discussions and working groups held before 1998, preferring to instead discuss the early 1990s only briefly and only as background information. As a result, they often make throwaway statements giving the Taepodong launch paramount importance in driving missile defense. Hook et al. are well within the norm when they state that the Japanese “pursued [BMD] with vigor” only after the Taepodong incident.<sup>7</sup> Numerous works pinpoint August 1999’s MOU (described as a result of the missile launch) as the real start to Japan’s participation in BMD.<sup>8</sup> Few papers venture more deeply into the history.

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<sup>7</sup> Hook, Glenn D., et al. *Japan’s International Relations: Politics, Economics, and Security*. Vol. 44. Routledge, 2011. Pg. 142.

<sup>8</sup> See Cronin, Richard P. "Japan-US Cooperation on Ballistic Missile Defense: Issues and Prospects." Congressional Research Service [Library of Congress], 2002. Available at: <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/9186.pdf>;

This problem exists because most of the works are not interested specifically in the history of missile defense. They have larger topics of interest. Pekkanen and Kallender-Umezu's work on the Japanese defense industry's role in pushing towards the militarization of space, for example, naturally spends most of its time on how economic pressures led into corporate activity on BMD, as well as business involvement in the joint studies and dialogues.<sup>9</sup> Green, in his work on Japanese indigenous development of technology, likewise places missile defense within the larger context of joint versus indigenous defense cooperation.<sup>10</sup>

Most troublesome, however, is the fact that there has been no comprehensive analysis of the entire history up to deployment. Even the best papers on Japanese missile defense are constrained by the fact that they were published before the history had played out. They are, in other words, products of their time. Green, for example, wrote in 1997 that joint cooperation would hinge on “the cost, the technical demands of ‘hitting a bullet with a bullet,’ the limitations imposed by the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, and the constraints placed on Japan by the Three Arms Export Control Principles.”<sup>11</sup> While this may have been true in 1997, no one has asked whether these still remained the primary factors underlying BMD cooperation in 2002. But with sufficient time now having passed after deployment of BMD in Japan, this type of overarching analysis is possible – and can draw on previous efforts to guide the development of new hypotheses. The existing literature has thus far suggested several plausible causal variables:

#### *Focusing events*

By conventional wisdom, Japan is becoming a “normal” country, with military capabilities comparable to other countries uninhibited by constitutional limitations, because of emerging security problems in East Asia. As Andrew Oros describes this conventional wisdom, Japan's remilitarization is a reaction to “no shortage of substantial security contingencies, including conventional and nuclear weapons proliferation, tense standoffs over the divided states of China/Taiwan and the Koreas, Islamic-related terrorist activity in a number of Southeast Asian

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O'Donogue, Patrick M. *Theater Missile Defense in Japan: Implications for the US-China-Japan Strategic Relationship*. DIANE Publishing, 2000. Available at:

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/files/PUB66.pdf>; Montague, Karen. “Japan's Ballistic Missile Defense Policies and Programs.” George C. Marshall Institute. June 2014. Available at:

<http://marshall.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Japan-BMD-PO-June-14.pdf>; James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. “Nuclear Threat Initiative: Missile.” Available at: <http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/japan/delivery-systems/>; Bitzinger, Richard A. “Asia-Pacific Missile Defense Cooperation and the United States 2004–2005: A Mixed Bag.” *The Asia-Pacific and the United States* 2005 (2004).

Available at: <http://www.apcss.org/Publications/SAS/APandtheUS/BitzingerMissile1.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Pekkanen, Saadia, and Paul Kallender-Umezu. *In Defense of Japan: From the Market to the Military in Space Policy*. Stanford University Press, 2010. Web. Ch.6

<sup>10</sup> Green, Michael J. *Arming Japan: Defense Production, Alliance Politics, and the Postwar Search for Autonomy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

<sup>11</sup> Green, Michael J. “Theater Missile Defense and Strategic Relations with the People's Republic of China.” *Significant Issues Series-Center For Strategic And International Studies* 19 (1997): 111-118. Pg.

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states, and widespread concerns over the ‘rise’ of China.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, the prevailing assumption is that Japan adjusts its conception of what is necessary and acceptable of its military, in line with the rising threats in its external security environment.

This reasoning underlies the importance attributed particularly to North Korea and China’s actions. As Cronin, Giarra, and Green state: “The advocates of missile defense argue that Northeast Asian politics are fluid and uncertain enough to allow any number of troubling political scenarios... [a] threat assessment based on intentions and capabilities must take account of the steady proliferation and modernization of ballistic missiles...in the region.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, the deployment of missile defense could be an instance of Japan reacting to the escalation of threats – demonstrated by specific focusing events – by neighboring countries.

### *Alliance pressure*

Given that its alliance with the US is the cornerstone of its security strategy, Japan has historically tried to oblige its ally. Blaker, Giarra, and Vogel have characterized Japan’s position within the bilateral relationship as that of the “junior partner” – “a generally loyal, if sometimes exasperated and resentful, subordinate.” As a result, Japan has typically bent and deferred to the United States’ security goals as much as possible: “Rather than advancing their own agenda, Japanese diplomats have sought to anticipate US demands, to moderate them, and then to satisfy them, albeit at the lowest cost to Japan.”<sup>14</sup>

US policy has deeply influenced the changes in Japan’s security posture by altering its strategic calculus.<sup>15</sup> It would not be surprising to find that this influence played a significant role in Japan’s decisions on BMD. Japan might have decided to deploy missile defense to boost the US-Japan alliance, by offering it as a litmus test of the alliance’s strength.

### *Domestic leadership*

Swaine et al. lists the Prime Minister and his Cabinet as one of several domestic players likely to influence the Government of Japan’s path on missile defense. Although the authors recognize that Prime Ministers cannot necessarily dictate decisions in Japan’s consensus-driven political process, they suggest that prime ministerial leadership is and will be crucial to the future of missile defense. The Prime Minister and his Cabinet have the power to reinterpret the Constitution so as to include BMD within the limits of Japan’s defensive posture.<sup>16</sup> Naming

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<sup>12</sup> Oros, Andrew L. *Normalizing Japan: Politics, Identity, and the Evolution of Security Practice*. NUS Press, 2008. Pg. 1

<sup>13</sup> Cronin, Patrick M., Paul Giarra, and Michael Green, “The Alliance Implications of Theater Missile Defense,” in Michael Green and Patrick Cronin (eds.), *The US-Japan Alliance: Past, Present, and Future* (New York, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1998). Pg. 174

<sup>14</sup> Blaker, Michael, and Paul Giarra. *Case Studies in Japanese Negotiating Behavior*. US Institute of Peace Press, 2002. Pg. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Kliman, Daniel M. *Japan’s Security Strategy in the Post-9/11 World: Embracing a New RealPolitik*. Vol. 183. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006. Pg. 3

<sup>16</sup> Swaine, Michael D., Rachel M. Swanger, and Takashi Kawakami. *Japan and Ballistic Missile Defense*. Rand Corporation, 2001. Print. Pg. xii

Ryutaro Hashimoto and Keizo Obuchi as specific examples of Prime Ministers with an active interest in missile defense, Swaine et al. state: “[The Prime Minister’s office] orchestrated the pace and timing, decided how quickly to push forward, and worked closely with the Diet and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on how to handle the issue...and how to explain the decision to those at home and abroad who expressed opposition.”

Swaine and his co-authors also point to comments by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, then still newly elected, regarding revision of the Constitution as a sign that he might eventually pursue BMD. The expectation that Koizumi was influential in the deployment of missile defense during his administration is driven by the fact that he has since been characterized as nationalistic, and in favor of Japan taking on a more active role internationally as well as within the US-Japan alliance.<sup>17</sup> It might therefore be reasonable to suspect that his more “hawkish” position on military issues was a strong force behind missile defense.

This expectation is also in line with the present characterizations of security changes happening now in Japan, given that most tend to attribute its recent constitutional reinterpretations to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his more nationalistic tendencies.

### *Legal restrictions*

No examination of Japan’s security policy can go without consideration of the country’s self-imposed constitutional restrictions. According to the Government of Japan’s official view on Article 9 of the Constitution, Japan can only possess “the minimum necessary level of self-defense capability.” Thus, “the possession of armaments deemed to be offensive weapons designed to be used only for the mass destruction of another country, which would, by definition, exceed the minimum necessary level, is not permissible under any circumstances.”<sup>18</sup> Article 9 leaves Japan in a unique position within an existing theoretical literature about how states compete against one another in pursuit of security. This literature also gives some indication that Article 9 may have had to expand to accommodate missile defense.

According to neorealists such as Waltz or Jervis, states inadvertently feed into an action-reaction process – a “security dilemma” – that leaves all states in the international system worse off. Each state’s acquisition of power, whether offensive in nature or not, is regarded as a threat to the security of other states. This, in turn, moves these other states to acquire further capabilities of their own.<sup>19</sup> Offensive realists, like Mearsheimer, argue that states must act aggressively, and become the hegemon in this system, in order to survive.<sup>20</sup> But this logic directly contradicts Japanese law. Constitutionally, Japan cannot possess offensive capabilities. The government has interpreted the statute so as to specifically forbid the Self-Defense Forces from having even “intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), long-range strategic bombers, or

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<sup>17</sup> “A Turn to the Right?” *The Economist*. May 17, 2001. Available at: <http://www.economist.com/node/624009>

<sup>18</sup> Japanese Ministry of Defense. “Fundamental Concepts of National Defense: The Government’s View on Article 9 of the Constitution.” Available at [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/d\\_policy/dp01.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/dp01.html)

<sup>19</sup> Jervis, Robert. “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma.” *World Politics* 30.2 (1978): 167-214. Web. Pg. 186-187

<sup>20</sup> Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: Norton, 2001. Print. Pg. 34

attack aircraft carriers.”<sup>21</sup> Japan has held firm on this issue – at least, it has on the matter of ballistic missiles. It has preferred to, instead, stay the shield to the United States’ sword.

Japan’s constitutional restrictions therefore ostensibly place it squarely in the camp of the defensive realists. According to defensive realists such as Van Evera, aggression is self-defeating, as it only raises the probability of war. Countries should instead strive to be defensively dominant. When the buildup of offensive weapons can be differentiated from that of defensive weapons, countries experience more security and arms races slow down.<sup>22</sup> Glaser goes even further: when a state can persuasively reassure others that its capabilities are purely defensive, the security dilemma is completely eliminated. In such a case, every state can increase its own protection without threatening the security of others.<sup>23</sup>

Given that Japan cannot pursue offensive dominance, missile defense should be an immediately attractive option. Yet Japan has proved incredibly resistant to the idea of working with the United States on BMD. It took ten years for Japan even to agree to conduct joint research on four parts of the interceptor missile. This suggests that the legalities of missile defense might have been murkier than otherwise supposed – that it may have been unclear whether missile defense was actually a step towards defensive, and not offensive, dominance. Japan must therefore have had to, at some point prior to deployment, interpret the Constitution to allow missile defense.

