You MAD Bro? The Case For Arms Race Prevention

By Nick Robison

***Resolved: Deployment of anti-missile systems is in South Korea’s best interest.***

In this case, we argue that the deployment of missile systems in South Korea (particularly THAAD, but the generic arguments really apply to any such system) will make things worse for everyone involved by inciting an arms race.

Note that if the PRO team brings up the prisoner’s dilemma, you can point out that in this particular case, disarming THAAD doesn’t lower your defenses all that much—especially since you have contention 2.

Note to debaters: you may want to reword my tags and impacts and suggested speeches. I had some fun with a few of them, and you also ought to assess how your judge is likely to react.

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Framework: Arms race prevention

Link: Leads to war

Arms Races Raise the Chances of Conflict

Michael Wallace 1979. (Professor of Political Science at the University of British Columbia. He received his degrees at McGill an dhte University of Michigan. In 1982 he received the Karl W. Deutsch Peace Research Award.) The Journal of Conflict Resolution, March 1979 “Arms Races and Escalation: Some New Evidence” <https://www.jstor.org/stable/173649?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>

It is difficult to argue... that arms races play *no* role in the process of leading to the onset of war.

The policy implications of this are obvious and immediate. The findings support with hard evidence the intuitive fears of those who argue that an intensification of the superpower arms competition could lead to a "hair-trigger" situation in which a major confrontation would be far more likely to result in all-out war. Thus, they undermine the urgency of present efforts to curb the looming quantitative and qualitative expansion of superpower strategic arsenals.

Impact: Lives imperiled.

Link: Costs money

Timothy Crawford 2008. (Faculty member of the Boston College Political Science Department. He has been published by Cornell University.) Encyclopedia.com, Retrieved 5 September 2017 “Arms Control and Arms Race.” <http://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/applied-and-social-sciences-magazines/arms-control-and-arms-race>

Nevertheless, arms races are often considered harmful because they lead states that are trying to outpace each other to devote more resources to military preparations than would otherwise be necessary for their security. Increased military buildup, in turn, means that fewer resources can be devoted to other, welfare-enhancing activities. When the competitive dynamic of arms racing comes to dominate other principles for controlling acquisitions, the buildup (and concomitant waste) can mount precipitously. For example, during the most dramatic upswing of the cold war nuclear arms race, as the Soviet arsenal grew and American planners became ever more ambitious in their target selection, the U.S. nuclear warhead stockpile climbed from approximately 1,000 in 1955, to 18,000 in 1960, to 32,000 by 1967. It was very hard to understand why a much smaller (and cheaper) arsenal of warheads would not have been sufficient to achieve the main strategic purposes: deterring a Soviet nuclear strike on the United States, or a conventional assault on Western Europe.

Impact: Less money in the economy for production and investment.

Contention 1: THAAD pushes China to develop stronger weapons systems

Security Trilemma

Dr Rod Lyon 2016. (Dr Rod Lyon is a fellow at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. He holda a in political philosophy from the University of Auckland.) The Strategist, 23 February 2016. “THAAD, South Korea and China” <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/thaad-south-korea-and-china/>

Second, let’s turn to the U.S.–China issue. China worries primarily about the system’s surveillance capabilities. It’s not concerned that a THAAD missile battery in South Korea could intercept a Chinese strategic missile bound for continental America—that’s not a realistic scenario. Rather, it’s concerned that THAAD’s radar might be able to offer early tracking data to other parts of the U.S. ballistic missile defense system—in particular to the Ground Based Interceptors responsible for defending the U.S. homeland—thus degrading China’s ability to target the United States.

Its anxiety is a classic case of a security trilemma, where actions taken by one country in response to the actions of another—here the deployment of enhanced U.S. BMD capabilities to offset North Korea’s growing missile capabilities—complicate relations with a third player.

Equal and Opposite Reaction

Gerry Mullany and Chris Buckley 2017. (Gerry Mullany is the Asia Editor for the New York Times, Chris Buckley is an American Satirist and Author of God is my Broker and Thank you for Smoking. He worked as a speech writer for George H. W. Bush.) The New York Times, 7 March 2017 “China warns of Arms Race After US Deploys Missile Defense in South Korea.” <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/07/world/asia/thaad-missile-defense-us-south-korea-china.html>

Xinhua, the official Chinese news agency, warned that Thaad “will bring an arms race in the region,” likening the defensive system to a shield that would promp the development of new spears. “More missile shields of one side inevitably bring more nuclear missiles of the opposing side that can break through the missile shield,” it said.

