

# China a Military Threat? No Wonder China is Nervous as Obama Pivots

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Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

To read the mainstream Western media, one would conclude that China has become an economic giant now intent on flexing its military muscle and making a massive arms buildup to do so. China's designated new President, Xi Jinping, has just won both the top Communist party post from predecessor Hu Jintao as well as the head of the powerful Central Military Commission, giving Xi a full takeover of party and armed forces.

A recent *BBC* analysis, in an article titled "China extending military reach," is typical of Western media coverage of China's military program: "*China's first aircraft carrier will begin sea trials later this year. Late last year, the first pictures were leaked of the prototype of Beijing's new "stealth" fighter. And US military experts believe that China has begun to deploy the world's first long-range ballistic missile capable of hitting a moving ship at sea.*"

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In Japan, nationalist politicians like politically ambitious Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara and Toru Hashimoto, the mayor of Osaka, are gaining popularity with anti-China rhetoric and by claiming Japan must develop capacities to oppose Chinese military ascendancy. In May the authoritative *New York Times* ran an alarming story to the effect that China announced a "double-digit increase" in military spending. In the actual text of the article they report an 11% increase over the previous budget, far less than even the rate of inflation.

However, when we examine in detail the actual redeployment and military moves of US Armed Forces in the Asia region following President Obama's announcement of a new "Asia Pivot" refocus of US military capacities from Western Europe to the Asia region, it becomes clear China is re-acting, in order to attempt to deal with quite real threats to its future sovereignty rather than acting in an aggressive posture.

The mere fact that a standing President, Obama, during nationally televised Presidential debates labeled China as an "adversary" is indicative of the US military posture change. The depth and nature of the US pivot to China is crystal clear when one takes a closer look at the recent developments in an Asian US Missile Defense deployment, clearly aimed at China and no other.

China officially spent barely 10% of what the US does on its defense, some \$90 billion, or if certain defense-related arms import and other costs are included, perhaps \$111 billion a year. Even if the Chinese authorities do not publish complete data on such sensitive areas, it's clear China spends a mere fraction of the USA and is starting from a military-technology base far behind the USA.

The US defense budget is not just by far the world's largest. It dominates everyone else,

completely independent of any perceived threat. In the nineteenth century, the British Royal Navy built the size of its fleet according to the fleets of Britain's two most powerful potential enemies; America's defense budget strategists declare it will be "doomsday" if the United States builds its navy to anything less than five times that of China and Russia combined.<sup>[2]</sup>

If we include the spending by Russia, China's strongest ally within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, their combined total annual defense spending is barely \$142 billion. The world's ten top defense spending nations in addition to the USA as largest, and China as second largest, include the UK, France, Japan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Germany, India and Brazil. In 2011 the military spending of the United States totaled a staggering 46% of total spending by the world's 171 governments and territories, almost half the entire world.<sup>[3]</sup>

Clearly, for all its rhetoric about peace-keeping missions and "democracy" promotion, the Pentagon is pursuing what its planners refer to as "Full Spectrum Dominance," the total control of all global air, land, ocean, space, outer-space and now cyberspace.<sup>[4]</sup> It is clearly determined to use its military might to secure global domination or hegemony. No other interpretation is possible.

China today, because of its dynamic economic growth and its determination to pursue sovereign Chinese national interests, merely because China exists, is becoming the Pentagon new "enemy image," or adversary, now replacing the no longer useful "enemy image" of Islam used after September 2001 by the Bush-Cheney Administration to justify the Pentagon's global power pursuit.

After almost two decades of neglect of its interests in East Asia, in 2011, the Obama Administration announced that the US would make "a strategic pivot" in its foreign policy to focus its military and political attention on the Asia-Pacific, particularly Southeast Asia, that is, China.