## **Propositions**

The literature thus points to four variables that might explain why Japan ultimately decided to commit to missile defense. These should not be seen as competing, as they are most likely complementary – and, in any case, would be difficult to separate empirically.

### ***P1: Focusing Event Proposition***

Japan deployed missile defense in reaction to focusing events that heightened its perception of the threats raised by neighboring countries.

According to this proposition, missile defense in Japan was a reaction to the escalation of threats, demonstrated by specific focusing events, by neighboring countries. Numerous kinds of focusing events might have led to a heightened threat perception, including but not limited to: a missile launch, a government-issued threat against Japan, the termination of negotiations with Japan, or the movement of Navy ships into disputed territories.

The first observable implication of this proposition, as summarized in Table 1, is that the heightened threat perception would be evidenced by public statements of condemnation from

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<sup>21</sup> See Japanese Ministry of Defense. *Fundamental Concepts of National Defense: The Government’s View on Article 9 of the Constitution.*

<sup>22</sup> Evera, Stephen van. “Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War.” *International Security* 22.4 (1998): 5-43. Print. Pg. 9

<sup>23</sup> Glaser, Charles L. “The Security Dilemma Revisited.” *World Politics* 50 (1997): 171-201. Print. Pg. 186-187

Japanese government officials, as well as references to the focusing event in the next Defense White Paper. The second observable, though more uncertain, implication is that if neighboring countries' actions instead lowered threat perception, Japan would have scaled back or slowed down on missile defense. Such actions might have been a treaty signing, positive negotiations with Japan, or agreements to stop building particular offensive weapons. This implication is less certain because, once Japan started on missile defense, it would have been difficult to roll back the progress already made.

**Table 1.** Focusing Event Proposition summary

<b>Propositions</b>	<b>Observable implications</b>
<p><b><i>P1: Focusing Event Proposition</i></b>            Japan deployed missile defense in reaction to focusing events that heightened its perception of the threats raised by neighboring countries.</p>	<p><b>Focusing event → Heightened threat perception → Missile defense</b></p> <p><b>I1: Missile defense a reaction to escalation of threats, demonstrated by specific focusing events, by neighboring countries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex. Potential focusing events: a missile launch, a government-issued threat against Japan, termination of negotiations with Japan, movement of Navy ships into disputed territories, etc.</li> <li>• Escalation of threat perception evidenced by public statements of condemnation from Japanese government officials, reference to focusing event in next Defense White Paper</li> </ul> <p><b>I2 (uncertain): Neighboring countries actions' that lower threat perception → scaling back on missile defense</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex. Actions: Treaty signing, positive negotiations, agreements to stop building particular offensive weaponry</li> </ul>

***P2: Alliance Pressure Proposition***

Japan deployed missile defense because the United States communicated that Japan's refusal to collaborate on BMD would prove harmful to the bilateral relationship.

The first observable implication of this proposition is that progress towards missile defense would have followed increased pressure from the US. This pressure might have come in the form of statements from the US side emphasizing the importance of missile defense to the alliance, the description of missile defense as a measure of burden-sharing, or the provision of US proposals on ways to collaborate on BMD. The second implication is that the Japanese would have publicly acknowledged how important missile defense was to the alliance. The third implication is again uncertain (for the same reason as before): if pressure from the US decreased, Japan would have scaled back on missile defense. Decrease in the pressure applied by the US would have been evident from the US focusing its attentions elsewhere, or from it discussing US-Japan cooperation in areas other than missile defense. These implications are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Alliance Pressure Proposition summary

Propositions	Observable implications
<p><b>P2: Alliance Pressure Proposition</b>            Japan deployed missile defense because the United States communicated that Japan’s refusal to collaborate on BMD would prove harmful to the bilateral relationship.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pressure from the United States → Missile defense</b></p> <p><b>I1: Progress towards missile defense follows increased pressure from US</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex. US pressure: statements from US side emphasizing importance of missile defense to alliance (refusal of joint initiative would hurt security arrangement, joining would bring two countries closer together as allies), description of missile defense as measure of burden-sharing, proposals from US on ways to collaborate</li> </ul> <p><b>I2: Japanese acknowledgement of importance of missile defense to alliance</b></p> <p><b>I3 (uncertain): Decrease in pressure from US → scaling back in missile defense</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex. Decrease in pressure: US focusing attentions elsewhere, discussions of US-Japan cooperation in other areas</li> </ul> <p>• Pressure would come from US Dept. of Defense, US State Dept., President</p>

**P3: Domestic Leadership Proposition**

Japan deployed missile defense when it did because a nationalistic Prime Minister in favor of remilitarization came into power.

This proposition has three similar observable implications, described in Table 3. The first is that progress on BMD efforts would have followed the choice of a Prime Minister supportive of missile defense. That support might have come in various forms: the Prime Minister might be characterized as nationalistic or hawkish, or may have made statements of interest in missile defense or remilitarization. The second, but uncertain, implication is that a Prime Minister ambivalent on missile defense would lead to a pause or a slowdown on BMD efforts. The third, similarly uncertain, implication is that a Prime Minister who is critical of missile defense would roll back previous efforts. This might also lead to a decrease in the funds allocated to missile defense.

**Table 3.** Domestic Leadership Proposition summary

Propositions	Observable implications
<p><b>P3: Domestic Leadership Proposition</b>            Japan deployed missile defense when it did because a nationalistic Prime Minister in favor of remilitarization came into power.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Prime Ministerial support → Missile defense</b></p> <p><b>I1: Prime Minister supportive of missile defense → progress on missile defense efforts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex. Prime Ministerial support: statements of interest in missile defense or remilitarization, characterization as nationalistic or more hawkish</li> </ul> <p><b>I2 (uncertain): Prime Minister ambivalent about missile defense → pause on missile defense efforts, slowdown, lack of progress towards deployment</b></p> <p><b>I3 (uncertain): Prime Minister critical of missile defense → rolling back previous efforts made, decrease in funds allocated to missile defense</b></p>

***P4: Legal Restrictions Proposition***

Japan deployed missile defense because it was the only purely defensive mechanism, and therefore the only system not restricted by constitutional limitations, capable of addressing the missile threat.

This proposition, summarized in Table 4, suggests that changes in Japan’s interpretation of the Constitution preceded missile defense. The first implication is that there must have been a shift in Japan’s official understanding of what Article 9 does or does not allow. These legal decisions might have entailed changes in the definition of missile defense as strictly defensive, the clarification of collective self-defense on whether to intercept missile directed at US, and the relaxation of ban on arms exports. If such shifts did occur, they would have been explained in Japan’s Defense White Papers, official government statements, and the National Defense Program Guidelines. A related observable implication is that, if there was confusion over whether missile defense was allowed, there would have been a lack of progress towards deployment.

**Table 4. Legal Restrictions Proposition summary**

Propositions	Observable implications
<p><b>P4: Legal Restrictions Proposition</b>            Japan deployed missile defense because it was the only purely defensive mechanism, and therefore the only system not restricted by constitutional limitations, capable of addressing the missile threat.</p>	<p><b>Change in interpretation of Constitution → missile defense</b></p> <p><b>I1: Shift in Japan’s official understanding of what Article 9 does or does not allow – explained in Defense White Paper, official government statements, National Defense Program Guidelines</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal decisions to allow missile defense: definition of missile defense as strictly defensive, clarification of collective self-defense on whether to intercept missile directed at US, possible relaxation of ban on arms exports</li> </ul> <p><b>I2: Confusion over whether missile defense allowed → lack of progress towards deployment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift going to be precipitated by another causal variable – possibly one of other three hypotheses (focusing event, Prime Minister, pressure from US) pushing JDA towards reinterpretation</li> </ul>

**Methods**

This analysis draws initially from the existing literature on Japan’s history with missile defense, and supplements this information with interviews.

*Existing literature*

The existing literature serves to first highlight clearly incorrect hypotheses: a source might, for example, indicate that, given the time frame of ballistic missile defense development, it may simply be impossible for a certain variable to have contributed to BMD deployment in Japan. As previously established, however, the literature is insufficient for eliminating any one of the hypotheses completely. Although it may indicate that certain scenarios are more likely than others, it does not provide enough evidence to establish a case against a hypothesis. The literature is too thin, and too incomprehensive, to do so. Sources include not only academic, secondary-source papers, but also includes primary documents: official government documents, such as Japan’s Annual Defense White Paper and press releases; statements from government officials, as quoted in news reports from both American and Japanese media; and Congressional Research Service reports.

*Interviews*

This thesis follows the leads from the existing literature in interviews with policy specialists and former government officials. Results are based on interviews with seven experts. Interviewees include not only experts within the Japan defense policy sphere, but also Department of Defense, State Department, military officials, and industry leaders who were once involved in the US-Japan negotiations during the 1990s and early 2000s. They are:

1. Dr. James Auer, former Special Assistant for Japan in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and current Director of the Center for US-Japan Studies and Cooperation at Vanderbilt University
2. Dr. Ken Jimbo, Associate Professor at Keio University and Senior Fellow at The Tokyo Foundation
3. Commander Paul Giarra, US Navy (Ret.), Senior Country Director for Japan in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
4. Lieutenant Colonel Robin “Sak” Sakoda, Senior Japan Director in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and Senior Policy Advisor and Executive Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of State
5. Gregg A. Rubinstein, Deputy Director of the Mutual Defense Assistance Office at the Tokyo US Embassy, Vice President of the International Trade and Technology Association, and Director of Policy and Planning at Grumman International, Inc.
6. Masato Nagase, Deputy Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Mitsubishi Corporation’s Ship, Aerospace & Transportation Systems Division
7. Hiroshi Tajima, General Manager of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries’ Aircraft & Special Vehicle Headquarters and Executive Advisor of Mitsubishi Corporation’s Aerospace Division

Interviewees were generally chosen either because they had previously written on the issue of missile defense or because others recommended them as potential contacts. Four of the seven interviewees were American; two of the seven are now academics, while the remaining five currently work as independent defense consultants. The Americans were all formerly associated with either the Department of Defense or the State Department, while two of the three Japanese interviewees once worked for Mitsubishi Corporation.

Some of these interviewees were more willing to share material in part due to the passage of time: it has been over a decade since some of the working groups and events discussed in the thesis. Six of the seven interviewees are now retired, and most now work at their own consultancies. It is possible that, because they were now free of direct ties to the current governments or to companies with bids on missile defense contracts, they might have been more open to speaking than they previously had been.