Ian Armstrong 2017. (Armstrong is a senior analyst with Global Risk Insights and a simulation and wargame supervisor at Wikistrat.) Huffpost, Date not stated, but no earlier than June 23 “Why the U.S.-South Korea Missile Shield Could Provoke China to Develop Advanced Weaponry” <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ian-armstrong/us-korea-missile_b_11532232.html>

How, then, will China respond? As Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi recently stated, THAAD is “not a simple technical issue, but an out-and-out strategic one” — and a strategic military problem will evoke a strategic military response. Countering a powerful missile defense system means more advanced Chinese missiles, with more aggressive deployment….

Regardless of the Pentagon’s intentions, the Chinese perceive the agreement on THAAD as a demonstration that the United States does not value strategic stability with China. Beijing will be motivated to restore its nuclear and ballistic credibility by developing missile technologies that make the AN/TPY-2’s early warning potential irrelevant.

In countering the THAAD deployment to South Korea, two existing Chinese missile programs are likely contenders for accelerated development — hypersonic glide vehicles and multiple, independently targetable re-entry vehicles known as MIRVs.

Impact: Fuels US/China arms race

Stacy Yuen 2017. (Reporter for CNBC in their Asia Pacific headquarters in Singapore) CNBC 30 August 2017 “Trump wants China to fix North Korea, but it isn't going to happen” <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/08/30/trump-wants-china-to-fix-north-korea-but-it-isnt-going-to-happen.html>

A day after the missile traveled over Japan, China called for an immediate halt to THAAD deployment and for the removal of related facilities in comments from its United Nations ambassador. In the statement, China blamed THAAD deployment for jeopardizing geopolitical balance and "undermining the strategic security interest of all regional countries, including China."

According to some analysts, security concerns may be what's driving China's opposition to THAAD deployment in the Korean peninsula — Beijing fears that the defense system's powerful radar gives Washington and Seoul the ability to monitor China's military activities.

Impact: A nervous China is a trigger-happy China. If the Chinese government is concerned that it is threatened, then they are more likely to create more advanced weapons that threaten others.

Contention 2: The THAAD System does not work

THAAD doesn’t work

Emanuel Pastreich 2016. (Emanuel Pastreich is the Director of the Asia Institute and an associate professor at the College of International Studies, Kyung Hee University. He holds a Ph.D. in East Asian studies from Harvard University.) The Kyunghyang Shinmun, 17 July 2016. “The Unbearable Sadness of THAAD.” <http://english.khan.co.kr/khan_art_view.html?artid=201607171721017&code=790000>

To start with, THAAD is an outdated technology whose ability to stop missiles is doubtful. To the degree that THAAD might work, it does so for missiles flying at high altitudes. North Korea does not need to send missiles at high altitudes to attack South Korea, if such an unlikely scenario unfolded.

After all, if North Korea wanted to kill tens of thousands or more South Korean civilians, it does not need to use any missiles at all, but rather can use its substantial artillery units for which Seoul is fully within range. THAAD is entirely useless against artillery.

Missiles aren’t Even the Main Threat

George Friedman 2017. (George Friedman is Founder and Chairman of Geopolitical Futures and former Chairman of Stratfor, a global intelligence company. Friedman is an internationally recognized geopolitical forecaster and New York Times best selling author.) Business Insider, 17 August 2017. “GEORGE FRIEDMAN: North Korea is far from being irrational — it actually has a plan.” <http://www.businessinsider.com/north-korea-is-rational-2017-8>

The South Koreans actually fear the North’s artillery more than they fear a nuclear strike. North Korea faces the risk that the fallout of a nuclear strike might reach their soil and devastate them as well. But the North’s artillery could wreak havoc.

The artillery emplacements are both well-defended by anti-air missiles and widely spread, so that it would take many airstrikes or a bloody invasion from the South to destroy them—a process that would take days at least.

Link: THAAD Systems are expensive

Jeff Daniels 2017. (Jeff Daniels is a coordinating producer for CNBC) CNBC, 13 July 2017. “South Korea's THAAD missile shield could be 'overwhelmed' by swarm-like attack from North.” <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/07/13/south-koreas-thaad-missile-shield-could-be-overwhelmed-by-pyongyang.html>

The U.S.-provided THAAD system costs just over $1 billion for each battery, and President Donald Trump told Reuters in April that Seoul should pay for it. That idea didn't go over well with the South Koreans, some of whom were already feeling economic anxiety from Chinese retaliation over the THAAD.

