

**Do Domestic Processes
Prevent Effective Balancing?
Alliance Policies by Japan and South Korea**

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Do Domestic Processes Prevent Effective Balancing? : Alliance Policies by Japan and South Korea*

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Introduction

How and under what circumstances do domestic factors impede cooperation between alliance partners? More specifically, under what conditions does domestic politics in Japan and South Korea prevent decision makers from pursuing effective cooperation with the United States? These are key research questions with respect to inefficient and even inconsistent alliance policy choices employed by Japan and South Korea in the past few decades. For instance, after deciding to join the US Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) systems in the late 1990s, Japan procrastinated in developing and deploying BMD technologies. It took Japan almost seven years to follow through with its promise to the United States. Another example includes South Korea's missile defense (MD) policies. Seoul has refused to join the US systems to develop the Korean style MD programs, but it has procured US technologies that are interoperable with the US-led regional BMD.

There are many explanations for the problem of cooperation between alliance partners. One category of argument involves alliance literature (Walt, 1990; Snyder, 1997; Weitsman, 2004; Pressman, 2008). The prediction of balance of threat theory shows that international environment or external threats have a strong influence on the cohesion of alliance. In other words, disagreements between alliance partners over the degree of threats can hinder alliance cooperation. Moreover, the argument of alliance security dilemma demonstrates that the lack of cooperation between alliance members is driven by alliance dynamics. When states feel the fear of entrapment because their allies are belligerent to initiate aggression against others, they reduce support for alliance partners and decrease cooperation. However, these assessments are not sufficient to explain specific details of alliance policy choices by Japan and South Korea. Importantly, existing work on alliance fails to explicate why Japan has been slow in fulfilling its commitment despite mounting external threats. It also fails to explain South Korea's inconsistent and even contradictory posture on MD policies.

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The second category of argument focuses on domestic political constraints that explain why alliance partners have trouble in maintaining constant cooperation (Doyle, 1986; Milner, 1997; Moravcsik, 1997). They assume that alliance policies are caused by conflicts between various domestic actors as they attempt to maximize their influence in the society. This line of argument is applicable to Japan because the frequent shifting of leadership and internal turmoil between political parties in the mid 1990s made Japanese alliance policies look inconsistent. Moreover, growing liberal elites because of social and generational changes rendered South Korea reluctant to cooperate with the United States in the past ten years. Nevertheless, this approach that turns to idiosyncratic domestic politics in explaining foreign policy outcomes tend to marginalize the causal weight of international factors. To be precise, if ineffective and inconsistent alliance policies by Japan and South Korea are driven by their internal politics, what explains the necessity of their cooperation with the United States from the outset?

The third line of argument refers to the cost of maintaining alliance. As Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser have argued, in an asymmetric alliance that involves states with different relative material capability, weaker partners tend to ride free on the collective security goods provided by stronger states (Olson and Zeckhauser, 1966). The argument of collective goods theory predicts that alliance cooperation is difficult to achieve, particularly when such a choice creates a financial burden to smaller powers. James Morrow has also claimed that the cost-benefit analysis on maintaining alliance can impact cooperation between alliance partners (Morrow, 1991 and 1993). All in all, this line of argument can explain why South Korea has chosen indigenous MD programs that are less expensive than the US BMD. However, it does not offer an account for why Seoul has gradually increased military expenditure that might go beyond the requirement of indigenous systems not to mention why South Korea's cooperation with the United States has been inconsistent. Japan's case has also revealed that this argument has limited applicability because the government had intention to cover the cost of MD-related programs but failed to do so.

This article seeks to offer an alternative explanation for why states fail to employ effective cooperation with their alliance partners. Although international pressures provide incentives for states to choose cooperative policies toward allies, domestic variables limit the efficiency of such choices. Here I suggest political and social obstacles that can undermine the processes of implementing alliance cooperation and make alliance policies appear inconsistent. As a result, states cannot fulfill the requirement of alliance tasks and face some criticisms from alliance partners. In line with neoclassical realism, I will introduce a theoretical framework that delineates the conditions under which domestic obstacles preclude efficient alliance cooperation.

In a broad sense, this article is consistent with a major debate about balancing in the study of international relations. According to structural realism, since increased alliance commitments or cooperation with alliance partners can strengthen or enlarge the role of alliance vis-à-vis external powers, such choices are seen as balancing actions (Waltz 1979).



However, the meaning of balancing at present is so broadly defined that it cannot depict some occasions in which states do not respond to alliance agreements and even fail to honor commitments despite constant external pressure. A simple dichotomy of balancing and non-balancing is not sophisticated enough to describe detailed foreign policy choices. In actuality, a wide range of works in international politics saw this problem. One of the most distinct examples involves the inter-war period in which Great Britain and France failed to form an alliance or engage in balancing against Nazi Germany. As Randall Schweller has observed, '(these) countries have failed to recognize a clear and present danger or...have simply not reacted to it or...have responded in paltry and imprudent ways' (Schweller, 2004: 159). The concept of underbalancing that Schweller has introduced refers to a situation in which an expected effective balancing behavior driven by mounting external threats is hindered by internal politics. In light of this, I present slow balancing (slow cooperation with allies) and inconsistent balancing (inconsistent cooperation with allies) that indicate balancing behaviors that look sluggish or even inconsistent because of domestic obstacles.