Clearly, there should be some concerns about the fact that four of the seven come from the same network of experts and diplomats. It is more than probable that they have similar answers or worldviews, and that drawing inferences from their responses results in a biased product with gaps of knowledge. But the process of gaining interviewees through contacts was unavoidable. It might, in fact, be desirable, given that those most experienced in this issue are the members of the small US team on the ground that was actually negotiating with Japan. The interviewees here were those actually articulating the United States’ policy positions, and speaking with their counterparts on the Japanese side.

## **Results**

### ***Historical Narrative of Japanese Involvement with Ballistic Missile Defense***

#### *Japan joins Star Wars despite past disasters in technological collaboration*

Official Japanese involvement with ballistic missile defense ostensibly began in September 1986, when Chief Cabinet Secretary Masaharu Gotoda issued a public statement affirming Japan's participation in President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program. Brushing aside concerns that involvement might run contrary to a 1969 resolution limiting the use of space to non-military activities, Gotoda announced that Japan had quite simply "decided to enter into consultations with the United States government on specific measures," in the hopes that their research together would lead to technological progress and commercial applications for both countries. At the briefing that followed, however, a Japanese Foreign Ministry official expressed mixed feelings on SDI. There were many, particularly at the management level, concerned that not only was there little commercial potential in the output of SDI research, but that Japanese corporations would also be barred by the United States from using whatever little did result for commercial interests.<sup>24</sup> There existed the largely unspoken suspicion that the United States had brought Japan on for the "hidden purpose" of taking Japanese technology, in "a kind of reverse Pearl Harbor, a technological 'sneak attack' by the United States...[where] the US [would] get all this technology and then decide not to share it, citing US security interests."<sup>25</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Japanese participation in SDI yielded nothing substantial. Given these existing fears, the United States' attempt to bring Japan into its SDI framework could not have come at a worse possible time, just as US actions brought on the unfortunate "FSX crisis." For over a decade, Japanese industry had wanted, and planned on, developing an indigenously designed fighter jet, the FSX. But in the late 1980s, the United States killed those plans and instead strong-armed Japan into signing an MOU for joint development of the FSX – only for Congress to then turn around and accuse Japan of trying to weaken the US aerospace industry by stealing American technology.<sup>26</sup> The FSX dispute, once called "the bitterest US-Japan negotiations in the post-war era,"<sup>27</sup> naturally did not bode well for cooperation.

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<sup>24</sup> Yates, Ronald E. "Team to Study Japan's Role in SDI." *Chicago Tribune*. Oct. 24, 1986. Available at: [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1986-10-24/news/8603200016\\_1\\_sdi-japanese-political-leaders-japanese-foreign-ministry-official](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1986-10-24/news/8603200016_1_sdi-japanese-political-leaders-japanese-foreign-ministry-official)

<sup>25</sup> Yates, Ronald E. "Japan Buys into SDI, But Wonders if It'll Pay Off." *Chicago Tribune*. Sept. 10, 1986. Available at: [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1986-09-10/news/8603070526\\_1\\_sdi-japanese-foreign-ministry-official-nuclear-weapons](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1986-09-10/news/8603070526_1_sdi-japanese-foreign-ministry-official-nuclear-weapons)

<sup>26</sup> See Green, Michael J. *Arming Japan: Defense Production, Alliance Politics, and the Postwar Search for Autonomy*. Pg. 86-107.

<sup>27</sup> See Blaker, Michael, and Paul Giarra. Pg. 87.

### *Missile defense agenda driven by trade negotiations and alliance management*

In those “early – it’s the economy, stupid’ – post-Cold War years,”<sup>28</sup> trade, rather than security, issues dominated the US-Japan alliance. Amidst a rising US trade deficit, sentiments in the United States towards Japan, whose trade surplus in 1986 totaled \$58.6 billion (or about one-third of the US’ deficit), soured.<sup>29</sup> By 1990, polls had 60 percent of the general American public calling Japan’s economic power a “critical threat to the US.” One CIA-sponsored study even declared, “Japan is an economic superpower whose world dominance appears inescapable and incontrovertible, absent some dramatic unified reassertion of Western intent... Mainstream Japanese... are creatures of an ageless, amoral, manipulative and controlling culture.”<sup>30</sup> An economically powerful Japan was anathema to the United States’ interests, and “no one single country accounted for more of the perceived imbalance in US trade than Japan.”<sup>31</sup>

When the Soviet Union was still in power, and the United States needed its relationship with Japan to act as its counterbalance in Asia, it set aside these tensions for the sake of the alliance. When the Soviet Union fell and the Cold War ended, however, such sentiments were allowed to overwhelm the security interests of the alliance. There was no explicit reason for the alliance to even exist anymore, leading to “a period of mutual antipathy and domestic fractiousness that gave both countries pause for thought.”<sup>32</sup> The bilateral relationship was officially “adrift.” But missile defense, for those who saw the importance of preserving the US-Japan alliance, was one of the few opportunities available for reworking the relationship and bringing the two countries together into closer collaboration.

### *Missile defense research begins with the WESTPAC Study and TMD Working Group*

In 1989, the US Department of Defense and the Strategic Defense Initiative Operation (SDIO) formalized SDI research in the \$8 million Western Pacific Missile Defense Architecture (WESTPAC) Study. Numerous Japanese industry companies entered bids to conduct this research for the DOD. Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) eventually won out, and was chosen to lead a group of five American and seven Japanese companies.<sup>33</sup> The WESTPAC Study was conducted over four years, with the intent of answering the basic question of whether missile defense was necessary in the region, and if yes, what the best architecture of missile defense would be.<sup>34</sup> The initiative followed three phases. In FY 1989, it examined the conventional missile threat, in 1990, the non-conventional missile threat, and in 1991, the defense of a 1000

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<sup>28</sup> Rubinstein, Gregg. Personal interview. Oct. 7, 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “Diplomatic Bluebook Section 3. North America” 1987. Available at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/1987/1987-3-3.htm>

<sup>30</sup> Berger, Suzanne and Kenneth A. Oye. “It isn’t Cold War II.” *The New York Times*. Dec. 9, 1991. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/12/09/opinion/it-isn-t-cold-war-ii.html>

<sup>31</sup> Krauss, Ellis S., and T. John Pempel, eds. *Beyond Bilateralism: US-Japan Relations in the New Asia Pacific*. Stanford University Press, 2004. Pg. 11.

<sup>32</sup> See Blaker, Michael, and Paul Giarra. Pg. 94

<sup>33</sup> See Pekkanen, Saadia, and Paul Kallender-Umezu. Ch. 6.

<sup>34</sup> Nagase, Masato and Hiroshi Tajima. Personal interview. Oct. 5, 2014.

n.m. radius around Japan.<sup>35</sup> At the end of WESTPAC in April 1993, MHI returned to SDIO with a 421-page report on the group's findings.<sup>36</sup> It stated that, yes, missile defense was indeed necessary, and that Japan and the United States should pursue a multi-tier missile defense architecture.<sup>37</sup>

Although the Government of Japan was briefed on the report's progress and outcomes, it did not actively participate in the WESTPAC Study.<sup>38</sup> But in terms of intangibles, the WESTPAC Study proved a valuable experience for both the American and Japanese defense industries. In contrast to the FSX negotiations, the TMD discussions and meetings between the companies were "very friendly and cooperative." The WESTPAC Study required that MHI and the Japanese companies meet in "regular executive level as well as working level face-to-face meetings and social gatherings with their counterparts of major US [missile defense] contractors," such as Raytheon, McDonnell Douglas, and Lockheed. This engendered more personal relationships within the industry, leading to an environment conducive to collaboration between the companies. Indeed, in the words of one Japanese participant, the Japanese had "good enthusiasm but no hesitation about working with USA."<sup>39</sup>

Six months later, the United States approached Japan with a more formal – though ultimately ill-considered – proposition of participation in the Clinton Administration's theater missile defense (TMD) efforts. In October 1993, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin met with the JDA and Japanese industry to offer Japan three options: joint development, the purchase of TMD off-the-shelf from American companies, or gradual technology exchanges. The Japanese balked at the absolute demand that they share their technologies. To many in Tokyo, it seemed that trade considerations had once again usurped Japan's actual security interests. The United States had "overplayed its hand."<sup>40</sup>

Even worse, the US side did not even have a clear, singular vision of what it wanted from its ally. Not only were the Department of Defense and the State Department competing against one another for influence, their interests were also contrary to those held by the White House, Commerce, and Treasury Department. No agency in discussions with Japan had any actual authority for negotiating terms of agreement on missile defense. For those early years, "the two national systems were out of synch internally and with each other."<sup>41</sup> In essence, the US government side was a mess, and inadvertently alienated Japan when it played into its ally's doubts about how committed the United States actually was to the security of Japan.

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<sup>35</sup> MG Malcolm O'Neill. "Strategic Defense Initiative Advance Planning Briefing for Industry." United States Department of Defense. Mar. 2, 1992. Available at: [http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/homeland\\_defense/strategic\\_defense\\_initiative/425.pdf](http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/homeland_defense/strategic_defense_initiative/425.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Monterey Institute of International Studies. "Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) in Northeast Asia: An Annotated Chronology, 1990-Present." Mar. 13, 2003. Available at: [http://cns.miis.edu/archive/bmd\\_neasia/bmdchron.pdf](http://cns.miis.edu/archive/bmd_neasia/bmdchron.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> See Nagase, Masato and Hiroshi Tajima.

<sup>38</sup> See Blaker, Michael, and Paul Giarra. Pg. 109

<sup>39</sup> See Nagase, Masato and Hiroshi Tajima.

<sup>40</sup> See Cronin, Patrick M., Paul Giarra, and Michael Green, Pg. 172

<sup>41</sup> See Blaker, Michael, and Paul Giarra. Pg. 102

The United States regrouped, and eventually “recast TMD as an alliance management issue”<sup>42</sup> that in December 1993 led the two countries to form the bilateral US-Japan Theater Missile Defense Working Group (TMDWG). Initially led by the Department of Defense’s Office of Asian and Pacific Affairs, the TMDWG explored the evolution of threats in East Asia, the capabilities that would be required to address those threats, and the potential areas for collaboration.<sup>43</sup>

### *Tomiichi Murayama becomes Prime Minister*

The formation of this group coincided with a particularly tumultuous time in Japanese politics that resulted in leadership ambivalent on missile defense. In July 1993, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) of Japan, the ruling party for 38 years, lost its majority in the Diet. It then returned in 1994, as part of a coalition with the Social Democratic Party (SDP) that elected Japan’s first Socialist Prime Minister in 47 years, Tomiichi Murayama.<sup>44</sup> The Socialist Party had long held the view that the US-Japan Security Treaty establishing the alliance should be abolished. It had also questioned the constitutionality of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces.<sup>45</sup> When it came into power with the LDP, the Socialists were forced to accept the constitutionality of both the alliance and the SDF. In return, Murayama was allowed to harden his opposition to TMD.<sup>46</sup> During the SDP’s annual convention in October that year, it proposed abandoning TMD entirely due to its cost, which would pull away funds needed for other procurement programs. Additionally, some doubted whether the Patriot missile could actually intercept its targets, and whether TMD was even necessary in the region.<sup>47</sup>

### *Discussions within TMDWG at policy level include numerous conceptual TMD plans*

Nonetheless, even without the support of the leading political party of Japan, discussions within the US-Japan Working Group moved forward through talks at the policy level, between professional officials at State/Defense and JDA/MOFA. At times, these meetings included representatives up to the Office Director or the Deputy Assistant Secretary.<sup>48</sup>

At the TMDWG’s second meeting in May 1994, the Pentagon’s Ballistic Missile Defense Office (BMDO) presented Japan with a 40-page document called “Japan’s Choices Regarding

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<sup>42</sup> See Cronin, Patrick M., Paul Giarra, and Michael Green. Pg. 172

<sup>43</sup> Rubinstein, Gregg. Personal interview. Oct. 7, 2014.

