

The Process and the Aftermath of the THAAD Deployment in South Korea

Korea University, South Korea

Kim Ji Soo, Freshmen

[Abstract] East Asia countries have always been in tension due to the complicated relationship. With both Koreas in an armistice situation, North Korea has been active working on war weapons such as the nuclear bomb. On the other hand, Korea as not set hands on doing so because of the treaties made between member states of the UN and with America. In 2016 July, Korea and America came to an agreement to set up the THAAD. The settlement of THAAD has caused the relationship between South Korea and China apart even more and it has eventually impacted Korea's economy. It is necessary to evaluate both the positive and negative outcomes of THAAD deployment in South Korea.

[keyword] THAAD, Missile Defense, South Korea, China, Deployment.

1] Introduction

The 'Terminal High Altitude Area Defense' mostly well known as THAAD is a device made to track active missiles and intercept it in between to prevent mass destruction. THAAD which has been developed by Lockheed Martin was first signed in 2007 with the US government to protect the nation and allies from missile attacks and threats.

According to the 'Institute for Security & Development Policy,' THAAD system consists of five parts which are the launchers, missiles, fire control, THAAD radar, and support equipment. It is also stated that the missiles range of 200 kilometers with the altitude up to 150 kilometers.

THAAD destroys the missile through the hit to kill collision method and in that process of collision to destroying the missile the inner process is very complicated. [1,2,7]

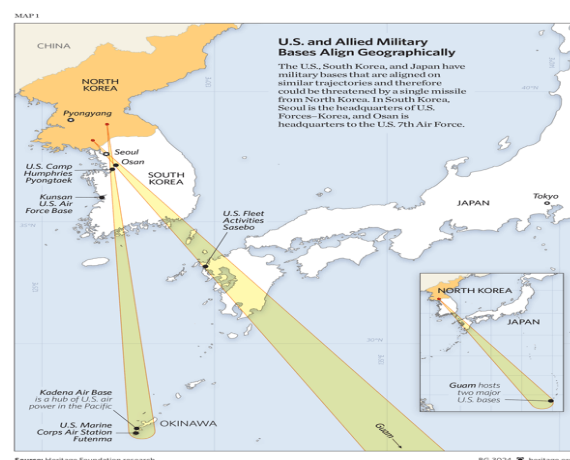
Decision Made for THAAD Deployment in South Korea

On July 7th 2016, South Korea and United States of America agreed to position the THAAD on South Korea's ground. THAAD's positioning has been agreed upon with the largest reason being that of the threat from North Korea's nuclear testing. Ever since the deployment has been decided, it has grabbed a lot of attention from the Koreans and surrounding countries and has been a hot potato until today. It has brought up both voices that support and oppose the deployment within Korea. When South Korea and the US agreed on the deployment in 2016, they stated that it was to defend any threats given from North Korea in various ways.

South and North Korea has been in war in the 1950s knows as the Korean War which lasted few years and have been in ceasefire with the help of the United Nation allies. For over 50 years, the tension between the two Koreas has tightened up after the Sunlight Policy came to a halt and a new government moved in.

South Korea, as a country with a ceasefire relationship with North Korea, army training and the effort to improve the defense system has been continuing for a long time. As much as military service is mandatory in South Korea, defense system is extremely important.

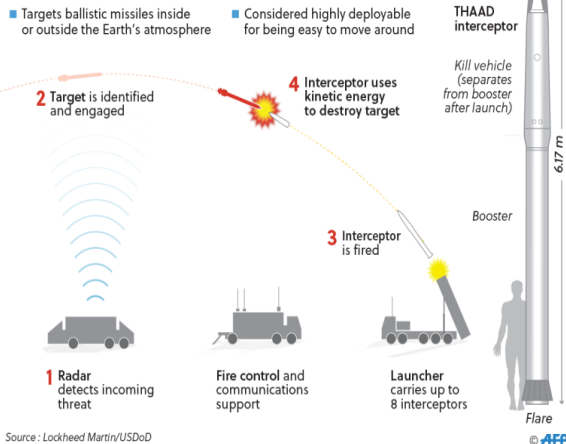
Defense News has also been reported in June 2016, that 'North Korea has deployed Musudan missiles – with ranges that cover all of South Korea and Japan but could reach as far as Guam...' [3]