#### 'Obama Doctrine' and Asian BMD

To date the heart of the initial stages of the China Pivot involve building a massive anti-Ballistic Missile Defense ring around China to neutralize China's nuclear strike potential. During the final months of 2011 the Obama Administration clearly defined a new public military threat doctrine for US military readiness in the wake of the US military failures in Iraq and Afghanistan. During a Presidential trip to the Far East, while in Australia, the US President unveiled what is being termed the Obama Doctrine.<sup>[5]</sup>

The following sections from Obama's speech in Australia are worth citing in detail:

*With most of the world's nuclear power and some half of humanity, Asia will largely define whether the century ahead will be marked by conflict or cooperation...As President, I have, therefore, made a deliberate and strategic decision — ...the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future...I have directed my national security team to make our presence and mission in the Asia Pacific a top priority... We will preserve our unique ability to project power and deter threats to peace...The United States is a Pacific power, and we are here to stay. Indeed, we are already modernizing America's defense posture across the Asia Pacific. ..We see our new posture here in Australia...I believe we can address shared challenges, such as*

*proliferation and maritime security, including cooperation in the South China Sea.*<sup>[6]</sup>

On August 24, 2012 the New York *Wall Street Journal* reported that the Obama Administration as part of its newly-announced policy of China Pivot, will expand its missile-defense shield, Ballistic Missile Defense or BMD as it is known in the military, in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>[7]</sup>

The official reason given by the Pentagon for its new BMD deployment to the Asian theater is to protect Japan, South Korea and other US allied countries in the region against a North Korean nuclear missile attack. That argument doesn't stand close scrutiny.

In reality, according to numerous reports, Washington has decided to invest in a major Ballistic Missile Defense network using Japan, South Korea and Australia. The real target of the BMD system is not North Korea, but rather the Peoples' Republic of China, the only power in the region possessing even a potential nuclear threat with serious long-range delivery capabilities. It is part of the new Pentagon strategy of imposing full control over the future development of China.

The Washington BMD offensive has to be viewed as well in the light of the well-timed Japanese government decision to deliberately provoke tension with China over the disputed Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea, a region believed to be vastly rich in natural gas reserves.<sup>[8]</sup>

### Part III: Japan Missile Defense Key

In September 2012, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced that the United States and Japan had reached a major agreement to deploy a second major advanced missile-defense radar on Japanese territory.<sup>[9]</sup> In his announcement Panetta declared, "The purpose of this is to enhance our ability to defend Japan. It's also designed to help forward-deployed US forces and it also will be effective in protecting the US homeland from the North Korean ballistic missile threat."<sup>[10]</sup> A glance at the map shows the nuclear holes in Panetta's statement. Chinese missile sites are just across the Korean border, well in range of the US-Japan new BMD installation.

The Washington decision to place advanced BMD infrastructure in Japan was made long ago as part of a US strategy of global military dominance. The BMD cooperation with Japan began in earnest on December 19, 2003, when the Japanese government issued the cabinet decision "On Introduction of Ballistic Missile Defense System and Other Measures." Ever since, establishing a robust missile defense system has been a Japan national security priority.

Under the current Japanese government's interpretation of Article 9 of Japan's Constitution, Japan's participation in collective self-defense is prohibited, as is using missile defense capabilities to defend a third country—even an ally such as the United States. Shinzo Abe, head of the Liberal Democratic Party, almost certain to become Prime Minister after the December 16 Lower House elections, is a strong advocate of BMD and of changing Article 9. That means we can expect a major shift to a more militant anti-China military posture from Tokyo. <sup>[11]</sup>

According to US military press accounts, the most important feature of the new Japanese

BMD project will be installation of a powerful early-warning radar, 'X-band', made by Raytheon Co. It's "a large, phased-array fire control sensor, featuring precision discrimination and interceptor support," designed to counter threats from 'rogue states.' It will be installed on an unnamed southern Japanese island.<sup>[12]</sup>