<sup>44</sup> “Major Political Parties in Japan.” *The Washington Post*. July 1998. Available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/japan/japanparties.htm>

<sup>45</sup> Jameson, Sam. “Socialist Named Premier in Japan: Asia: Tomiichi Murayama is chosen with support of his party's archenemies. Analysts expect greater strain on U.S. trade relations, while Tokyo business world is shocked.” *Los Angeles Times*. June 30, 1994. Available at: [http://articles.latimes.com/1994-06-30/news/mn-10296\\_1\\_japan-trade-relations](http://articles.latimes.com/1994-06-30/news/mn-10296_1_japan-trade-relations)

<sup>46</sup> See Green, Michael J. *Arming Japan: Defense Production, Alliance Politics, and the Postwar Search for Autonomy*. Pg. 138.

<sup>47</sup> Goozner, Merrill. “Japan Balks at Buying into Mini-SDI System.” *Chicago Tribune*. Nov. 3, 1994. Available at: [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1994-11-03/news/9411030061\\_1\\_anti-missile-patriot-missile-theater-missile-defense](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1994-11-03/news/9411030061_1_anti-missile-patriot-missile-theater-missile-defense)

<sup>48</sup> See Rubinstein, Gregg. Personal interview.

TMD.” This paper was written on the “supposition of two types of missile attacks – one from ‘the DPRK (North Korea)’ and the other from ‘North Korea and China.’”<sup>49</sup> It presented four potential routes for TMD collaboration:

1. A Japanese forward-deployed navy upper-tier, ground lower-tier system at a cost of \$4.5 billion (based on upgrades of existing Japanese plans to deploy four Aegis destroyers, four AWACS, and twenty-four land-based Patriot fire units);
2. A Japanese deployed-in-bastion navy upper-tier, ground lower-tier system at a cost of \$16.3 billion (based on upgrades of existing deployment plans plus two new Aegis and new surveillance radar for support);
3. A Japanese ground upper-tier, lower-tier system centered on six THAAD sites at a cost of \$8.8 billion
4. A Japanese combined upper-tier ground lower-tier system combining five THAAD sites and existing Patriots and Aegis at a cost of \$8.9 billion<sup>50</sup>

#### *Plans take shape within US-Japan Bilateral Study for BMD*

Japan gave its first indication of real interest in August of the same year, when the JDA placed its first request for a budget between 2-3 million yen and 20-30 million yen for examining the TMD project in FY1995.<sup>51</sup> The JDA’s Procurement Bureau then discreetly backed an industry working group, called the “Air Defense Systems Research Group,” consisting of eight defense companies within the Japan Association of Defense Industries (JADI) that would consider the four options that the BMDO had presented Japan. This group was naturally concerned that further delays would cause Japanese industry to lose the chance for co-development and construction of a TMD system, estimated at the time with a worth of anywhere between one to three trillion yen. It was, as the BMDO’s document called it, “the last military business opportunity for this century.”<sup>52</sup> Indeed, the defense industry was more eager to participate than anyone in the JDA or MOFA. As the executive officer of Mitsubishi Electric stated, the company would start its own TMD research and, “as the top missile maker...be ready to deal with anything.”<sup>53</sup>

The ADS Study served simply as the bridge between the WESTPAC Study and the crucial entity that followed. Formed in October of 1994 by the Government of Japan, the US-Japan (DOD-JDA) Bilateral Study for BMD was to continue analyzing the missile threat to Japan and the potential architectures for a Japanese missile defense system.<sup>54</sup> In contrast to the

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<sup>49</sup> “Cold Peace: Choice of TMD; U.S. Shows Threat Scenario.” *Mainichi Shimbun*. Mar. 17, 1995. Available at: <http://fas.org/news/japan/eas95056.htm>

<sup>50</sup> See Green, Michael J. *Arming Japan: Defense Production, Alliance Politics, and the Postwar Search for Autonomy*. Pg. 138.

<sup>51</sup> “DA Requests Funding to Examine TMD Project.” *Mainichi Shimbun*. Aug. 5, 1994. Available at: <http://fas.org/news/japan/eas94152.htm>

<sup>52</sup> See “Cold Peace: Choice of TMD; U.S. Shows Threat Scenario.”

<sup>53</sup> “Defense Technology – Theater Missile Defense.” *Nikkei Sangyo Shimbun*. May 8, 1995. Available at: <http://fas.org/news/japan/jst95050.htm>

<sup>54</sup> “Japan Gets Serious about Missile Defense: North Korean Crisis Pushes Debate.” *Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies* 2003(2).

ADS Study, which was funded solely by JADI, the Bilateral Study was in fact JDA-funded: responsibility for the study was contracted out by the government to JADI, which then outsourced it to Mitsubishi Heavy. The US-Japan Bilateral Study was crucial, because according to Masato Nagase and Hiroshi Tajima, two former executives from MHI, “The SM-3 joint development idea for collaboration was derived from this activity.” That is, the idea to jointly research the SM-3 BlockIIA missile – the very foundation of the 1999 MOU – emerged out of talks begun five years earlier, in 1994.<sup>55</sup> The idea was already under consideration half a decade before North Korea fired its Taepodong towards Japan.

*Japan moves towards internal consensus within individual agencies as China rises*

Japanese involvement further accelerated in 1995, after the government set aside 20 million yen for TMD research as requested by the JDA.<sup>56</sup> By February of 1995, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) had also agreed to actively promote the TMD project as part of a joint communiqué affirming the US-Japan Security Treaty. It described TMD in its internal document as “an important project in conducting smooth and effective operation of the Japan-US security system.”<sup>57</sup> The JDA then ordered Nissan Motors and Kawasaki Heavy Industries (KHI) to produce by the end of the year a prototype, of a new TMD interception missile with its flight controlled by thrusters systems.<sup>58</sup> Research on the Japanese side proceeded unilaterally, with the government funding initiatives with Japanese defense contractors as it continued to hesitate on the issue of whether to proceed together with the United States.

The JDA was the first of the government agencies to actively argue for BMD. Mid-1995, it released a report, called “On Research Concerning Ballistic Missile Defense,” that advocated for Japan’s further study of technologies that would be useful in a BMD system. Japan’s existing capabilities, the report claimed, were inadequate for addressing the missile threat – namely, North Korea and a hypothetical 1,000 km.-range ballistic missile – to the country. It called for Japan to pursue several initiatives: “satellite-linked sensor systems, a more capable weapons system, and a highly integrated C3I system.” This report, according to Swaine et al., had been privately approved by both the Prime Minister’s office and by MOFA. They had all agreed by then that some form of missile defense was needed – even if none was ready to publicly state such a position just yet. Action from the government did follow: the Security Council and the Ministry of Finance budgeted 25.15 trillion yen for another five-year defense plan to study the “usefulness and cost-effectiveness of TMD” – only to then step back due to the Social Democratic Party’s objection to the wording. The final version reassured that the plan was not a commitment to fully participate in the program. Nonetheless, the JDA announced several days later that it would allocate 295 million yen, or \$2.85 million, to BMD concept studies in 1996.<sup>59</sup>

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Available at: <http://www.apcss.org/Publications/APSSS/JapanGetsSeriousAboutMissileDefense.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> See Nagase, Masato and Hiroshi Tajima.

<sup>56</sup> See “Cold Peace: Choice of TMD; U.S. Shows Threat Scenario.”

<sup>57</sup> “MOFA Plans to Push U.S.-Proposed TMD Project.” *Sankei Shimbun*. Feb. 25, 1995. Available at: <http://fas.org/news/japan/eas9x038.htm>

<sup>58</sup> “JDA Orders Research Prototype Interception Missile from KHI, Nissan – Controlled by Injection System.” *Nikkan Kogyo Shimbun*. June 13, 1995. Available at: <http://fas.org/news/japan/jst95053.htm>

<sup>59</sup> See Swaine, Michael D., Rachel M. Swanger, and Takashi Kawakami. Pg. 30

In March of 1996, China utilized its missile capabilities in a very public display of force – one directed not at Japan, but at Taiwan, which was about to re-elect Lee Teng-hui by direct vote.<sup>60</sup> As part of a weeklong military exercise, China fired four DF-15 short-range missiles into the vicinity of Taiwan, though not over the island or into the strait.<sup>61</sup> For Japan, this act raised not only the possibility that it might be drawn into a conflict between the United States and China over Taiwan, but that China, with its intermediate-range missiles, might pose a threat to Japan in such a regional dispute.<sup>62</sup> It was apparent China was aggressively pursuing ballistic missiles as the “centerpiece of their capabilities,” and that they were developing their entire nuclear posture around these missiles.<sup>63</sup> By then, the territorial dispute between Japan and China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands had also become a problem for the two countries’ relationship – as well as for the bilateral alliance, when the United States did not rush to support Japan.