Japan and South Korea are least likely cases for an assumption that domestic sources have influence on state behavior (See King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994; George and Bennett, 2005). After the end of the Cold War, security policy options by Japan and South Korea were most likely determined by international elements. One can argue that the absence of the Soviet threat, the lack of imminent threats, and growing economic interdependence with Cold War enemies make Tokyo and Seoul less motivated to increase cooperation with Washington. This is particularly challenging to a proposed theory because the lack of clear and imminent threats makes it difficult to differentiate between the causal influence of international politics and that of domestic politics. Accordingly, without the clear impact of external factors, one does not know why states choose balancing or cooperation with alliance partners as opposed to other options, not to mention why domestic variables have a causal influence. On the other hand, the opposite side of story is also true. One can claim that Japan's security policy choices have been driven by growing perceived threats from North Korea and China. Japan has been responding gradually to increasing external threats in the post Cold War era and its domestic politics do not play a role in Japan's security strategy. For these reasons, analyzing alliance policy options by Japan and South Korea needs process tracing to discern the putative influence of domestic politics that lie between international politics as 'hypothesized cause' and policy options as 'observed effect' (Bennett, 2004: 22).

This article is composed of two parts. In the first part, I differentiate neoclassical realism from major schools of thought in international relations. Then I introduce a theoretical framework about domestic obstacles. In the second part, I examine alliance policies by Japan and South Korea, focusing on their missile defense policies. I conclude by summarizing my arguments and suggesting policy implications.



Domestic Obstacles and Alliance Cooperation

Neoclassical Realism vs. Major Schools of Thought

Under what circumstances do domestic politics matter in state behavior? This is a central question raised by many neoclassical realist scholars. They criticize Waltzian structural realism that gives a general direction of foreign policy by exogenizing domestic politics and fails to predict particular state behavior (Elman, 1996; Rose, 1998; Bueno de Mesquita, 2002; Rathbun, 2008; Lobell et al., 2009). Neoclassical realists have made attempts to bring the state back in or discuss the logic of *innenpolitik* in order to explain state behavior that goes beyond the scope of systemic analyses. They look at bureaucratic politics, regime types, social and political stabilities, and conditions of economic development. To name a few, their work encompasses two level games (a process in which leaders choose a policy considering domestic and international influences), a decision to forge or strengthen alliance without a salient external threat, a choice between internal and external balancing (why states choose alliance over arms build-up or vice versa with a threat augmentation), and a failure to meet external threats because of domestic turmoil (Putnam, 1988; Barnett and Levy, 1991; Snyder, 1991; Morrow 1993; Schweller, 2004 and 2006; Taliaferro, 2006).

Neoclassical realism seeks to differentiate itself from classical realism that focuses generally on the state and national power rather than the constraints of international politics. Classical realists, including Niccolo Machiavelli, Hans Morgenthau, Arnold Wolfers, and Henry Kissinger, are concerned primarily with how leaders utilize and maximize state power. Based mostly on European history, classical realists recognize the distribution of relative capability between great powers in Europe and assume that constant power competitions have been a major driver for great power's foreign policy. However, because classical realists have a propensity for overlooking international politics, they are indifferent in explaining to what extent states will expand their power and when the distribution of relative power leads to stability or to war.

Neoclassical realism also differs from liberalism (or a pluralistic approach) although both theories share a similarity in that they consider domestic-levels of analysis. While both neoclassical realism and liberalism see the connection between systemic and domestic politics, liberalism puts more emphasis on the causal role of domestic-level variables than international constraints. Advocates of liberalism describe the role of the state as a relatively passive set of institutions and an arena for competition and bargaining for interest groups. Therefore, foreign policy choices are influenced mostly by domestic politics reflecting complex preferences of domestic actors and interactions between them instead of international pressure. However, neoclassical realists place policy elites, military leaders, and politicians at the center of foreign policy choices. They assume that policy elites, who are sitting at the juncture of the state and the international system, are best equipped to perceive both systemic constraints and domestic pressure (Taliaferro et al., 2009).



The Theoretical Framework: Domestic Obstacles

The focus of this article is to clarify how and under what conditions domestic politics prevent effective alliance cooperation. I suggest a new theoretical framework about domestic obstacles that shows that although international variables cause states to choose cooperation with alliance partners, decision makers will confront domestic pressures that impede or delay such cooperation. In line with neoclassical realism, the new framework assumes that systemic influences and relative power distributions define the key parameters of a state's behavior. However, as some scholars have already recognized, 'domestic processes inhibit actors from ever objectively judging choices, behaviors, and outcomes, and could even serve as a barrier to their survival during times of major external crisis' (Sterling-Folker, 1997: 20).

Delineating Alliance Cooperation

A general consensus among many scholars demonstrates that there are at least two broad categories of international elements that explain alliance cooperation. First, common external threats offer strong incentives for alliance partners to cooperate and create cohesive alliance relationships. Even when common external threats do not exist in the beginning, international settings can give some leeway to the alliance partners to redefine common enemies and create cohesion between alliance members. For instance, when Germany and Austria-Hungary formed a dual alliance in 1879, there were no clear uniform external threats that these two countries were facing. While Austria-Hungary was overtly concerned about the Russian threat, Germany was not. To Germany, major threats came from possible retaliation by France over Alsace - Lorraine. However, cooperation between Germany and Austria-Hungary increased by 1914 and their cohesion also grew due to growing threats from the Triple Entente that was forged by Russia, France and Great Britain (Weitsman, 2004).