Map showing how a single North Korean missile can threaten and reach up to Japan and US base

Missile defense system

THAAD: Terminal High Altitude Area Defense



Process to how THAAD missile defense system works

Voices of Korean Citizens

With the decision to deploy THAAD, there have been voices for and against it. As for those who are for the deployment see that it will protect South Korea from any possible nuclear attacks or any other form of attack from North Korea in the future. [20]

According to the Institute for Security & Development Policy, they have summarized the 'People's Reaction to THAAD' as following. As the location of deployment was set to Seongju, the citizens of Seongju have disapproved this decision. It is written:

"The inhabitants continually expressed their discontent citing health concerns due to radiation and loss of land for the THAAD installation. The radiation claims have been disputed by the US, but experts disagree whether the safe distance from a THAAD radar is 100 meters or 3.6 kilometers. Some residents also expressed concerns that there would be an increase in loud bars, drunken soldiers, prostitution, and other illicit activities that have been prevalent around many of the US military bases throughout South Korea. [1]

Furthermore, there is the fear that the presence of THAAD will make Seongju a military target. 900 residents protested THAAD by shaving their heads in August and managed to collect 100,000 signatures for a petition against THAAD, which was sent to the White House. [13, 14]

The decision to choose Seongju as the location for the THAAD battery has also been considered as undemocratic. Local residents claim that they had not been consulted until after the decision was made. The county governor also stated that he had only learned of the decision through the media reports." [1, 5]

Despite the voices against the deployment, the process didn't stop but instead searched for another location. On Wednesday 16, 2016 Lotte Group agreed to hand over their golf course land in Seongju for THAAD deployment and take the land value of the golf course of the military base in Namyangju. [2]



Anti-war activists holding placards to oppose THAAD

The Twisted Relationship between China and South Korea

Following the decision of deployment, China has responded sentimentally to the issue. Despite the statements and the reasons that South Korean and US has set forth in the deployment by saying that it is to protect threats from North Korea, China has taken in the decision differently. In China's perspective, THAAD is placed by the US to expand their interest in territories and it could possibly be used to attack China. [3]

However, China's strong opposition did not affect South Korea's decision in deployment. As a result of the final decision of deployment, China has shown actions of retaliation against South Korea by targeting the economy.

As mentioned, China retaliated against South Korea by restricting tourism, cancelling events, and even by closing down super markets.

It started with China disapproving the deployment and as the process continued, they started to show actions in which they said they will show retaliation against South Korea's decision.

China then took the next step by starting to block Korean media from entering China and even causing Korean celebrities to cancel events that have been planned to take place in China's mainland.

According to telegraph, they mentioned The Korea Times' report that since October, None of the Korean stars have been given the permission to perform in Beijing. Korean media including TV shows, films have been banned and commercials where Korean celebrities have been participating in have been replaced by Chinese stars. [4]

It has been well known among K-pop and K-drama fans how big and powerful China's entertainment market is. With Chinese government putting a blockade on all these media context have started to impact Korea's entertainment business with one of the reason being that a lot of the drama's are made by entertainment companies to target the Chinese viewers.

However according to telegraph, Beijing has not officially announced a ban on Korean entertainment and China's foreign ministry spokesman also mentioned "I have never heard about any restriction on the ROK (Republic of Korea), and the Chinese side is always positive to people-to-people and cultural exchanges with the country." [4]

Not only has the entertainment business been affected but China has also ordered Chinese tourist offices to ban all promotion or packages for traveling to Korea. It has been obvious in Korea where there used to be a lot of Chinese tourist.