Yet, in spite of these issues, the mid-1990s were still characterized by an agenda of engagement with China. It was not yet an immediate threat to Japan, and any concerns that Japanese officials harbored about China were generally shared privately and cautiously.<sup>64</sup> Instead, if these issues with China highlighted anything, it was that the security alliance needed affirmation and clarification. In April 1996, amidst unrest over the significant presence of US forces and bases in Japan, President Clinton and Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto signed the “Japan-US Joint Declaration on Security Alliance for the Twenty-First Century.” Among its provisions was their joint recognition that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction posed a danger to both countries, and a commitment to “continue to cooperate in the ongoing study on ballistic missile defense.”<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile, the individual agencies continued to move forward on BMD. The JDA set aside 440 million yen for TMD R&D in 1996. It then signed an MOU under which the United States would provide Japan with TMD information that the Japanese defense contractors would keep confidential. Official news reports speculated soon afterwards that the JDA would make finalize plans on whether to pursue TMD by summer of 1997.<sup>66</sup> According to one US official, the United States, at some point over the course of the TMD Working Group, received reassurances from the Japanese that not only would they be moving forward, but that they would be doing it together with the United States. They agreed with the US’ identification of the military challenge ahead of them, and agreed that they were committed to the development of ballistic missile defense. Though not a formal commitment to TMD collaboration, it was a sufficient

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<sup>60</sup> Tyler, Patrick E. “China Warns U.S. to Keep Away from Taiwan Strait.” *The New York Times*. Mar. 18, 1996. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/03/18/world/china-warns-us-to-keep-away-from-taiwan-strait.html>

<sup>61</sup> Scobell, Andrew. “Show of Force: The PLA and the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis.” *The Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Working Paper* (1999): 1-24. Available at: <http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/10091/Scobell.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> Jimbo, Ken. “A Japanese perspective on missile defense and strategic coordination.” *The Nonproliferation Review* 9.2 (2002): 56-62. Available at: <http://cns.miis.edu/npr/pdfs/92jimbo.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> Giarra, Paul. Personal interview. Sept. 19, 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Jimbo, Ken. Personal interview. Oct. 21, 2014.

<sup>65</sup> See Blaker, Michael, and Paul Giarra. Pg. 144

<sup>66</sup> See Monterey Institute of International Studies.

demonstration of intention to sustain the American side.<sup>67</sup> As promised, by 1997, the JDA had concluded internally that the Navy Theater-Wide program, pushed by the US Navy and the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Forces, would present the best opportunity for US-Japan bilateral technical TMD efforts.<sup>68</sup>

### *Japan hesitates and delays decision at last minute in 1998*

Between 1995 and 1998, Japan had spent a total of 560 million yen on studying TMD.<sup>69</sup> In a sign of the JDA's commitment to BMD for FY1999, however, it was ready to devote up to twice as much to TMD research for that one year as had been spent in those past four years. According to the Japanese media, by early August of 1998, the JDA had drafted a budget that would request anywhere between 500 million to 1 billion yen for research and development of missile defense technologies. The draft was due by August 31 to the Ministry of Finance for approval.<sup>70</sup>

But two weeks before the deadline, around August 20, the political landscape forced the JDA to reconsider the timing of its request. China's President Jiang Zemin was scheduled to visit Japan in September, marking the first ever visit to the country by a Chinese president. An announcement implying Japan's great interest in BMD – a touchy subject for China, which had previously voiced its opposition to such a system – might anger Beijing and endanger the diplomatic mission. So instead, the JDA requested 100 million yen for preliminary study, and masked the project by placing it under the headline of "Other Items" in the draft budget. But this was all merely a delay in the JDA's plans. It would request the rest of money in December, after President Jiang's visit was over. The project would then be included in the Ministry of Finance's final version of the budget as "Joint Research on BMD."<sup>71</sup>

### *North Korea fires Taepodong missile and sets MOU into motion*

Just two weeks after the media speculation, on August 31, North Korea fired its Taepodong missile over Japan. The political calculus changed yet again. Plans discussed in the working groups took on greater urgency. Within the next year, Japan and the US signed on to the MOU establishing joint research of the SM-3 BlockIIA missile. It is important to note, however, that the terms of the MOU limited its importance in the overall scheme of BMD development.

The Government of Japan ensured – as part of the negotiations for the MOU, as well as prior to the Taepodong launch – that it would only pursue joint TMD research if that research did not lead directly into a procurement decision.<sup>72</sup> That is, Japan distinguished between the research, development, and deployment stages of acquiring BMD technologies. Its signature on the MOU for research did not signify that procurement would immediately follow at the end of the five-

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<sup>67</sup> Sakoda, Robin. Personal interview. Oct. 3, 2014.

<sup>68</sup> See Swaine, Michael D., Rachel M. Swanger, and Takashi Kawakami. Pg. 33

<sup>69</sup> Hughes, Christopher W. "Sino-Japanese relations and ballistic missile defence." (2001).

Available at: [http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/2061/1/WRAP\\_Hughes\\_wp6401.pdf](http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/2061/1/WRAP_Hughes_wp6401.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> See Swaine, Michael D., Rachel M. Swanger, and Takashi Kawakami. Swaine et al. Pg. 51

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Rubinstein, Gregg. Excerpt from TMD Dialogue Report, Sept. 11, 1998.

year program. An entirely separate political decision would need to be made before advancing to the next phase. It was also possible that Japan would eventually move forward with a different system entirely than the one explored in the research stage.<sup>73</sup> As such, research, as a “pre-acquisition technology development program,” was considerably low-risk. In only committing to this one step towards BMD capabilities, Japan could move forward without making any decisions about acquisition or addressing “current constitutional interpretations [that would] appear to rule out the integration of any such Japanese capability with that of the US Navy.”<sup>74</sup>

### *Developments in the US affect long-term potential for Japanese BMD*

Research as agreed under the MOU pushed forward over the next several years, even as the circumstances of the security environment and of the alliance changed. The pursuit of ballistic missile defense took on a greater sense of urgency when President George W. Bush came into office. Adopting a position on missile defense fundamentally different from that of his predecessor, he made it clear, from the beginning of his presidency, that ballistic missile defense would play a much more significant role in his security strategy and in his expectations for the United States’ allies.

First, in a speech delivered in May 2001, the President announced that the United States would no longer abide by the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, a bilateral treaty adopted in 1972 that stipulated that the United States and the Soviet Union would each be limited to the deployment of only one anti-ballistic missile interception system – and thus only protect either the national capital or a site containing intercontinental ballistic missile silo launchers. He stated, “We need a new framework that allows us to build missile defenses to counter the different threats of today’s world. To do so, we must move beyond the constraints of the 30-year-old ABM Treaty.”<sup>75</sup> Later that year, the United States formally announced its unilateral withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, as the President explained, “The ABM Treaty hinders our government’s ability to develop ways to protect our people from future terrorist or rogue state missile attacks.”<sup>76</sup>

Second, in that same speech from May 2001, President Bush erased the distinctions that existed between theater missile defense (TMD), meant to protect a particular region against short-range and theater-range missiles, and national missile defense (NMD), or systems to defend the United States’ territory against long-range missiles.<sup>77</sup> This explicitly tied Japan into the US system – as “one tier of a multi-tiered defense of the United States and its interests.”

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<sup>73</sup> Takahashi, Sugio. “Ballistic Missile Defense in Japan: Deterrence and Military Transformation,” Center for Asian Studies Security Studies Center, Dec. 2012. Available at: [http://ifri.org/?page=contribution-detail&id=7475&id\\_provenance=97](http://ifri.org/?page=contribution-detail&id=7475&id_provenance=97)

<sup>74</sup> See Cronin, Richard P. “Japan-US Cooperation on Ballistic Missile Defense: Issues and Prospects.” Pg. 10.

<sup>75</sup> “President Bush Speech on Missile Defense,” May 1, 2001. Available at: <http://www.acronym.org.uk/bush1.htm>

<sup>76</sup> “President Discusses National Missile Defense,” Dec. 13, 2001. Available at: <http://2001-2009.state.gov/t/ac/rls/rm/2001/6847.htm>

<sup>77</sup> See Cronin, Richard P. “Japan-US Cooperation on Ballistic Missile Defense: Issues and Prospects.” Pg. 4.

Naturally, this immediately raised questions of whether Japan would intercept a missile directed not at Japan, but at the United States. Participation in a system with such an objective might arguably violate Japan's restrictions on collective self-defense.<sup>78</sup> But when asked about the shift in the United States' position, Deputy Press Secretary Chikahito Harada reiterated, "This missile defense is for a purely defensive purpose: to shoot down missiles directed toward Japan."<sup>79</sup> The JDA was more specific, though it similarly hedged against addressing the problem: "We can understand US thinking about regarding NMD and TMD as a comprehensive package, but our position will not change: we will only carry on joint research on the TMD."<sup>80</sup> Once again, the questions of legality surrounding missile defense would have to wait. They would not hinder current research, but Japan was not ready to address these concerns just yet.

### *US defense industry demonstrates feasibility of hitting a bullet with a bullet*

These policy developments in the United States came just as the American defense industry demonstrated the potential of missile defense. In March that year, the BMDO and the US Army conducted a test of the Patriot PAC-3 missile, which saw two PAC-3 missiles successfully intercept a Hera ballistic missile target and one PAC-2 missile hit a Patriot missile target. The PAC-3 missile had previously already passed eight flight tests, intercepting various targets six out of six times.<sup>81</sup> As Lockheed Martin declared afterwards, the missile had "a perfect flight test record."<sup>82</sup>

By 2003, the US had also conducted several tests of its Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense systems, designed to catch short- to medium-range ballistic missiles at sea. It ran three tests in 2002, which saw the SM-3 missile intercept its short-range target every time. In June 2003, the SM-3 missed its short-range target. In December 2003, it hit its medium-range target.<sup>83</sup> By December 2002, the director of the Missile Defense Agency (MDA), formerly known as the BMDO, was confident enough to say, "What we do know is that our fundamental technology of hit-to-kill works. A few years ago, I could not tell you that with confidence... We have the ability to integrate these elements... and to make them effective."<sup>84</sup> The seemingly impossible task of "hitting a bullet with a bullet" had now been demonstrated as possible, even if imperfect.

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<sup>78</sup> See Oros, Andrew L. Pg. 161.

<sup>79</sup> Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Press Conference." May 11, 2001. Available at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/2001/5/511.html#6>

<sup>80</sup> "Japan's Response to US' NMD Concept Remains Unclear; Involvement in TMD Study Alone is Unacceptable," *Asahi Shimbun*, May 9, 2001. Quoted in American Embassy, Tokyo. "Daily Summary of Japanese Press." May 10, 2001. Available at [web.stanford.edu/dept/SUL/.../DS010510.doc](http://web.stanford.edu/dept/SUL/.../DS010510.doc)

<sup>81</sup> Missile Defense Agency. "Patriot PAC-3 Missile Defense Intercept Test Successful." Mar. 31, 2001. Available at: <http://www.mda.mil/global/documents/pdf/01archive0001.pdf>

<sup>82</sup> "Lockheed Martin's PAC-3 Missile Intercepts Target in White Sands Test." Mar. 31, 2001. Available at: <http://fas.org/spp/starwars/program/news01/bmd-010331.htm>

<sup>83</sup> Missile Defense Agency. "Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense Test." Nov. 11, 2004. Available at: [http://www.mda.mil/global/documents/pdf/aegis\\_tests.pdf](http://www.mda.mil/global/documents/pdf/aegis_tests.pdf)

<sup>84</sup> Specht, Wayne. "Japan Ponders Speeding its Missile Defense." *Stars and Stripes*. Dec. 28, 2002. Available at: <http://www.stripes.com/news/japan-ponders-speeding-its-missile-defense-1.527>

## *Domestic and external changes in Asia simultaneously push BMD towards development*

Within a few months of President Bush's inauguration, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi also came into power. He then installed JDA chief Shigeru Ishiba, who would become the face of Japanese BMD while the Prime Minister took on a less visible, less active role on the matter. Ishiba, once called "Japan's hawk-in-chief,"<sup>85</sup> was particularly reactive as North Korea ratcheted up its rhetoric and provocations over the next three years.