Another explanation for alliance cooperation includes alliance dependence. States engaged in alliance constantly face two fears. One is fear of abandonment, which means that states are worried because their allies would leave the alliance or fail to provide help. The other is fear of entrapment, which emerges when states are concerned about being dragged into unwanted conflicts that allies initiate. These risks cause alliance security dilemmas because reducing one of these fears will increase the other. For instance, if states try to reduce alliance commitments in order to handle the fear of entrapment, the risk of abandonment will increase. In asymmetric alliances, smaller states are more likely to feel abandonment fear than entrapment fear because their security relies more on alliances than their larger partners do. Therefore, states with fears of abandonment are willing to coordinate their security policies with what larger alliance partners desire. Small powers would also increase commitments to help their larger alliance partners in order to maintain their alliance because the benefit of such an option outweighs the cost.



Defining Domestic Obstacles

Advocates of neoclassical realism endogenize the process of decision-making. They assume that foreign policy options are developed by actual policy leaders, not the aggregate form of the state. After choosing cooperative policies toward alliance partners, policy elites have to ask at least two important questions: first, whether or not they have political leverage to overwhelm those who oppose such policies and how effectively they can convince the general population; and second, how effectively they can extract resources to implement cooperative policy options. As a result, a state's alliance cooperation does not take a simple form as expected by the balance of power and the balance of threat theories. The influence of domestic obstacles yields various forms of alliance policy behavior: effective cooperation with allies (effective balancing) and slow and inconsistent cooperation (slow and inconsistent balancing).

The new framework presents at least two domestic obstacles that affect alliance cooperation. The first obstacle is a political fragmentation. As Randall Schweller has demonstrated, whether or not policy leaders agree on the level of external threats has direct influence on forming alliance policies (Schweller, 2006). When policy elites share similar views on international environment and reach a consensus in interpreting external threats, coherent and effective cooperation will arise. However, a rigid elite division generates debates over the validity of alliance cooperation and prolongs the process of forming and implementing alliance policies. If the executive branch has political leverage over the opposition, policy choices would generally reflect what central actors in the government pursue. If political factions can never reach an agreement, the state's policy options are likely to shift along with the political orientation of the government. Moreover, the autonomy of the executive branch should be considered with respect to the preference of civil society reflected by legislators (Bennett, Lepgold and Unger, 1994: 45). The autonomy of the government matters particularly when the policy preference of the government is different from that of civil society. In such a case, cooperation with allies can be extremely limited or never be achieved unless the government autonomously subsidizes such policy options.

The second impediment entails social obstacles or legal and economic constraints (Taliaferro, 2006). Policy elites must rely on domestic society for material resources when developing and implementing alliance policies. They must consider aggregate national power and potential economic capacity. Of course, not all states successfully develop and implement military strategies because the level of economic capacity varies across states. The degree and the speed of developing and employing alliance strategies depend on a country's capacity of extracting resources. Even after policy elites decide to increase alliance commitment, social impediments, such as legal and budget constraints, can limit access to resources and therefore block alliance cooperation. Moreover, onerous alliance tasks that require massive resources will increase the mobilization hurdles: policy leaders find it difficult to mobilize and maintain broad economic support for increased alliance tasks that will involve high taxation, conscription, and relocation of resources (Taliaferro,



2006). During the Gulf War in 1991, some of the US allies, such as Germany and Japan, faced legal and economic obstacles to offering military support for the US operation in Kuwait. In particular, Japan provided small military assistance that came only after the fighting was over. Economic constraints also made Japan pledge to offer \$1 billion in the beginning but later made \$13 billion contribution. Nevertheless, Japan’s massive financial contribution and some military assistance were not appreciated properly because of Tokyo’s sluggish response to the US request.

Table 1. Domestic Obstacles and Alliance Cooperation

Minimal or no domestic obstacles	→	Effective and fast cooperation with allies (Effective balancing)
Political obstacles (Policy elites)	→	Inconsistent cooperation with allies (Inconsistent balancing)
Social obstacles (Legal and economic constraints)	→	Slow cooperation with allies (Slow balancing)

This table demonstrates political and social obstacles to alliance cooperation. Decision makers with minimal or no political and social constraints are likely to implement fast and effective cooperation. They offer verbal commitments to alliance partners and follow through with actions without delay. However, states with political obstacles are likely to have inconsistent cooperation toward alliance partners. While extracting resources is not difficult, the elite division regarding the interpretation of external settings and constant power shifts between political parties may cause frequent changes in alliance policies and therefore make cooperation with allies appear inconsistent. Moreover, the lack of autonomy in the executive branch combined with strong opposition from the civil society gets alliance plans bogged down. In this situation, committed policy elites will modify the original plans to soothe the general public although the success of such modifications depends on whether or not their allies agree to comply.