From the controversy over THAAD, Lotte Group is considered one of the biggest targets that have been hit. Lotte Group is not only one of the biggest running corporations in Korea with branches in media, food, shopping, and entertainment – amusement parks but also the ones who have their golf course to deploying THAAD. Lotte Group's amusement park Lotte World is one of the main attractions to not only Koreans but also to foreigners. Also shopping centers such as Lotte Department stores and Lotte Duty Free are definitely branches that produce profits. [6] Lotte Group also has many branches within China and has been reported to be tremendously hit.

According to VOA News, they reported that 55 of Lotte stores including Lotte Marts have been closed down after any violent events. There have been videos of shoppers consuming food inside the marts without paying, destroying products, breaking glass bottles, and also protesting in front of the stores. [8, 9, 10] Not only have stores been closed down but Lotte has been faced tremendous tax probe in China. According to Chosun Ilbo, Lotte Chemical officials stated that five of the manufacturing operations near Shanghai have been audited and the Chinese tax authorities have demanded for documents and records from Lotte Confectionery factories. [11, 12]



Chinese shoppers breaking products from Lotte Mart

Reliability and the Importance THAAD's deployment

As the deployment of THAAD is still an issue in Korea, it is important to see the pros and cons to it. As South Korea is still in threat from North Korea's weapon of massive destruction, defense system does need to be strengthen, however it is important to measure the effectiveness and the outcomes of it.

The hankyoreh has reported an article with the following statement:

"Theodore Postol, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and George Lewis, a visiting scholar at the Cornell University Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, reached this conclusion on June 14 from an analysis on whether a THAAD system in South

Korea could successfully intercept a North Korean Scud or Nodong missile.

The Hankyoreh was the first media outlet to acquire the findings from Postol and Lewis, both leading experts with years of research into US missile defense systems. While US experts and news outlets have previously noted possible problems with the use of Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD) to protect the mainland US, the question of THAAD interception capabilities has remained a mystery, with few raising questions about the systems' deployment and export to allies. The new findings now appear to hold important implications for a full-scale debate on THAAD's military efficacy.

The findings showed that both the North Korean Scud-B and Scud-C missiles, with ranges of around 300 and 600 km respectively, and the Nodong missile, with a range of around 1,000 km, would fall in the range of THAAD interceptability.

But they also concluded a THAAD unit would have difficulty accurately targeting the Scud-B and Scud-C missiles because of their irregular trajectory, which moves in a spinning or screw-shaped pattern rather than a straight line once it finishes its powered flight and reaches a target.

In the case of a Nodong interception, the same irregular movement issues apply, along with the basic US missile defense problem of being unable to distinguish genuine warheads from decoys. Noting that intercepting missile would have to be fired when the Nodong is at an altitude of over 105 km from its target, Postol and Lewis said the difference from a decoy would be difficult to identify at that height. While a decoy is lighter and would have a slower descent to earth, the thin air at that altitude would produce similar descent speeds, making the warhead and decoy difficult to tell apart."

Not only has the accuracy been questioned but also words that THAAD is unable to protect South Korea's capital city, Seoul has been brought up. [16] According to 'The National Interest,' it is stated that "THAAD changes almost nothing geopolitically. It is a defensive system intended recapture the status quo ante against Northern missilization. It does not facilitate American or South Korean offensive action against North Korea or China.....South Korea is only buying one THAAD battery, which has only 8-10 rockets. That battery will not, as a concession to the China, cover Seoul. THAAD also does nothing to reduce North Korea's conventional, artillery-barrage choke-hold on Seoul." [17]

Bruce Klinger of the Heritage Foundation has made the following statement that summarizes what a lot of experts have said about the limitations of the deployment of THAAD in South Korea.