It was already understood that North Korea possessed the capability to hit all major cities on the Japanese mainland, given its stockpile of 100 Nodong missiles with a range of 1000 miles. But Japan's worry over conventional missiles paled in comparison to its fears over the DPRK's nuclear capabilities. In October 2002, a US delegation confirmed its suspicions that North Korea was in the midst of restarting its nuclear program, and had again built up a secret project to make nuclear weapons from highly enriched uranium.<sup>86</sup> Not one month afterwards, Ishiba publicly stated, "We should exert efforts to get the [missile defense] program to leave the research phase as soon as possible"<sup>87</sup> – despite the fact that the research was only three years in to a five-year program.

The situation with Pyongyang only worsened in the following months. The Government of Japan's reaction, as expressed through Ishiba, reasonably escalated as well. After the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) stopped oil shipments to North Korea, the DPRK expelled all International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors from the country.<sup>88</sup> It then removed metal seals and shut off the surveillance equipment at its plutonium reprocessing plant at Yongbyon.<sup>89</sup> As if this was not enough, it officially withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in January 2003. For the JDA, these moves were provocative enough to lead Ishiba to tell Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that Japan should "study the [joint missile defense program] with an eye toward a future move to development and deployment." Although Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda publicly distanced the Government of Japan from Ishiba's comment, saying that it had not yet agreed on the necessity of BMD, it has been suggested that Ishiba was in fact testing the waters on missile defense with the Cabinet's implicit permission. If the public and the Diet were receptive to Ishiba's remarks, the Koizumi

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<sup>85</sup> Berkofsky, Axel. "Shigeru Ishiba: Japan's Hawk-in-Chief." *Asia Times Online*. Apr. 10, 2003. Available at: <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Japan/ED10Dh01.html>

<sup>86</sup> Robertson, Jeffrey. "North Korea Nuclear Crisis – Issues and Implications." Parliament of Australia. Mar. 18, 2003. Available at: [http://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/Publication\\_s\\_Archive/CIB/cib0203/03CIB18](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publication_s_Archive/CIB/cib0203/03CIB18)

<sup>87</sup> Brooke, James. "A Missile Shield Appeals to a Worried Japan." *The New York Times*. Nov. 11, 2002. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/11/international/asia/11MISS.html>

<sup>88</sup> Manyin, Mark E., Emma Chanlett-Avery, and Helene Marchart. "North Korea: A Chronology of Events, October 2002-December 2004." Library Of Congress Washington DC Congressional Research Service, 2005. Available at: <http://fas.org/man/crs/RL32743.pdf>

<sup>89</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. "IAEA North Korea Inspectors Recall the Day When..." Jan. 3, 2003. Available at: <http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/2003/inspectorsrecall20030103.html>

administration would follow through with its plans for accelerating the timeline on missile defense; if not, it might reconsider its position.<sup>90</sup>

Given that a poll from the *Asahi Shimbun* found around that time that 95 percent of Japanese respondents surveyed were “concerned” about North Korea’s nuclear program,<sup>91</sup> it is unsurprising that the JDA followed Ishiba’s direction. Its next Defense White Paper concluded, in an unprecedented interpretation of Japan’s constitutional restrictions, that intercepting ballistic missiles over Japanese air space – even if those missiles were flying towards the United States – would not violate its ban on collective self-defense.<sup>92</sup> It urged policymakers to accept missile defense as a means for combating “unpredictable threats, such as ballistic missile and terrorist attacks.”<sup>93</sup> As the White Paper articulated, “Based on the current situation, in which Japan does not possess an effective missile defense system, ballistic missile defense is an important and pressing matter for our country’s defense policy.”<sup>94</sup>

In early December of 2003, the press reported that the JDA would spend 500 billion yen acquiring, over a period of three years from FY2004/2005 to 2007/2008, a missile defense system from the United States. It had already requested 142 billion yen for FY2004. The JDA expected the system to come into operation in 2007, and be fully deployed by FY2011 or 2012 at the earliest. When asked about whether any decision had been made to introduce a BMD system, Prime Minister Koizumi was noncommittal, saying: “I will give it thorough consideration as such moves are likely to come up as we compile the budget.”<sup>95</sup>

#### *Japan’s enthusiasm culminates in Koizumi administration deployment of BMD*

Two weeks later on December 19, 2003, after making statements to the press indicating otherwise, the Koizumi administration announced its Cabinet decision to deploy a ballistic missile defense system – with capabilities focused, not on its own research into the SM-3 BlockIIA missile, but on the acquisition of PAC-3 and Aegis SM-3 Block IA missiles. The statement released by the Chief Cabinet Secretary addressed several points of contention. First, it argued that interception tests and performance evaluations conducted in the United States had convinced the Government of Japan that missile defense was now technologically feasible: “It is concluded that these systems with high technological reliability meets the high technical standards to enable the introduction.” Second, it asserted that the missile defense system “is the only and purely defensive measure, without alternatives, to protect life and property of the

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<sup>90</sup> Quoted in Kliman, Daniel M. Pg. 98.

<sup>91</sup> See Brooke, James.

<sup>92</sup> Arima, Tatsuya. “Japanese Security Policy in the Next Ten Years,” Stimson Center, Sept. 2003. Pg. 15 Available at:

[http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/Japanese\\_Security\\_Policy\\_in\\_the\\_Next\\_Ten\\_Years.pdf](http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/Japanese_Security_Policy_in_the_Next_Ten_Years.pdf)

<sup>93</sup> Berkofsky, Axel. “Japanese Missile Defense: A Matter of Timing.” *Asia Times Online*. Sept. 12, 2003. <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Japan/EI12Dh01.html>

<sup>94</sup> Quoted in “Japanese Defense White Paper Calls for ‘Country Capable of Meeting Threats.’” *Geopolitis*. Available at:

<http://www.geopolitis.net/LES%20DOCUMENTS/JAPAN%20DEFENSE%20WHITE%20PAPER.pdf>

<sup>95</sup> “Japan to Introduce Missile Defence System.” *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Dec. 5, 2003:

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/12/04/1070351723086.html?from=storyrhs>

citizens of Japan against ballistic missile attacks.” Under this reasoning, BMD fell within the limits of Japan’s purely defensive security posture, and should not threaten neighboring countries. Third, because the BMD system would intercept missiles in accordance with Japan’s “own independent judgment” and would not be used to defend third countries, it did not violate restrictions against collective self-defense.<sup>96</sup>

### *Analysis of Propositions under Historical Narrative*

This narrative reveals that the propositions and assumptions previously noted, while intuitively on the right track, generally require greater nuance to account for the varied history of BMD in Japan.

#### *Focusing Event Proposition*

The Focusing Event Proposition is lacking in light of the historical narrative. It would be correct to say that missile defense received a much-needed push forward from the Taepodong incident. It progressed even quicker after each of North Korea’s moves towards reviving its nuclear capabilities. As North Korea demonstrated its intentions, Japan naturally reacted. The first implication of this proposition is indeed observed: the 1998 Taepodong incident and North Korea’s restart of its nuclear program in 2002 raised threat perceptions in Japan. That heightened concern then led to greater interest and investment in missile defense. It might therefore be assumed that Japan’s interest in BMD early on started because of something either North Korea or China did. To outside observers, it should seem reasonable to suggest that Japan would pursue BMD in the early 1990s because it was already concerned about North Korea – particularly after the DPRK fired four short-range missiles into the Sea of Japan in 1993.

Yet, not all focusing events had the effect that might have been expected. The 1993 North Korean launches and the 1996 Chinese military exercises did not change Japan’s threat perception of either country. Most of the policy planning being done on missile defense was an example of defense planning. It entailed looking fifteen to twenty years into the future to see what that future security environment might look like, and identifying the threats, challenges, and opportunities there. It was not contingency planning, which would have instead involved looking at the current security environment and developing plans to respond given the forces at hand.<sup>97</sup> Experts had expected the threat to develop, with North Korea always on the periphery and China on the rise. When North Korea and China did finally act, it was surprising – and yet not totally outside Japan’s expectations of what might happen.

Though it is true that certain focusing events entered into the calculus of Japan’s decision-making, they were not always necessary to the heightened threat perception that eventually led to missile defense. North Korea’s pre-1998 launches were not the “clear and present danger’ that required serious policy and acquisitions responses.”<sup>98</sup> Rather, the danger that

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<sup>96</sup> Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet. “Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary.” Dec. 19, 2003. Available at: [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/tyokan/2003/1219danwa\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/tyokan/2003/1219danwa_e.html)

<sup>97</sup> See Sakoda, Robin.

<sup>98</sup> See Rubinstein, Gregg. Personal interview.

missile defense was preparing for was a North Korea or China a decade down the line. Focusing events tended to instead reinforce notions about neighboring countries that Japan already held.

As such, the Focusing Event Proposition is, for the most part, true. It would be foolish to suggest that Japan’s commitment to BMD was not in great part driven by the Taepodong incident or North Korea’s provocations in the 2000s. But to suggest that that was all that it was driven by – as some in the literature have done – is also misrepresentative of what happened.

**Table 5. Focusing Event Proposition Results**

Observable implications	Narrative observed
<p><b>I1: Missile defense a reaction to escalation of threats, demonstrated by specific focusing events, by neighboring countries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex. Potential focusing events: a missile launch, a government-issued threat against Japan, termination of negotiations with Japan, movement of Navy ships into disputed territories, etc.</li> <li>• Escalation of threat perception evidenced by public statements of condemnation from Japanese government officials, reference to focusing event in next Defense White Paper</li> </ul> <p><b>I2 (uncertain): Neighboring countries’ actions’ that lower threat perception → scaling back on missile defense</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex. Actions: Treaty signing, positive negotiations, agreements to stop building particular offensive weaponry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>I1 mostly true:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1998 Taepodong incident</li> <li>• 2002 North Korea restart of nuclear program, withdrawal from NPT</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>More complicated:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focusing events do not always lead to heightened or lowered threat perception <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1993 North Korea missile launches</li> <li>• 1996 China missile demonstrations</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

*Alliance Pressure Proposition*

Missile defense in Japan has never been considered independent of the United States. Everything that has resulted since the late 1980s has been the direct result of (at times) heavy-handed pressure from US policymakers, dialogues with US defense establishment officials, and trade deals with US defense industry contractors. As the narrative illustrates, missile defense was presented in the early 1990s as one of the few means by which Japan might revive its security alliance with the United States. The “connectors” between the two countries were, at the time, considered too insubstantial. The United States’ armed forces, which had significantly closer ties to NATO and even South Korea, were not operationally aligned with Japan’s Self-Defense Forces. Due to the very nature of the bilateral command structure, there existed a US Command, with a US staff; a Japan Joint Staff Office with all Japanese staff; and a bilateral liaison between the two.<sup>99</sup> With missile defense, there was “an opportunity for real joint development”<sup>100</sup> that would bring the two countries into closer coordination efforts.