On the other hand, states with social obstacles are likely to employ slow cooperation. Slow cooperation refers to inaction or failure to implement foreign policies immediately even after a verbal commitment of cooperation is offered to allies. When policy leaders try



to fulfill the commitment, they have to make a genuine effort to increase the budget and relax regulations in order to finance alliance tasks. There is also a possibility that political obstacles coexist with social constraints. States with both impediments are likely to face chaotic situations and even fail to cooperate with allies. Disagreements between policy elites over alliance tasks make alliance policies inconsistent while social obstacles hinder these elites from implementing such policies effectively.

Japan: Slow and Inconsistent Cooperation

Defining External Environments and Cooperation over BMD

Although Cold War-style communist threats no longer exist, Japan and the United States began redefining external threats in the post-Cold War era. As predicted by the structural realism and the balance of threat theory, growing external uncertainties increased Japan's security interest in maintaining and strengthening alliance with the United States (Funabashi, 2000; The Henry Stimson Center Working Group, 2000). A series of missile tests by regional nuclear powers, including China, North Korea, India and Pakistan in the 1990s offered good grounds for Tokyo to acknowledge the necessity of the US missile defense. Particularly, North Korea's Taepodong missiles overflowed the northern part of *Honshu* in 1998 and astonished the majority of the Japanese. These incidents implied a significant message to Japan that the Asian region had become less stable and that international institutions, such as the nuclear nonproliferation treaty (NPT) and the comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT), had not reduced the arms race among regional powers.

In the post 9.11 era, Japan's National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) addressed new security concerns that are compatible with the US Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). It recognized terrorist activities and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles as new security challenges (Japanese Ministry of Defense, 2004). In this light, Japan passed anti-terrorism legislation before it deployed refueling tankers to the Indian Ocean in order to assist the US operation in Afghanistan. Moreover, the Japanese government agreed with the United States to identify the Taiwan Strait and the Korean peninsula as their core security concern. This agreement was originally discussed in the working-level Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) in 2002 and was confirmed later at the two plus two meeting in 2005. The joint statement issued after the meeting was the first official confirmation of Tokyo's security interest concerning regional challenges beyond Japanese security.

Moreover, Japan gradually responded to mounting ballistic missile threats. As early as September 1993, the Japanese government launched a joint research project with the United States, or Theater Missile Defense Working Group (TMDWG), to study technical requirements for missile defense and potential cooperation between the two countries. In



a few months, the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) noted that the existing 1976 defense framework was no longer relevant to meet new missile threats and announced a new defense plan. JDA noted that possible cooperation with the United States would involve a sea-based system or the Navy Theater Wide (NTW) program since the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF), which already had the platforms such as Aegis ships, showed interest in the joint research project with the United States.

Japan tried to step up the research as government officials and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) members envisioned the growing role of Japan in the US-Japanese alliance after they signed a 1997 new security guideline. North Korea's major missile test in 1998 also added impetus to Japan's cooperation with the United States. In December 1998, Japanese cabinet ministers agreed to pursue TMD with the United States. In January 1999, Defense Secretary Cohen and Japanese counterpart Hosei Norota agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding. A few years later, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi announced that Japan would develop and deploy MD capabilities with the United States. Japan has procured upper and lower BMD systems including land-based Patriot missiles and sea-based Standard Missile 3 (SM-3) with the Aegis combat system. Japanese Aegis destroyers successfully intercepted missiles near Hawaii in 2009 and 2010.

As Michael Green and Benjamin Self have noted, Japan's missile defense policy has shown a gradual transformation to meet growing external challenges (Green and Self, 1996). Both the balance of threat theory and the alliance security dilemma directed Japan's increasing commitment to MD cooperation with the United States. Nevertheless, as the following section shows, relying merely on international politics is insufficient to explain critical problems that the Japanese government had in cooperating with the United States.

Political Obstacles

When the concept of MD was first introduced, Japanese policy elites expressed their desire to participate as an attempt to consolidate the US-Japan alliance. It is important to note that Japan's interest in missile defense began in the mid 1980s. Under the US Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), the Japanese government signed a memorandum of understanding and allowed private companies and public institutions to join research projects with the United States. However, this 'politically-driven' approach was quickly replaced by a 'threat-driven' approach due to growing ballistic missile threats in the early 1990s (Jimbo, 2002). Shocked by North Korea's missile test in 1993 and 1998, the majority of Japanese elites agreed with the fact that existing first-generation Patriot interceptor systems could not offer comprehensive protection against ballistic missiles.

However, policy elites were divided with respect to the necessity of MD systems. Some of them were not completely convinced by an argument that North Korea posed conspicuous threats to Japan. They believed that North Korea's ballistic missiles did not



create imminent threats because Pyongyang would use missiles simply as a bargaining chip in negotiations instead of destroying targets in Japan. Others believed that missile threats from China were overestimated (Jimbo, 2002). Despite China's increasing projection capability, Beijing is unlikely to launch missiles against Japan. In this line of thinking, some policy elites in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that Japan's cooperation with the United States to develop MD systems would deteriorate bilateral relations between Japan and China because Beijing would view Tokyo's intention as offensive and therefore develop the Chinese version of missile defense programs (Kaneda *et al.*, 2007). Still others charged that the United States proposed to co-develop MD technologies in order to share the burden with Japan and take advantage of Japanese technologies. The division of policy elites over whether or not MD systems were necessary discouraged Japan from moving beyond the joint research. Even though Japan and the United States met many times, there was no clear sign that the Japanese government would join the US MD systems until the late 1990s.