He has stated as following:

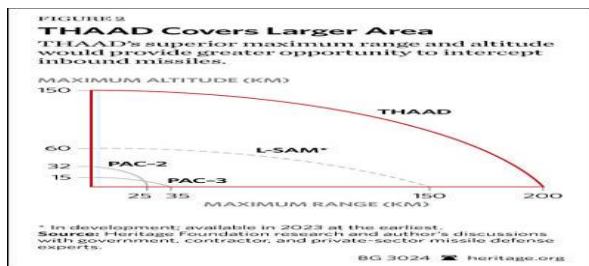
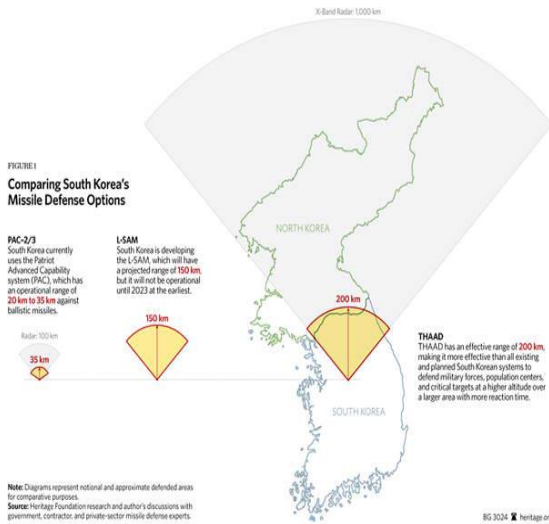
"The THAAD system is designed to intercept short-range, medium-range, and some intermediate-range ballistic missiles' trajectories at endo-atmospheric and exo-atmospheric altitudes in their terminal phase. In conjunction with the Patriot missile system, THAAD would create an essential multilayered defensive shield for South Korea. THAAD's large-area defense capability with 72 interceptors per battery would complement Patriot's point defense and enable defense of more military forces, population centers, and critical targets.

South Korea's Hannam University conducted a computer simulation that showed a PAC-2/3 low-altitude missile defense system would have only one second to intercept a North Korean missile at a range of 12-15 kilometers (km), while a THAAD medium-range system would have 45 seconds to intercept a missile at 40-150 km.

South Korea's planned indigenous L-SAM would have less altitude and range than THAAD and would not be available for deployment until at least 2023. However, that target date is unlikely since creating a missile defense system is a long, expensive, and difficult process. For example, THAAD took approximately 30 years for the U.S. to fully develop, test, and field. The THAAD system has already been developed, tested (scoring a 100 percent success rate of 11 for 11 successful intercepts), and deployed.

A Lockheed Martin simulation showed that a single THAAD battery could defend most of South Korea against a North Korean missile attack, while two batteries would protect all of Korea except the southeast and provide greater protection against multiple missile attacks. Three batteries would cover all of South Korea." [18]

With the two statements and by viewing the ranges to how THAAD will defend South Korea, it could protect US military bases in Korea but Seoul which is one of the most populated cities will not be in the range to be protected. [19]



[Conclusion]

THAAD was chosen by South Korea not only because US made a proposal but it was also because it can be reposition quickly and it is more flexibly in responding to various threats. However, there still has been questions to rather it will be able to hit precisely incoming missiles and if it would be able to differentiate between decoys and real warheads. Also as many states that it will not be able to protect Seoul it will continue to be a hot potato. It is important to question THAAD can do for South Korea and what negative outcomes result from it should be evaluated in all levels with precise measurements.

It could make North Korea become more cautious of making nuclear testing but if North Korea continues to build weapons, there is a limitation to what South Korea would be able to do with the limited number of defense weapons. The tension between North Korea and South Korea has become even stronger and more apparent and it has also cause a crack between Korea and China's relationship.

With issues concerning THAAD, it would definitely last a long time as it is a matter of South Korea's defense system. Along with this issue, it would be wise to reflect and see how much Korea has relied on China for economic growth and also to how much we rely on United States and what we should do from now on.

★★★★★

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