<sup>99</sup> See Sakoda, Robin.

<sup>100</sup> See Rubinstein, Gregg. Personal interview.

The first implication of this proposition is especially apparent in the mid- to late-1990s. If the United States was anything at that time, it was persistent – even in the years when it had no concrete program in mind. It continually brought unilaterally-researched proposals to the Japanese. It also pressed the issue as a way of alleviating the trade tensions of the early 1990s. But some were also more direct in their disappointment as BMD talks dragged on. Indeed, as Deputy Undersecretary of Defense Carl Ford said in 1995 during a visit with a JDA official: “Relations with the US military industry and Congress will suffer if no progress is made in introducing the TMD.”<sup>101</sup>

The narrative, however, proves the third implication false. A decrease in pressure from the US did not lead to Japan rolling back, or even slowing, its missile defense efforts. By the 2000s, pressure from the United States was less overt – and, perhaps, less necessary – as missile defense took on a greater importance for those involved in Japan. It became something of “a poster-child for alliance cooperation at the height of the Bush-Koizumi years.”<sup>102</sup> By then, US policy had taken more of a backseat in Japan’s decision-making. In fact, US Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith denied the existence of US pressure in 2002, saying, “We are not pressing Japan to do anything. It is not the way we deal with our allies.”<sup>103</sup> Japan’s pursuit of BMD was more self-motivated, and more of its own position, as opposed to a policy being imposed on them from above by the United States. The Government of Japan – from Koizumi, who offered quieter support, to Ishiba, to the rest of the JDA and MOFA – was mostly already on board with BMD. As a result, progress accelerated. For the United States, negotiations became more akin to “pushing an open door.”<sup>104</sup>

What Japan needed – and received – in the early 2000s was not the United States’ heavy hand, but its reassurances to Japan that it was actually committed to missile defense this time around. The Japanese were wary, having already once been asked by the Americans to join them in their missile defense program – only for the US to then quit on SDI. They needed to know that the United States was serious. But the US could not convince Japan as it continued to stand under the terms of the ABM Treaty; US-Russian negotiations might undo everything if it was decided that missile defense violated existing arms control regimes.<sup>105</sup> In other words, the Japanese needed to know, in the words of former DOD official Sak Sakoda: “If we step up to this, will [the United States] be there tomorrow, next month, next year?” Thus, when President Bush announced that the United States would no longer comply with the ABM Treaty, it was a real show of commitment to its allies. It demonstrated that, if the Japanese would devote the political capital, the technical expertise, and the money to missile defense, the United States would be there with them: “[The United States] had to convince Japan, and Japan had to be convinced.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> See “Cold Peace: Choice of TMD; U.S. Shows Threat Scenario.”

<sup>102</sup> See Rubinstein, Gregg. Personal interview.

<sup>103</sup> Berkofsky, Axel. “US Turns Up Missile Defense Pressure on Japan.” *Asia Times Online*. Nov.19, 2002. Available at: <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Japan/DK19Dh01.html>

<sup>104</sup> Quoted in Kliman, Daniel M. Pg. 108.

<sup>105</sup> See Cronin, Giarra, and Green. Pg. 178

<sup>106</sup> See Sakoda, Robin.

The Alliance Pressure Proposition might thus be considered only partially true. Pressure from the United States pushed Japan forward only to a certain extent. There is no denying that part of the reason why Japan entertained SDI was because it had serious fears over US disengagement in Japan. It was the alliance that brought Japan to the table, and it was the alliance that kept Japan at the table. The United States kept pushing – and it was because the US conducted its analyses unilaterally and shared them with the Japanese that the conceptual plans for collaboration were there at the right time, in the mid- to late- 1990s.

But alliance pressure alone did not bring about Japan’s deployment of BMD. If it had, Japan might have committed to missile defense long before 2003 – or even 1999 – in those early years when it needed to prove to the United States that it still wanted the alliance to remain one of the United States’ top priorities. Japan, as with any ally, needed the United States’ reassurances – not only that investment in missile defense would pay off, but that the US would also be committed to Japan.

**Table 6.** Alliance Pressure Proposition Results

Observable implications	Narrative observed
<p><b>I1: Progress towards missile defense follows increased pressure from US</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex. US pressure: statements from US side emphasizing importance of missile defense to alliance (refusal of joint initiative would hurt security arrangement, joining would bring two countries closer together as allies), description of missile defense as measure of burden-sharing, proposals from US on ways to collaborate</li> </ul> <p><b>I2: Japanese acknowledgement of importance of missile defense to alliance</b></p> <p><b>I3 (uncertain): Decrease in pressure from US → scaling back in missile defense</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex. Decrease in pressure: US focusing attentions elsewhere, discussions of US-Japan cooperation in other areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>I1 true:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missile defense never considered independent of the US</li> <li>• 1995: “Relations with the US military industry and Congress will suffer if no progress is made in introducing the TMD.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>I2 true</b></li> <li>• <b>I3 not true</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pressure largely unnecessary during early 2000s: negotiations more akin to “pushing an open door”</li> <li>• Political establishment mostly on board</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

*Domestic Leadership Proposition*

The timing of Japan’s BMD deployment within the Koizumi administration might lead to yet another reasonable assumption, that Koizumi’s influence and support of missile defense drove the acceleration in progress. The narrative, however, shows that forward movement during the administration has largely been attributed to Shigeru Ishiba and the JDA. Of course, Koizumi must have given the JDA chief his tacit approval to make the statements that he did. But if BMD was anyone’s undertaking, it was Shigeru Ishiba’s.

Turning to another period of Japanese history nearly a decade earlier – to Murayama’s term in office starting in 1994 – even further illustrates the point that overt prime ministerial involvement in BMD has been minimal. As previously noted, Murayama and the Socialist Party of Japan opposed missile defense; but BMD talks continued unabated. As former OSD Senior Country Director for Japan and Senior Policy Advisor to the Deputy Secretary of State Robin “Sak” Sakoda notes about this period of time, the policy specialists could not and would not have done anything they were not allowed to do. Regardless of Murayama’s politics, he could not have changed the standing security framework for the alliance, which established a structure for bilateral negotiation, on a whim. Changing that structure would have required a shift in the entire security and defense framework. Thus, talks proceeded – even without Murayama’s help – between the US Department of Defense and the JDA. To a lesser extent, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs eventually followed the JDA, despite seeing the issue as a potentially “sticky policy matter.”<sup>107</sup> Within the Government of Japan, it was the JDA that could see missile proliferation in movement and that understood the operational requirements for missile defense.<sup>108</sup>

As such, none of the observable implications expected from the proposition proved to be entirely true. BMD development remained on a steady upward trajectory throughout its history. There was no sudden downtick in progress following Murayama’s rise, nor any unexpected uptick following Koizumi’s. It certainly helped BMD to have political support at the Prime Ministerial level. It became easier to justify missile defense’s cost, its nature as a defensive mechanism, and its legality. But for the majority of Japan’s history with BMD, progress was driven by those at the policy level – at State/DOD and JDA/MOFA – who continued to work on missile defense, irrespective of changes on the political front.

**Table 7. Domestic Leadership Proposition Results**

Observable implications	Narrative observed
<p><b>I1: Prime Minister supportive of missile defense → progress on missile defense efforts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex. Prime Ministerial support: statements of interest in missile defense or remilitarization, characterization as nationalistic or more hawkish</li> </ul> <p><b>I2 (uncertain): Prime Minister ambivalent about missile defense → pause on missile defense efforts, slowdown, lack of progress towards deployment</b></p> <p><b>I3 (uncertain): Prime Minister critical of missile defense → rolling back previous efforts made, decrease in funds allocated to missile defense</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>I1 partially true:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex. Progress during Koizumi administration attributed mostly to Shigeru Ishiba</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>I2 not true</b></li> <li>• <b>I3 not true</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex. Tomiichi Murayama</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>107</sup> See Rubinstein, Gregg. Personal interview.

<sup>108</sup> See Sakoda, Robin.

*Legal Restrictions Proposition*

According to the Legal Restrictions Proposition, Japan needed to overcome several hurdles in its interpretation of the Constitution before missile defense deployment. One of the implications of this proposition was that confusion over whether missile defense was allowed would have led to a lack of progress towards deployment. This was certainly true. As US representatives negotiating with Japan during the 1990s would attest, it cannot be overstated just how deeply the national, cultural proclivities against military involvement ran. As former Senior Country Director for Japan at the Pentagon Paul Giarra comments, constitutional limitations – engrained as they were in the Japanese security identity – were the “proverbial wet blanket” on missile defense talks.<sup>109</sup> Japan’s opposition to missile defense was based on two significant legal roadblocks: the resolution against the militarization of space, and the ban on collective self-defense. These issues made missile defense a politically sensitive topic. Policy negotiators did not know how far they could go without first resolving these questions.

The other implication also proved to be true. Prior to the 2003 deployment, the government made numerous announcements explaining how missile defense would be legal. In doing so, it resolved several issues, including the matter of collective self-defense, as well as the defensive nature of BMD. The Koizumi statement of deployment in 2003 specifically addressed this issue when it called missile defense “the only and purely defensive measure, without alternatives, to protect...against ballistic missile attacks.”<sup>110</sup>

**Table 8. Legal Restrictions Proposition Results**

Observable implications	Narrative observed
<p><b>I1: Shift in Japan’s official understanding of what Article 9 does or does not allow – explained in Defense White Paper, official government statements, National Defense Program Guidelines</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal decisions to allow missile defense: definition of missile defense as strictly defensive, clarification of collective self-defense on whether to intercept missile directed at US, possible relaxation of ban on arms exports</li> </ul> <p><b>I2: Confusion over whether missile defense allowed → lack of progress towards deployment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift going to be precipitated by another causal variable – possibly one of other three hypotheses (focusing event, Prime Minister, pressure from US) pushing JDA towards reinterpretation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>I1 true:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several hurdles in legal interpretation overcome before 2003 deployment (collective self-defensive, defensive nature of missile defense)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>I2 true</b></li> </ul>

<sup>109</sup> See Giarra, Paul. Personal interview.