Japan's defense minister Satoshi Morimoto confirmed that Tokyo and Washington "have had various discussions over missile defenses, including how to deploy the US's X-Band radar system."<sup>[13]</sup> Japan already hosts one X-Band radar in the northern prefecture of Aomori, since 2006. It's heavily opposed by local residents who fear, not without good reason, that the presence of the radar makes them a target for potential enemy attacks.<sup>[14]</sup>

### BMD across Asia

The US move to prioritize its BMD installation in Asia involves not only Japan. Washington is also helping India improve its new missile defense system. The Indians want to build a multi-layer missile defense network with US help. Publicly India's government cites Pakistan as the reason. Privately, it's China. India test-fired its Agni-V intermediate range ballistic missile earlier this year and the Indian press openly cited the system's ability to strike anywhere in China as the most important feature.<sup>[15]</sup>

According to Steven Hildreth, a missile-defense expert with the Washington Congressional Research Service, the USA is "laying the foundations" for a region-wide missile defense system that would consist of US ballistic missile defenses combined with those of regional powers, particularly Japan, South Korea and Australia. Although supposedly aimed at containing threats from North Korea, Hildreth also stated, "the reality is that we're also looking longer term at the elephant in the room, which is China." According to a report in the *Wall Street Journal* the X-band arc would allow the US to 'peer deeper' into China, in addition to North Korea.<sup>[16]</sup>

As well, there are reports from unnamed US Defense Department officials that a third X-Band radar would be positioned in the Philippines, allowing the Pentagon to accurately track ballistic missiles launched from North Korea but also from large parts of China.<sup>[17]</sup>

In addition to Japan, Washington has invited South Korea and Australia to join the Asian BMD program. The official Chinese English language daily, *Global Times*, pointed out, "Among the nuclear powers, China has the smallest number of nuclear weapons. It is also the only country to make a 'no first use' commitment. Installing a missile defense system in Asia disrespects China's nuclear policy."

The *Global Times* article notes further, "If Japan, South Korea and Australia join the system, a vicious arms race in Asia may follow. It is not what China wants to see, but it will have to deal with it if the arms race happens. The US is creating waves in Asia. The region may see more conflicts intensify in the future. China should make utmost efforts to prevent it, but prepare for the worst."<sup>[18]</sup>

Part V: BMD encourages Nuclear First Strike

The US BMD strategy in Asia follows a decision by the Bush and Obama Administrations to first deploy BMD in a ring surrounding Russia with installations in Poland, the Czech Republic and Turkey, aimed at Russia's Intercontinental Ballistic Missile arsenal. As prominent retired US military officers have warned, deploying Ballistic Missile Defense against a potential nuclear opponent, whether Russia or China or North Korea or Iran is madness in strict military strategy terms.

With even a primitive missile defense shield, the US could launch a first strike attack against Russian or Chinese missile silos and submarine fleets with less fear of effective retaliation; the few remaining Russian or Chinese nuclear missiles would be unable to launch a response sufficiently destructive.

During the Cold War, the ability of the Warsaw Pact and NATO to mutually annihilate one another had led to a nuclear stalemate dubbed by military strategists, MAD—Mutually Assured Destruction. It was scary but, in a bizarre sense, more stable than what would come with a unilateral US pursuit of nuclear primacy. MAD was based on the prospect of mutual nuclear annihilation with no decisive advantage for either side; it led to a world in which nuclear war had been 'unthinkable.'

Now the US, with BMD in Europe against Russia and in Asia against China, is pursuing the possibility of nuclear war as 'thinkable.' That is really and truly 'mad.'

The first nation with a ballistic missile 'defense' shield (BMD) would de facto have 'first strike ability,' making BMD not defensive but offensive in the extreme. Lt. Colonel Robert Bowman, Director of the US Air Force Missile Defense Program during the Reagan era, recently called missile defense, "the missing link to a First Strike."<sup>191</sup> BMD gives an incentive to make a first nuclear strike, something never before imaginable owing to the lack of certainty one's nation would not become nuclear radioactive rubble. In military terms, BMD is offensive, not defensive contrary to the name, and should properly be named Ballistic Missile Offense.

