

Session 2: Missile Defense

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Summary

The missile defense panel featured experts Paul Davis (Moderator), Pardee RAND Graduate School, James Bonomo, Pardee RAND Graduate School, and Kim Taewoo, Korea Institute for Defense Analyses (KIDA). Dr. Bonomo's remarks began with four assumptions generally made about missile defense and then he provided reasons why each may be incorrect, particularly in the context of South Korea. First, there is a presumed tight connection between missile defense and the delivery of ballistic missiles carrying nuclear weapons. There are, however, many ways to deliver a nuclear weapon without a ballistic missile (such as smuggling or a small submarine) and many North Korean ballistic missiles that are threatening to South Korea but unable to carry nuclear weapons. Second, defense against ballistic missiles is considered costly and technologically very difficult. Yet if one looks at the short-range systems that would most interest South Korea, there has been significant technological progress in the last 25 years. Moreover, Bonomo argued that the cost of these missile defense systems should be viewed as another military capability subject to the same cost/benefit analysis as other programs rather than a symbolic program independent of military needs. Third, South Korean participation in a U.S. theater missile defense (TMD) system could be provocative to China and Russia. The most appropriate missile defense system for South Korea, however, would have little capability against the Russian and Chinese forces that could hold South Korea at risk. Fourth, some have argued that missile defense has little applicability for South Korea because the primary threat to Seoul, located so close to the border, is short-range rockets. While Seoul could be considered vulnerable to any number of military threats, short-range missile defense systems such as PAC-3 and perhaps AEGIS could help provide some modicum of defense. Missile defense

can't be considered a panacea for the large number of North Korean rockets but it could have a useful limited defense function.

Mr. Kim Taewoo also raised four overarching sets of questions that South Korea must consider with respect to missile defense. First, South Korea needs to ask a series of difficult technical questions about missile defense. For instance, is a nuclear attack defensible? How many missile defense assets would be considered sufficient, particularly given North Korea's expansive assets? Second, what are the political limits of missile defense? Is it true a missile defense system would cause relations with China to deteriorate? Is there large-scale domestic opposition within the South Korean public? Third, what should be the prioritization of the South Korean force construct? Strategic priorities, such as planning for defense as opposed to deterrence, as well as inter and intra-service politics will play a large role in determining capabilities. Fourth, is the South Korean leadership sufficiently concerned with the protection of the nation? The political pressures to retain votes can cause politicians to follow popular issues, perhaps at the expense of deeply understanding some of these security issues. These series of questions must be seriously considered within South Korea to best inform the way ahead on missile defense.

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