<sup>110</sup> See Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet. “Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary.”

Some other factors, however, must have spurred the changes in Japan’s reinterpretation of the Constitution. The other variables of interest in this analysis – focusing events, alliance pressure, and domestic leadership – are all probable causes. This, however, is a separate question beyond the scope of this analysis.

Overall, two of the four propositions, Focusing Event and Legal Restrictions, proved to be true. Alliance Pressure was only partially true, while Domestic Leadership was false.

**Table 9.** Results summary

<b>Proposition</b>	<b>True/False</b>
<i>P1</i> : Focusing Event Proposition	True
<i>P2</i> : Alliance Pressure Proposition	Partially true
<i>P3</i> : Domestic Leadership Proposition	False
<i>P4</i> : Legal Restrictions Proposition	True

***Technical Feasibility, Cost, and Defense Industry Emerge as Factors in Narrative***

*Technical feasibility and cost of missile defense as interrelated deterrents*

Japanese policymakers often considered technical feasibility and cost together, in the sense that they did not want to invest in missile defense unless they knew it would work. Some, according to Paul Giarra, questioned whether missile defense was going to be technologically competitive enough to keep up with progress in offense weapons. Offense is simply much less expensive. In the long term, missile defense might not be able to keep up. But the basic idea of missile defense was tested during the Gulf War – and, as MHI’s Masato Nagase stated, “Even [though] the probability of engagement was low...once an incoming missile was actually shot down, the [idea of] missile defense proved realistic.”

Tests in the late 1990s and early 2000s then demonstrated that missile defense could work. As Nagase continued, “The Japanese defense engineers and industrial leaders had never doubted about the [feasibility of] interception, although the media and some government officials claimed ‘bullet to hit bullet’ is impossible. The actual challenge has been how to improve the engagement probability.”<sup>111</sup> The defense industry demonstrated that, with time, missile defense could be more accurate – that it really could intercept incoming missiles with some degree of certainty. The Koizumi administration specifically noted these developments in its announcement of BMD deployment, saying, “The technological feasibility of BMD system has

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<sup>111</sup> See Nagase, Masato and Hiroshi Tajima.

been verified through the results of interception tests...it is concluded that these systems with high technological reliability meets the high technical standards to enable the introduction.”<sup>112</sup>

The costs of missile defense then became a matter of prioritizing BMD within the defense budget. Each fiscal year between 2004 and 2007, BMD acquisition costs exceeded 10% of all defense procurement expenses.<sup>113</sup> Once Japanese policymakers were convinced that BMD was a worthwhile investment, they were willing to spend the billions necessary (\$12 billion total by 2012<sup>114</sup>) to attain the system.

### *Defense industry profit incentive for pushing Japanese missile defense*

A significant factor that has largely gone without examination in the main literature on Japan’s history with missile defense is the role of the defense industry. The defense industry was the first Japanese stakeholder to push the idea of missile defense. Indeed, while research began in the industries in 1988, the government did not officially get involved until 1994. From the very inception of Japanese BMD, it was the Japanese and the American industries that initiated US-Japan cooperation. It was not begun by direction from the Japanese government. The defense industry understood the potential profit that could result from a Japanese decision to deploy BMD. It was never a concern that constitutional limitations or technical feasibility would become a problem. Again, for those at MHI and in the rest of the Japanese industry who were there at the start, missile defense was a matter of when, not if. As Nagase and Tajima comment:

Because [the] Theater Missile Defense system is solely defensive, we never thought that the Constitution might prohibit the TMD system (today’s BMD)...Therefore, the question for us old-timers was ‘when, how soon’ rather than ‘if’...At that time, we of course did not think it would take eighteen years (1985-2003)...[for the] Government of Japan to decide on BMD.”<sup>115</sup>

The importance of profiting from missile development is, in part, represented by the content of the MOU, which brought Japan in on joint research on the SM-3 BlockIIA missile. Japan in part chose this specific missile because the R&D process for the Block I model was already advanced enough in the United States that Japan’s industry would see little benefit to joining at the last moment.<sup>116</sup> Additionally, one of Japan’s demands in negotiations over the MOU was “access – not only purchase but domestic production with substantial technology transfer – for the Block I missile.”<sup>117</sup> There were thus more business-driven motives involved in the negotiations as well, advanced by not only the defense industry but also abetted by the Government of Japan.

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<sup>112</sup> See Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet. “Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary.”

<sup>113</sup> Kaneda, Hideaki, et al. "Japan’s Missile Defense: Diplomatic and Security Policies in a Changing Strategic Environment." *Japan Institute of International Affairs* (2007). Available at: [http://www2.jiia.or.jp/en/pdf/policy\\_report/pr200703-jmd.pdf](http://www2.jiia.or.jp/en/pdf/policy_report/pr200703-jmd.pdf)

<sup>114</sup> Dawson, Chester. “Japan Shows Off Its Missile-Defense System.” *The Wall Street Journal*. Dec. 9, 2012. Available at: <http://online.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887323316804578165023312727616>

<sup>115</sup> See Nagase, Masato and Hiroshi Tajima.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> See Rubinstein, Gregg. Excerpt from TMD Dialogue Report,

## **Discussion**

This thesis demonstrates that Japan's involvement with missile defense cannot be attributed merely to the "Taepodong shock" that followed the North Korean launch in 1998. It shows a complex combination of various factors coming into play during the 1990s and the early 2000s, and their shifts in importance as the political landscape within and the security environment outside Japan changed in that time.

This analysis identifies focusing events, alliance pressures, bureaucratic leadership, legal restrictions, technical feasibility and cost, and the defense industry as crucial factors in the history of Japanese missile defense. This does not, however, mean that no other variables mattered. In fact, alternative explanations, such as the Diet, the Prime Minister, and the public, still had and continue to have a role in this narrative. The bureaucrats within the JDA and MOFA, for example, are empowered by the Prime Minister; their influence comes primarily from the influence of the office granted to them. Similarly, Japan must have the Diet's approval to proceed with an endeavor as significant as missile defense. The Diet is itself driven by public popularity. To ignore variables such as these would be to again oversimplify and mischaracterize what actually happened.

The identified variables are also interrelated and difficult to empirically separate from one another. While clear from the historical analysis that they did indeed provide the main drive behind Japan's BMD decisions, they were also more than likely intertwined. As the DOD and the State Department pressed Japan more heavily on missile defense, their bureaucratic counterparts at the JDA and MOFA largely wanted to oblige and therefore began the process of loosening legal restrictions on the issue. When the defense industry demonstrated to government officials that missile defense was not only possible, but also valuable, the GOJ was sure to include technology transfers from the US to Japan in its agreements. In such a complicated reality with tens of possible factors, it is simply more reasonable to assume that these causal variables interacted with one another.

## **Conclusion**

As one of only two countries (the other being the United States) with both the lower- and upper-level capabilities for intercepting incoming missiles, Japan now has one of the most sophisticated missile defense systems in the entire world. Conventional wisdom and the existing literature consider this success along a historical trajectory that started the day of the 1998 North Korean Taepodong launch. But the narrative shows that the achievement of missile defense capability in Japan was in fact the result of an uphill struggle begun in the late 1980s. Though the Taepodong incident was indeed important, numerous other factors – including alliance pressures, bureaucrats, and the defense industry among them – also played a role in Japan's decision to deploy BMD.

Incorrectly folding Japan's commitment to BMD in with "Taepodong shock" threatens to rewrite the actual history of the US-Japan alliance. This, in turn, generates unrealistic expectations of what Japan can and will do militarily together with the United States. The

disconnect between Japan and the US has already taken its toll on the alliance. Relations between the partners in recent years have been described as “anything but warm”<sup>118</sup> – in part, as this thesis shows, because Japan’s tendency to move at a frigid pace on security issues like missile defense has led to doubt on the US side about whether Japan will ever reach a satisfying point in holding its own within the alliance. If there is one commonality amongst those who negotiated with the Japanese on missile defense in the 1990s, it is their frustration with the sluggishness and the lack of coherence that characterized the Japanese side. Negotiations such as these color the United States’ perception of its alliance with Japan. Whereas every Japanese delegation was welcomed with open arms in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has become increasingly difficult to convince Washington of why Japan is very important. Its story has “diminished,” and expectations that Japan will step up have dwindled.<sup>119</sup>

Neither Japan nor the United States can afford to hold such doubts about the alliance these days. Relations in East Asia have deteriorated in recent years, with a number of issues – the rise of China, territorial disputes in the South and East China Seas, the conflict between India and Pakistan, and North Korea’s irrational behavior – cropping up. Japan will need the assurance of the United States’ nuclear umbrella. As the United States transitions towards a greater emphasis on East Asia, it will need Japan to be – as former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone put it in the 1980s – its “unsinkable aircraft carrier” in the Pacific. It will need Japan to take on a leadership role in East Asia. The United States can only do this if it enters the bargain with a full understanding of how far Japan will go. Such an understanding only comes with knowing the history of the US-Japan alliance.

Taken as a whole, the historical narrative holds significant lessons for what the United States can reasonably ask of Japan within the alliance. Although the Taepodong launch was a significant event in this history, even a missile flying over the islands was not reason enough for Japan to pursue BMD. What Japan needed was not only downward pressure from the United States, but also reassurance from its longest-standing ally that it was truly committed to the security of Japan. It had to first agree with the security assessment that there were neighboring countries to worry about, and to then find ways around its legal complications. The US’ strongest allies in this were the bureaucrats and the defense industry, who were able to demonstrate to the rest that, because missile defense was technologically feasible, it was worth the cost of investment. In order to convince its ally to join in its initiatives, the United States must do more than simply expect of Japan when it has little more than words and unformed ideas to offer.

The results here also tie into a deeper body of theoretical literature that could drive further research into Japan’s security strategy. As previously noted, work on defensive and offensive dominance led to the correct intuition that Japan needed to clarify its legal restrictions before pursuing missile defense. So what led to these reinterpretations? And where does Japan draw the line between offensive and defensive weaponry? These are but two of the many questions about Japan that still need examination, and they become more important with every

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<sup>118</sup> Sraric, Paul. “Turning Japanese: Obama's 'Asia Pivot' Centers on Japan.” *The Atlantic*. Mar. 7, 2013. Available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/03/turning-japanese-obamas-asia-pivot-centers-on-japan/273779/>

<sup>119</sup> See Giarra, Paul. Personal interview.

passing year. US policymakers must continue to ask questions that go to the heart of how and why Japan makes national security decisions. Otherwise, they risk jeopardizing an alliance that has served as the cornerstone of security in East Asia for over 50 years.

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