Impact: South Korea would be investing a significant amount of money in a weapons system that exacerbates a spiral of spending and counter-spending, all without stopping the particular weapons which North Korea would actually deploy to slaughter masses of innocent people.

Contention 3: China’s Economic Retaliation

Trade Warfare

Joshua Berlinger and Juliet Perry 2017. (Reporters for CNN.) CNN, 27 April 2017. “China tried to hack group linked to controversial missile defense system, US cybersecurity firm says.” <http://www.cnn.com/2017/04/27/asia/china-south-korea-thaad-hack/index.html>

South Koreans have accused China of enacting 'unofficial' sanctions in response to the THAAD deployment. Lotte, the company that owns the land where THAAD has been deployed, has seen 87 of its 99 stores in China closed and work on its theme park in the country suspended.

Those developments fueled concerns the disagreement could spiral into a trade war.

China Clamping Down

Jethro Mullen 2017. (Reporter for CNN.) CNN Money, 3 March 2017. “China's 'unofficial' sanctions rattle South Korea.” <http://money.cnn.com/2017/03/03/news/economy/china-south-korea-thaad-tourism-trade-sanctions/>

South Korea's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism said it had learned that Chinese authorities summoned representatives of travel agencies in Beijing on Thursday and instructed them to stop selling South Korean tours from March 15.

"The instruction was unofficial but China has a tendency not to give official orders for sanctions," said Wang Gi-young, a director at the ministry….

The stakes are high. Of the 17 million people who visited South Korea last year, eight million were Chinese, according to data from the Korea Tourism Organization.

China is also South Korea's biggest trading partner, accounting for about a quarter of its exports.

"Korea is a lot more dependent on China than the other way around," said Krystal Tan of Capital Economics. "China is a much larger economy."

Impact: Trade barriers make the economic effects of an arms race significantly worse by artificially hampering the structure of production.

PRO-AT or CON-AT: The Case for Arms Race Prevention

A/T: North Korea is a threat to South Korea

Nuclear Deterrence Brings Peace

Jonathan Tepperman 2009. (Jonathan Tepperman is a Managing Editor of Foreign Affairs. He is Vice Chairman of the Halifax International Security Forum and a Fellow of the New York Institute of Humanities.) Newsweek, 28 August 2009. “HOW NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAN KEEP YOU SAFE.” <http://www.newsweek.com/how-nuclear-weapons-can-keep-you-safe-78907>

The argument that nuclear weapons can be agents of peace as well as destruction rests on two deceptively simple observations. First, nuclear weapons have not been used since 1945. Second, there's never been a nuclear, or even a nonnuclear, war between two states that possess them. Just stop for a second and think about that: it's hard to overstate how remarkable it is, especially given the singular viciousness of the 20th century. As Kenneth Waltz, the leading "nuclear optimist" and a professor emeritus of political science at UC Berkeley puts it, "We now have 64 years of experience since Hiroshima. It's striking and against all historical precedent that for that substantial period, there has not been any war among nuclear states."

To understand why—and why the next 64 years are likely to play out the same way—you need to start by recognizing that all states are rational on some basic level. Their leaders may be stupid, petty, venal, even evil, but they tend to do things only when they're pretty sure they can get away with them. Take war: a country will start a fight only when it's almost certain it can get what it wants at an acceptable price. Not even Hitler or Saddam waged wars they didn't think they could win. The problem historically has been that leaders often make the wrong gamble and underestimate the other side—and millions of innocents pay the price.

Nuclear weapons change all that by making the costs of war obvious, inevitable, and unacceptable. Suddenly, when both sides have the ability to turn the other to ashes with the push of a button—and everybody knows it—the basic math shifts. Even the craziest tin-pot dictator is forced to accept that war with a nuclear state is unwinnable and thus not worth the effort. As Waltz puts it, "Why fight if you can't win and might lose everything?"

Link: US backs South Korea.

Impact: North Korea wouldn’t risk war with US by nuking South Korea. South Korea doesn’t have to escalate its own military spending, since the US’ nuclear weaponry has this covered.

A/T: Kim Jong Un is an irrational actor

Consequences Recognized

Michael Malice 2017. (Author of Dear Reader: The Unauthorized Autobiography of Kim Jong Il) Fox Business, 29 June 2017. “North Korea is desperate to avoid military conflict: Author Michael Malice” <http://www.foxbusiness.com/politics/2017/06/29/north-korea-is-desperate-to-avoid-military-conflict-author-michael-malice.html>

Despite what a lot of people have been saying, they [North Korea] are desperate to avoid military conflict….if you go there and you read their literature, they know full well that they’re not capable of surviving an attack, that it would be devastating for North Korea.