Japan's political turmoil in the 1990s also made the executive branch politically weak and therefore delayed Japan's participation in the US TMD systems. Drastic changes in the party systems in 1993 brought an end to the thirty-eight year domination of LDP and created complex political coalitions between conservative and liberal parties. Because of unexpected political turmoil, Japan had four different prime ministers within 11 months. As a result, the Japanese government, regardless of its leaders' political orientations, was not able to implement consistent alliance policies. For instance, Prime Ministers Tomiichi Murayama from the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) and Ryutaro Hashimoto from the LDP were constantly worried about their political coalition and therefore chose policies to please others within their coalition. For instance, the Murayama administration submitted to pressure from LDP, a JSP's major political partner, to purchase Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) and Patriot missiles (critical elements for MD systems in the long run) although Murayama's JSP originally declined this plan because historically the party disapproved of any military procurement (Pyle, 1996). Nevertheless, Japan's spending on MD-related projects did not last long when LDP's Hashimoto came into office. Japan's continuous political turmoil made even conservative leader Hashimoto cautious about increasing the budget particularly for missile defense research. Like the JSP during the Murayama era, the LDP that did not hold a majority in the upper House had to accommodate the Socialist party and the New Party Sakigake that threatened to leave the governing coalition. The Hashimoto government was not able to overcome opposition from the Diet to the increased budget for a research project on MD. As a result, even after five years of research, Japan had to postpone their plan without knowing when the government could participate in the US MD systems (Green and Cronin, 1999). In the end, Japanese policy elites including LDP members and bureaucrats in JDA were able to get an approval from the Diet to increase the budget for MD after North Korea's missile test in July 1998.

International pressure such as North Korea's growing missile threats, however, does not explain why Japan had inconsistent posture on MD and more specifically why the



socialist Murayama government spent more on MD than the conservative Hashimoto government. Moreover, external environments that drove Japan to pursue MD programs do not explain difficulties that Japanese policy elites had in moving beyond the research stage since the early 1990s. Even after Japan and the United States signed the TMD agreement in 1999, only Japanese elites, especially security specialists, discussed TMD issues, while the general public and even some politicians did not have a chance to have a thorough discussion. For this reason, Yoichi Funabashi has claimed that the decision of the Japanese government lacked the ‘solid support from the public’ and ‘the foundation of the support to the TMD option might erode further in the future’ (Funabashi, 2000: 140).

Economic and Legal Obstacles

Economic and legal challenges slowed down Japan’s cooperation with the United States. When Japan tried to move beyond the stage of research to an actual participation in 1998, JDA proposed an ambitious budget increase up to \$13 million. However, such a plan was flatly rejected by the Diet and the government had to defer the plan. Given that Japan had spent several million dollars on MD research per year, its participation in the US MD systems would create an enormous burden. Experts estimated \$10 billion on MD projects for at least five years when Japan would decide to participate in the US MD systems. This amount would take approximately one fourth of the total military expenditure that was already occupied with other procurement plans.

Such economic constraints left Japan’s cooperation with the United States limited only to a research level for several years even after Japan’s decision to participate in US MD systems (Samuels, 2007). Prime Minister Koizumi noted that bilateral cooperation on BMD should remain purely at the research stage because Japan was not ready to move toward the stage of developing technologies. Many politicians still questioned the cost and benefit of BMD programs while Japan’s stagnant economy made it even more difficult for the government to draw support from the Diet members and the general public (Jimbo, 2002). Japan’s cooperation with the United States did not go anywhere until 2003. Perhaps the most challenging to the theory tested here is the influence of international pressure that transformed Japan’s MD policies in 2003. More specifically, the Japanese government decided to enhance cooperation with the United States and co-developed MD technologies due in part to growing international pressure such as the change of US MD policies and North Korea’s second nuclear crisis in 2002. Nevertheless, Japan still had economic obstacles that could hinder seamless cooperation with the United States. Japan’s defense budget has gradually decreased in the past several years, which in the end can create a negative influence on maintaining some MD programs. Since the Democratic Party came into office in 2009, Japan has considered the reduction of spending on missile defense. Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa told the US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates that the technological development of BMD did not look optimistic because of Tokyo’s economic constraints.



Moreover, legal obstacles have constantly hampered Japan's effective cooperation with the United States. According to the Japanese peace constitution, the development and the deployment of MD systems are prohibited in Japanese territory even if they are purely defensive. One of central questions is whether or not the MD systems will be operated solely by Japan or jointly operated with the United States (Oros, 2008). For now, a joint operation is preferable because the United States has more advanced technology than Japan (Kaneda *et al*, 2007). In this situation, MD systems would go against the peace constitution that forbids collective defense arrangements. Although some officials have argued that Japan's participation in BMD is designed to protect the nation, coordinating with the United States could make Tokyo provide satellite information and perhaps military assistance for the United States and the US allies (Jimbo, 2002). Moreover, Japan's participation in MD runs contrary to the 1969 Diet resolution that restricts the use of outer space except for peaceful purposes. An important question here is how to interpret peaceful—whether it means non-military, non-aggressive, or defensive. Since there is little doubt that the system is used militarily, perhaps including an offensive measure to destroy adversaries' missiles in space, the operation of BMD may challenge the concept of a peaceful use.