Bowman further notes:

*Under Reagan and Bush I, it was called the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization (SDIO). Under President Clinton, it became the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (BMDO). Now Bush II made it the Missile Defense Agency (MDA) and has given it the freedom from oversight and audit previously enjoyed only by the black or top secret programs. If Congress doesn't act soon, this new independent agency may take their essentially unlimited budget and spend it outside of public and Congressional scrutiny on weapons that we won't know anything about until they're in space. In theory, then, the space warriors would rule the world, able to destroy any target on earth without warning. Will these new super weapons bring the American people security? Hardly.*<sup>201</sup>

Washington's major deployment of BMD across Asia is a major reason likely for the sudden decision to delay the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress until after the US elections to see whether China faced a President Romney or President Obama. What has materialized in terms of US military decisions in the few months since Obama first proclaimed his Asia Pivot and Obama Doctrine makes clear why China is increasingly nervous about Obama 'pivots.'

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Notes

[1] Jonathan Marcus, *China extending military reach*, 14 June 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13761711>

[2] Winslow Wheeler, *The Military Imbalance: How The US Outspends the World*, March 16, 2012, accessed in <http://www.iiss.org/publications/military-balance/the-military-balance-2012/press-statement/figure-comparative-defence-statistics/>.

[3] Ibid.

[4] F. William Engdahl, *Full Spectrum Dominance: Totalitarian Democracy in the New World Order*, 2010, edition.engdahl,Wiesbaden.

[5] President Barack Obama, *Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament*, November 17, 2011, accessed in <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Brian Spegele et al, *US Missile Shield Plan Seen Stoking China Fears*, The Wall Street Journal, August 24, 2012, accessed in <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390444082904577609054116070694.html>.

[8] Kazunori Takada, *Japanese firms shut China plants, US urges calm in islands row*, Reuters, September 17, 2012, accessed in <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/09/17/uk-china-japan-idUSLNE88G01A20120917>.

[9] Thom Shanker and Ian Johnson, *US Accord With Japan Over Missile Defense Draws Criticism in China*, The New York Times, September 17, 2012, accessed in <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/18/world/asia/u-s-and-japan-agree-on-missile-defense-system.html?pagewanted=all>

[10] Chris Carroll, *US, Japan Announce Expanded Missile Defense System*, September 17, 2012, Stars and Stripes, accessed in <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2012/09/17/us-japan-announce-expanded-missile-defense-system.html>

[11] Masako Toki, *Missile defense in Japan*, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 16 January 2009, accessed in <http://www.thebulletin.org/web-edition/features/missile-defense-japan>



[12] RT, *Shield revealed US spreads missile defenses East*, Russia Today, 24 August, 2012, accessed in <http://rt.com/news/us-missile-defense-asia-432/>.

[13] Brian Spegele, et al, *US Missile Shield Plan Seen Stoking China Fears*, Wall Street Journal, August 24, 2012, accessed in <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390444082904577609054116070694.html>

[14] Ibid.

[15] Trefor Moss, *Asia's New Arms Race: Missiles, Missile Defenses*, August 27, 2012, accessed in

<http://thediomat.com/flashpoints-blog/2012/08/27/asias-new-arms-race-missiles-missile-defenses/>.

[16] RT, op. cit.

[17] Brian Spegele, op. cit.

[18] Global Times, *US missile shield fosters Asian arms race*, Beijing, Global Times, March 29, 2012, accessed in <http://www.globaltimes.cn/NEWS/tabid/99/ID/702623/US-missile-shield-fosters-Asian-arms-race.aspx>.

[19] F. William Engdahl, *Full Spectrum Dominance: Totalitarian Democracy in the New World Order*, edition.engdahl, Wiesbaden, 2009, p. 162.

[20] Ibid., p. 161.

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