Malice *has* visited the country and has read their literature.

Kim Jong Un is Devious, Not Irrational

Virginia Kruata 2017. (Journalist for the Independent Journal Review) The Independent Journal Review, 5 September 2017. “Ex-CIA Chief: 'Kim Jong Un Is Not Crazy or Irrational' — That's Exactly What Makes Him So Dangerous” <http://ijr.com/the-declaration/2017/09/966737-ex-cia-chief-kim-jong-un-not-crazy-irrational-thats-exactly-makes-dangerous/?utm_source=Facebook&utm_medium=Owned&utm_term=ijpolitics&utm_campaign=ods&utm_content=Politics>

But over the past few months, now that President Donald Trump has gone a few rounds with North Korea involving mutual threats and missile tests, former acting CIA Director Michael Morell (under the Obama Administration) says it's dangerous to assume that Kim is crazy.

During an appearance on Sunday morning's “Face the Nation,” Morell gave CBS host Margaret Brennan his take on the North Korean dictator:

“…I think, Margaret, that people are wrong when they say he's crazy. He's not crazy. He's very rational in his own world. He is smart. He is decisive. He is persistent but he's also an attention seeker, he's also paranoid in way I talked about and he's also extraordinarily violent. So this is a different kind of guy."

And for what it's worth, Morell is not alone in his assessment. Former Australian Army officer Matt Jones had this to say about Kim and his interactions with Trump:

People often deride Kim Jong-un as crazy, but this is not the case. Examining his actions, he is highly rational and a skilled operator in pursuing his national objectives.

Evil, but Not Suicidal

Michael Malice 2017. (Author of Dear Reader: The Unauthorized Autobiography of Kim Jong Il) The Observer, 18 December 2014. “Michael Malice on the Magical World of North Korea” <http://observer.com/2014/12/michael-malice-on-the-magical-world-of-north-korea/>

Yes, they are crazy. But they are not “crazy” in the sense of a mentally-ill street person babbling nonsense on a corner. They are crazy in the sense, say, of someone who is under the delusion that he is Abraham Lincoln. His insanity is easy to understand, and the implications quite predictable. Though it’s not rational, neither is it random.

Impact: War with North Korea can easily be avoided without starting an arms race.

A/T: Arming to defend against North Korea

Overestimation is Dangerous

Joby Warrick, Ellen Nakashima and Anna Fifield 2017. (Journalists for the Washington Post. Warrick won a Pulitzer Prize in 2016 for Nonfiction and, along with two colleagues, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service) Washington Post, 8 August 2016. “North Korea now making missile-ready nuclear weapons, U.S. analysts say” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/north-korea-now-making-missile-ready-nuclear-weapons-us-analysts-say/2017/08/08/e14b882a-7b6b-11e7-9d08-b79f191668ed_story.html?utm_term=.75a7c4cb5962>

Although few discount North Korea’s progress, some prominent U.S. experts warned against the danger of overestimating the threat. Siegfried Hecker, director emeritus of the Los Alamos National Laboratory and the last known U.S. official to inspect North Korea’s nuclear facilities, has calculated the size of North Korea’s arsenal at no more than 20 to 25 bombs. He warned of potential risks that can come from making Kim into a bigger menace than he actually is.

“Overselling is particularly dangerous,” said Hecker, who visited North Korea seven times between 2004 and 2010, and met with key leaders of the country’s weapons programs. “Some like to depict Kim as being crazy — a madman — and that makes the public believe that the guy is undeterrable. He’s not crazy and he’s not suicidal. And he’s not even unpredictable.”

A/T: Nuclear War is a significant threat

Non-nuclear weapons pose the main threat

Ian Bremmer 2017. (Bremmer is a foreign affairs columnist and editor-at-large at TIME. He is the president of Eurasia Group, a political-risk consultancy, and a Global Research Professor at New York University He is the author of Superpower: Three Choices for America’s Role in the World. He holds a PhD in Political Science from Stanford University.) Time.com, 21 August 2017. “5 Reasons Things in North Korea Could Still Go Badly Wrong.” <http://time.com/4905594/north-korea-kim-jong-un-risk-report/>

Pyongyang already poses an existential threat to South Korea. North Korea has anywhere between 2,500 and 5,000 tons of chemical weapons at its disposal already, and a barrage of artillery (as many as 21,000 pieces) continuously pointed at Seoul; some analysts estimate that amount of firepower could decimate Seoul (population: 10 million) in as little as two hours.

