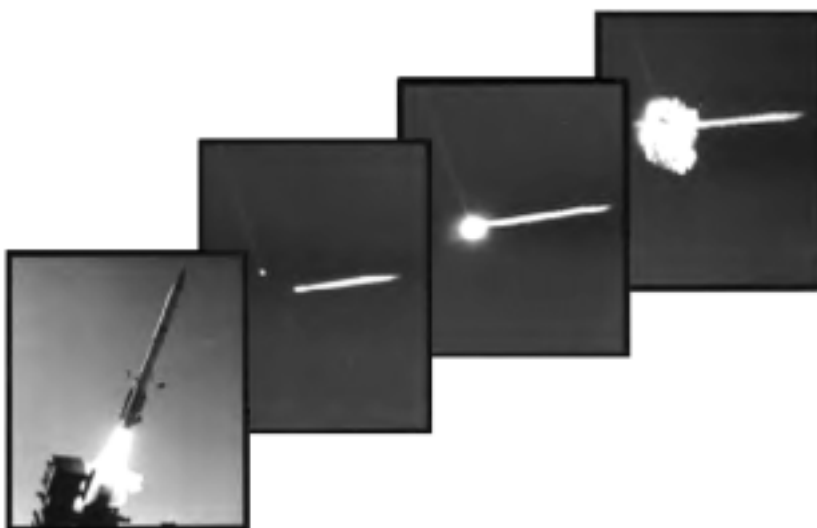


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## The Global Politics and Strategy of Missile Defense

*Essays by*

STEVEN E. MILLER, VLADIMIR BARANOVSKY, CHU SHULONG, THÉRÈSE DELPECH,  
JOHN B. RHINELANDER, WALTER B. SLOCOMBE, AND GEORGE W. RATHJENS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editor's Note ..... 1

STEVEN E. MILLER

*Reversing the Tide: The Changing Strategic*

*Context and the Rise of Missile Defense* ..... 3

VLADIMIR BARANOVSKY

*The Dynamics of Russian Missile Defense Policy* ..... 27

CHU SHULONG

*Missile Defenses and East Asian Stability* ..... 39

THÉRÈSE DELPECH

*A New Transatlantic Deal on Missile Defenses?* ..... 48

JOHN RHINELANDER

*US Missile Defense and the ABM Treaty* ..... 60

WALTER B. SLOCOMBE

*Stability Effects of Limited Missile Defenses:*

*The Case for the Affirmative* ..... 73

GEORGE RATHJENS

*Ruminations on the Utility of*

*Nuclear Weapons and Missile Defenses* ..... 89

Acronyms ..... 99

Como Workshop participants ..... 100

ON THE COVER: **Patriot PAC-3 Intercept Sequence**

Photo: Ballistic Missile Defense Organization, DOD

## Editor's Note

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The Pugwash Conferences held its second workshop on *Nuclear Stability and Missile Defenses* in Como, Italy, from 6-8 September 2001. A few days later, as participants were returning to their homes or traveling on to other business, the world as we know it changed with the September 11 terror attacks.

At first, the international response to September 11 seemed as if it would greatly alter the security dynamics of the missile defense issue. As time went on, however, as the essays in this volume make clear, both proponents and opponents of missile defense found much in September 11 to buttress their case either for or against US plans for national missile defense. What did change in the missile defense equation, to the advantage of the proponents, was the American domestic politics of the issue.

Then, on December 13, 2001, President George W. Bush announced that the United States would exercise its right as stipulated within the ABM Treaty to withdraw from that treaty, effective six months hence, at midnight on June 13, 2002.

The importance of these two dates, September 11 and December 13, for the debate over missile defense in particular, and the way we think about the threat posed by nuclear weapons in general, led the authors of the Como essays to revise (or not revise) their papers in light of these new developments in international security. Again, as these papers demonstrate, one can make a forceful argument that September 11 has either validated or shown the folly of making missile defense a priority, in the same way that one can argue that the US abrogating the ABM Treaty on June 13, 2002 will either pull down the entire structure of nuclear weapons arms control or usher in a needed new era of strategic thinking that goes beyond Cold War constructs.

What is common to all the papers, however, whatever their bias either for or against missile defense and the ABM Treaty, is that international security and reducing the threat posed by nuclear weapons will not be served by unilateral policies. In the same way that international cooperation will be needed to combat terror networks and the grievances that help give rise to such networks, so will cooperation, especially among the nuclear powers, be needed to drastically reduce current arsenals, ensure stability at lower force levels, and prevent the dispersion and leakage of nuclear materials and weapons to those who would not hesitate to use them.