Although some legal constraints were lifted to develop and deploy MD programs, collective defense operations are still problematic to the US-Japan cooperation. Whether or not Japan would intercept missiles targeting the United States creates constant debates among Japanese policy planners. A hypothetical situation where enemy missiles fly to the US territories, such as Guam and Hawaii, will give Japan a difficult time because intercepting such missiles will go beyond the protection of Japanese territory. Japan's decision not to respond to this situation will make the United States question the spirit of the US-Japan alliance and the intention of the Japanese government. Moreover, despite political measures to advance anti-missile technologies, there is still a grey area that can challenge Japan's effective cooperation with the United States. The alliance now faces differences about the export of co-developed technologies. Although Japan took a political gesture and lifted a ban on arms exports, the government demands that the United States should seek Japanese consent before exporting weapons to the third countries. This epitomizes 'how Japanese constraints limit the extent of bilateral cooperation and frustrate US defense planners' (Chanlett-Avery, 2011).

South Korea: Inconsistent Cooperation

Defining External Environments and Alliance Cooperation

South Korea's MD policy is designed in order to respond to North Korea's growing ballistic missile threats. The most threatening are short-range Scud and KN-02 missiles that can reach any area in South Korea. These North Korean missiles were tested along



with long-range missiles in July 2006, and the result proved that the accuracy of the missiles had improved. According to the Defense Intelligence Agency in South Korea, the North Korean government is about to complete a project to make lighter weight nuclear warheads for short-range ballistic missiles within a year or two. In actuality, as many scholars have recognized, South Korea and the United States can work together since both are exposed to threats from North Korea's ballistic missiles (Slocombe *et al.*, 2003). However, Seoul and Washington interpreted the threats differently due in part to their physical distance from North Korea. According to defense experts, North Korea's short-range ballistic missiles can hit targets in South Korea in eight minutes or less while the current US MD technologies take several minutes to locate enemy missiles. In this light, South Korea has claimed that the US MD systems are designed for intermediate and longer-range missiles but not for speedy KN-02 and Scud. As a result, the proximity of the North Korean threat is reflected in the Republic's choice to develop the Korean Air and Missile Defense (KAMD) programs instead of the US-led regional MD systems.

South Korea's MD policy creates problems to the balance of threat and the alliance security dilemma theories. First, the balance of threat argument only predicts that South Korea would choose balancing or security measures to respond to North Korean missiles and does not specify why South Korea has chosen indigenous missile defense policies over cooperation with the United States. Second, the prediction of the alliance security dilemma ran contrary to South Korea's choice not to participate in the US regional MD programs because the theory expects that South Korea, being the smaller partner, would feel fears of abandonment and increase cooperation with the United States. Perhaps more importantly, this can create a problem of testing the theoretical framework that hypothesizes domestic obstacles prevent alliance cooperation. Because alliance cooperation does not exist, the influence of domestic obstacles is not discernable.

In order to elucidate this problem, it is necessary to show that South Korea's cooperation with the United States exists and such behavior is driven by international politics. In actuality, a close examination of the case reveals that Seoul has been participating in the US missile defense programs, although the government is not likely to admit this fact overtly. KAMD's procurement is based mostly on the US technologies, which makes the Korean MD programs interoperable with the US command. Also, the low-tier MD systems that Seoul has been focusing on are nicely placed with the larger regional BMD. An effective use of KAMD requires collaboration with US Forces in Korea (USFK) because USFK has X-band radars that can detect the movement of North Korea's missiles and offers precise information about the speed of ballistic missiles. Then, a key question emerges with respect to South Korea's implicit and inconsistent cooperation. Why did South Korea declare that it would not participate in the US BMD while it implicitly cooperated with the United States?



Political Obstacles

The growing influence of liberal and progressive elites in domestic politics and their leadership in the 1990s and the early 2000s explain South Korea's inconsistent and even puzzling MD strategies. Progressive leaders that came mostly from the Democratic Party and the Uri Party had flexible attitudes toward North Korea. Although recognizing ballistic missiles in North Korea, progressive elites argued that Pyongyang was not likely to launch missiles against Seoul. They charged that the US MD systems would only exacerbate tensions in the peninsula because the anti-missile programs would provoke Pyongyang. They also believed that joining TMD would make South Korea rely more on the United States and thus the nation would not be able to wield political leverage over Pyongyang (See Horowitz, 2004-5). Realistically, the progressives understood that South Korea needed some defensive measures to meet North Korea's ballistic missiles and their nuclear weapons, but they tend to put more emphasis on cultivating a friendly relationship with North Korea.