Nuclear War is such an obviously bad idea, that North Korea simply won’t go for it

Robert Kelley 2017. (Robert E Kelly is an associate professor of international relations in the Department of Political Science and Diplomacy at Pusan National University) The National Interest 26 July 2017. “The Surprisingly Simple Reason North Korea Has Nuclear Weapons” <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/north-korean-nukes-are-almost-certainly-defense-21671>

Striking North Korea would be incredibly risky, and the United States has learned to live with other states’ nuclear missilization. Russia, China and Pakistan are powers whom Washington would almost certainly prefer were not nuclear. Yet the United States has adjusted. Each of those three, including Pakistan, has treated its weapons reasonably carefully. There has not been the much-feared accidental launch or hand-off to terrorist groups. All appear to think of their nuclear weapons as defensive and for deterrence purposes. Indeed, the offensive potential of nuclear weapons is curiously constrained. They would so devastate an enemy that conquest of said enemy would be pointless—who wants to take-over an irradiated wasteland? Plus, nuclear use would likely bring nuclear retaliation on the attacker, in which case any benefit of a war would be lost to the huge costs of nuclear destruction in the homeland.

This logic seems to apply to North Korea as well. In the most extreme possible scenario, where Pyongyang used nuclear weapons against Seoul to facilitate a successful invasion, the devastation in the South would be so awful, that one wonders why North Korea would want to invade at all. Due to the peninsula’s mountainous terrain, only a few areas of South Korea are easily habitable for large numbers of people. Nearly 75 percent of the population lives on 30 percent of the landmass. Those small areas—basically the South biggest cities—would be targets of Northern nuclear weapons in any such war. If North Korea were to win that conflict, it would then inherit those irradiated, blasted population zones, in addition to scarcely usable mountains. What would be the point of winning then? Of fighting at all?

Similarly, North Korean nuclear use against the South—or Japan or the United States—would lead to devastating American nuclear retaliation. South Korea and Japan have been treaty allies of the United States for decades. These relationships are about as robust as any in the U.S. alliance network. Countless secretaries of state and defense have pledged to protect Seoul and Tokyo. So American nuclear retaliation would almost certainly follow any Northern offensive nuclear strike. North Korea would inherit an apocalyptic wasteland in the South, while absorbing punishing nuclear retaliation at home—so punishing in fact, that the regime itself might collapse under the weight of the social chaos unleashed by American nuclear strikes.

And if that were not bad enough, one could easily imagine China attacking North Korea if Pyongyang offensively used nuclear weapons. China may tolerate North Korea’s nuclearization, but it is hard to imagine Beijing tolerating North Korea using such weapons to start a war. Beijing knows that China may well could be the next target. It is easy to foresee the United States and China working together to destroy North Korea if it aggressively used nuclear weapons.

A/T: Ditching THAAD hurts US Alliance

US/South Korea Alliance well established

Elizabeth Shim 2017. (Journalist at United Press International) United Press International 30 January 2017. “Trump, South Korea PM reaffirm alliance to defend against North Korea” <https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2017/01/30/Trump-South-Korea-PM-reaffirm-alliance-to-defend-against-North-Korea/2561485794061/>

U.S. President Donald Trump and South Korea's acting president and Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn exchanged a phone call on Monday, Seoul time, during which the two sides reaffirmed the bilateral alliance but did not discuss pending issues that include increased military burden sharing.

According to South Korean news service News 1, Trump told Hwang the United States would always be with Seoul "100 percent" in their joint defense against North Korea provocations.

During the phone exchange, which lasted for about 30 minutes on Monday morning, both sides agreed they are ready to develop a "strong and steadfast" alliance.

A/T: THAAD Does Work

Not Tested in Real-World Conditions

Ankit Panda 2017. (Editor at the Council on Foreign Relations and The Diplomat. His work has been presented to numerous government bodies, including the U.S. State department, the European Union, and the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office.) Council on Foreign Relations 29 August 2017. “Can Ballistic Missile Defense Shield Guam From North Korea?” <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/can-ballistic-missile-defense-shield-guam-north-korea>

There are considerable risks in both attempting and not attempting to destroy North Korean missiles launched toward Guam. SM-3 and THAAD interceptors have shown success against IRBMs in test environments, in which certain variables are controlled, but they cannot assure defense against multiple North Korean Hwasong-12 missiles in a real attack scenario. The systems have never been tested against multiple missiles simultaneously. Therefore, an attempt to intercept North Korean missiles could fail and, as a result, erode the credibility of U.S. missile defense, even if only one North Korean projectile successfully splashes down near Guam.

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