A central question for progressive leaders, therefore, was how to manage two incompatible agendas regarding North Korea. While the first agenda refers to how to address North Korea's nuclear and missile threats, the second agenda involves how to engage North Korea based on their belief that the policy of engagement will eventually change the North Korean society. A dilemma to maintain the delicate balance between two agendas was reflected in the Republic's MD policies when liberal leaders assumed the presidency. On the one hand, South Korean policy elites clarified that the government refused to join the US MD programs. Defense Ministers constantly confirmed this position, arguing that regional BMD programs were not beneficial to South Korea because they would offend their neighbors. The ROK Defense White Paper also noted that US-led MD systems were not desirable because regional anti-missile systems would instigate an arms race and intensify security competitions between Asian states (ROK Ministry of National Defense, 1999). Moreover, the political consequence of joining the US MD programs was not favorable to South Korea. As some scholars have argued, since the regional MD programs would create confrontation between the United States and China, South Korea's participation in the US systems would deprive the nation of an opportunity to promote friendly relations with China that has been critical of this issue (Hong 2004).

On the other hand, South Korea ironically increased cooperation with the United States under the name of the Korean MD systems. Despite South Korea's announcement not to participate in US BMD, the ROK government purchased US missile defense technologies. In an attempt to upgrade missiles in replacing 40-year old Nike Hercules surface-to-air missiles, the ROK had considered three options including Russian S-300, French EUROSAM LAND and American Patriot missiles. Although the South Korean government was interested particularly in Russian missiles because of their speed, capacity and the cost, the United States maintained that Russian missiles were not compatible with the command and control systems of USFK. South Korea was persuaded



by the United States and finally chose Patriot Advanced Capability (PAC). The procurement of such technologies created suspicion that the Korean style missile defense would tap into the US MD shield because the two countries' programs would be interoperable. Pundits have also gradually accepted the possibility of cooperation with the United States since the US MD systems are essential to improve protection for the peninsula in all levels from ground to space.

However, the ROK government led by a conservative leader revealed some changes in MD policies. In contrast to progressive elites, conservative leaders in the Grand National Party understood that even though the South achieved an overwhelming economic superiority over the North, it was still exposed to unpredictable Pyongyang's aggressions. North Korean submarines and patrol ships still take provocative actions by crossing the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the West Sea and even engaging in short battles with the South. Importantly, North Korea's provocative actions did not decrease in the past several years. Pyongyang detonated nuclear devices and conducted ballistic missile tests. Moreover, the Stalinist nation even initiated bombardments on the South Korean naval base in Yeonpyong in 2010, killing a few servicemen and civilians.

In contrast to progressive leaders, conservative leaders took a tougher stance vis-à-vis North Korea. Since the conservative government believed that unconditional economic assistance had not prevented North Korea's provocations, they sought to demand more concessions from Pyongyang in exchange for economic generosity. While the conservatives believed that improving relations with North Korea was important, the improvement should be reciprocal. Accordingly, South Korea's MD policies reflected the political orientation of the conservative leadership. Seoul showed increased cooperation with the United States as the Lee administration and conservative politicians emphasized the importance of the US alliance. The government pledged to spend more on military projects related to missile defense. The Republic also planned to complete a center for command, control, and communication by 2012 and signed a contract with Raytheon to purchase Patriot missiles. In October 2010, the Ministry of National Defense (MND) even noted that South Korea was considering cooperation with the United States over regional missile defense systems. Although the Defense Ministry has cautiously ruled out joining the U.S. programs, the Lee government has implemented a more flexible approach to BMD than the previous government led by liberal leader Roh Moo Hyun. Korea under the conservative leader completed the purchase of Patriot missiles, which had been cancelled by the previous government, and publicly discussed coordination with the United States over BMD.

Economic Obstacles

Seoul's cooperation with the United States under the name of KAMD programs confronted a problem of extracting resources. When the liberal government launched a



SAM-X program in order to replace aging Nike Hercules with Patriot missiles, the limited budget made South Korea choose the second hand 20 year-old PAC-2 from Germany that were cheaper than PAC-3 from the United States. Although PAC-2 can be compatible with PAC-3 theoretically, the role of the former is different from that of the latter. PAC-2 is designed to handle low-flying planes while a more advanced version of PAC-3 is designed for destroying ballistic missiles. At present, the procurement of PAC-2 does not create major problems in developing the missile defense programs, but it is questionable if the PAC-2 can effectively intercept missiles. Moreover, the economic cost created good grounds for progressive elites to forgo the US regional programs. Policy elites in Korea constantly argued that the Republic did not have economic capacity to develop and deploy the US MD systems. Even when South Korea increased a budget for MD programs, the focus was placed merely on indigenous systems that were less expensive than potential cooperation with the United States. While South Korea has already maximized the spending on its own MD policies, the United States still demands the upper-tier program, including Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), which would be worth more than \$15 billion. The considerable cost of the upper-tier system steered liberal leaders in South Korea away from the regional BMD.

However, for conservative leaders, economic obstacles do not seem to create major problems since they were more willing to shoulder financial burdens in anti-missile projects than progressive leaders. Unlike the progressive administration, the Lee government signed an agreement with the United States in 2011 to improve bilateral MD cooperation. South Korea is now seeking ways to provide sites in the peninsula for early-warning radars and even considers sharing the cost of US BMD systems to be deployed in the US bases in the near future (Defense News, 2008).

There is a growing consensus that bilateral cooperation between Seoul and Washington is not impossible in the future since the indigenous missile defense systems are increasingly inter-operable with US facilities. Although the Korean infrastructure offers a partial armament against short-ranged missile threats, the nation shows interest in moving towards multi-layered systems. General Walter Sharp, commander of the USFK, stated that South Korea should develop both upper and lower-tier missile defense systems that would improve the protection of the peninsula in all levels and work with the U.S. high-altitude BMD. Hwang Jin-Ha, a lawmaker in the conservative Grand National Party, also stated that joining the high-altitude BMD network was essential to protect the nation's satellites and communication systems in space.

It seems that economic obstacles are not as significant as the role of the political division in South Korea. In actuality, the liberal governments used economic constraints as a pretext for justifying Seoul's reluctance to US MD programs. Liberal policy elites constantly claimed that the ROK could not afford US anti-missile systems. However, after conservative leaders came into office, such remarks disappeared. They were less cautious and reluctant than liberal elites about cooperating with the United States, not to mention extracting resources on MD policies.



Conclusion

This article has sought to explain how domestic obstacles hinder alliance cooperation driven by international pressure. First, the case of Japan has demonstrated that system-guided alliance cooperation has been hindered and delayed by political, economic, and legal obstacles. Political obstacles have explained why policy elites in the Japanese government were not able to move beyond the stage of joint research and participate in the US MD systems in the 1990s. Japanese policy leaders questioned the feasibility of the US MD systems and constant leadership changes caused the executive branch to submit to political competition and make Japanese policies look inconsistent. Conservative Japanese leaders such as Hashimoto exercised only limited autonomy in pushing forward their plan to improve cooperation with the United States. Economic constraints played a role in slowing down the process of cooperation. The Japanese government could not increase a budget for MD research for several years. Economic obstacles also explain why the government remained at the stage of research and did not move on to the level of developing and deploying MD systems even after Tokyo's commitment to participate in the regional BMD programs. While domestic and economic obstacles fill the void between major changes in Japanese MD policies, important and constant influence came from legal obstacles. Legal impediments constantly delayed and discouraged cooperation with the United States. Even in the current stage of developing MD technologies, Japan will face legal obstacles to its cooperation with the United States because the interpretation of the peaceful use of outer space and particularly the concept of collective defense can pose problems to Japan's peace constitution.

South Korea's case revealed inconsistent cooperation with the United States. From the surface, South Korea's indigenous MD policies looked similar to the lack of alliance cooperation. However, in substance the ROK government has implicitly cooperated with the United States. The reason why South Korea has chosen such options can be explained by the political orientation of the leadership. For instance, progressive leaders who had a flexible attitude toward North Korea faced a dilemma in which they had to consider improving and maintaining friendly relations with North Korea while seeking measures to handle increasing nuclear and missile threats from Pyongyang. On the one hand, because liberal elites attempted to avoid policy options to antagonize North Korea, they refused to participate in the US systems and emphasized the development of KAMD. Of course, some people would charge that the choice of KAMD would still upset North Korea, but liberal leaders intended to make their option appear less antagonistic than the direct participation in the US MD systems. On the other hand, South Korea under the liberal leadership found a way to cooperate with the United States by purchasing technologies, such as Patriot missile systems, that are interoperable with the US MD programs. Such an option made Seoul's policy look inconsistent because its words and actions were not compatible. In the past several years, conservative leaders that stressed the importance of the alliance with the United States made the Korean MD systems



geared toward solid cooperation with Washington. Finally, economic constraints reflected the political division in South Korea. Liberal leaders used the prohibitive cost of US MD programs in order to justify their position in developing indigenous MD systems, while conservative leaders were less reluctant to carry the burden of cooperation with the United States.

As the Japan case has revealed, legal obstacles are more distinct than the other two obstacles because they created constant problems to Japan's effective cooperation with the United States. However, the South Korea case has demonstrated that political obstacles are more important than economic constraints. Future research, therefore, should include evaluating the causal weights of each domestic obstacle. It is necessary to explore when and how political, economic, and legal impediments interact with one another and explain under what circumstances which obstacles are more important than the others. Moreover, exploring more cases can improve the causal chain of the theoretical framework. Examining other alliance policy options by Japan and South Korea can be a good starting point. Future research could also include MD policies by other US allies in Europe.

There are at least three implications based on the theoretical framework about domestic obstacles. First, even if states agree with their alliance partners over the degree of external threats, it is likely that they do not receive fast and effective cooperation from allies. Alliance cooperation can be bogged down because of internal constraints within alliance partners. Therefore, when developing alliance policies, it is important to understand allies' internal processes as much as to adjust and redefine common threat perception. It also requires states to show patience even if their allies do not follow through with their commitment right away. Second, Japan's case has revealed that legal constraints are resilient to the change of US-Japan alliance. In the future, the success of increased cooperation between Japan and the United States is likely to depend on how eagerly Tokyo would relax and amend legal constraints. Third, a stark division between progressive and conservative leaders in South Korea is likely to influence the Republic's alliance policy in the future. Progressive elites that are flexible to North Korea are not necessarily against the alliance with the United States since they recognize the importance of the alliance to handle the uncertainty caused by North Korea. However, their dilemma that constantly guides them to choose policies to avoid confrontation with North Korea on the one hand while meeting threats from Pyongyang on the other hand can make their policies look inconsistent. ■



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