The deployment of missile defenses, and the putative threat they are meant to defend against, will likely not materialize until several years into the future. As demonstrated by September 11, the threat posed by the use of a nuclear weapon could be far more imminent, and it is that threat that must command the continued close cooperation of the international community.



The Pugwash Conferences would like to thank our hosts for the Como meeting, the Municipality of Como and the Mayor of Como, dott. Alberto Botta, and Maurizio Martellini and the Landau Network Centro Volta. Partial support for the publication of this Occasional Paper was provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, though the views expressed in the individual essays are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of either the Pugwash Conferences, its hosts, or its funders.

Jeffrey Boutwell  
Editor

# **Reversing the Tide: The Changing Strategic Context and the Rise of Missile Defense**

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*Steven E. Miller*

On Monday, August 27, 2001, the contractor Aglaq Construction Enterprises began clearing land at Fort Greely, Alaska, in preparation for the eventual installation of missile defense interceptors.<sup>1</sup> This is the first tangible step toward the deployment of missile defenses that the United States has taken in several decades. It represents the triumph of American missile defense proponents in the long and intense policy battle that was first triggered by President Ronald Reagan in the early 1980s; his “Star Wars” speech of March 23, 1983 reopened a debate that had seemed to be definitively settled by the 1972 ABM Treaty. To be sure, it is not clear how durable this victory will be or where this small first step will lead. But it certainly symbolizes a dramatic evolution in American policy on missile defense and reflects the predominance in American politics of a coalition favoring missile defense of one sort or another. The solution of 1972—the permanent repudiation of missile defenses—is coming undone.

On December 13, 2001, the Bush Administration took another step that illustrated dramatically the momentum toward missile defenses in the United States: it formally notified Russia of the intention of the United States to withdraw from the ABM Treaty in six months. This is a lawful act, involving the exercise of an option provided by Article XV, paragraph 2 of the ABM Treaty. But it is a fateful political step, symbolizing the determination of the Bush Administration to pursue missile defenses without constraint and despite the resistance and regret of Russia, China and many of Washington’s own allies.<sup>2</sup>

These outcomes are, at least in part, artifacts of domestic politics in the United States. During the 1990s, a relatively small but powerful and well placed group of ardent missile defense supporters in the US Congress (especially the Senate) very effectively championed the cause of missile defense. Republican proponents of NMD (including Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Jesse Helms) skillfully exploited their control of the Congress to elevate missile defense on the policy agenda and to press for the

abandonment of the ABM Treaty and for the serious pursuit of missile defense deployments. The Clinton Administration could neither ignore this high priority of its powerful Congressional antagonists nor, it appears, was President Clinton prepared to risk being outmaneuvered in terms of the electoral politics of missile defense. By the end of his term, President Clinton had signed the National Missile Defense Act of 1999, which declares it to be the policy of the United States to deploy missile defenses as soon as technically practicable. He had also committed his administration to the deployment of limited national missile defenses. These policies undoubtedly elicited genuine support from some in the administration, but for many Clinton's missile defense plans were simply a domestic political necessity in search of a plausible strategic rationale.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, President Bush's enthusiastic embrace of missile defenses is thought by some to be related at least in part to his desire to satisfy important constituencies within the Republican party.<sup>4</sup>

But American politics is only part of the story, a necessary but not sufficient explanation for the current state of affairs. The move toward deployment of missile defenses is a consequence not only of the rough and tumble of American politics but of the hugely altered strategic context within which the renewed missile defense debate is taking place. Indeed, the policy fight in the United States would have played out very differently were it not for the fact that a new strategic environment has emerged in the post-Cold War era. In this new world, old nostrums lost their relevance, traditional strategic thought has been called into question, cost-benefit calculations have altered, and different policy options beckon. The new strategic context changed—in fact, over time it reversed—the domestic balance of power between supporters and opponents of missile defense.

As members of the Bush Administration have repeatedly said, this is a very different world. There is no reason to assume that the old answers are still the right or necessary answers. Given the changes in the strategic environment over the past ten years, it is appropriate to fundamentally reconsider the role that missile defenses might play and to assess whether a recalculated cost-benefit analysis might favor some sort of missile defense deployment. As it turns out, there continue to be many who conclude that missile defense is still not yet desirable, even in the new strategic environment.<sup>5</sup> But in the United States at least, the post-Cold War strategic context has shifted the tide, gradually but with growing strength, in favor of missile defense deployments.

What changes in the strategic context have facilitated the rise of missile defense in the United States, and what are the implications of these changes?

In what follows, I attempt to provide some brief answers to this question. My aim in this exercise is not to lay out my own personal views on missile defense,<sup>6</sup> but to identify and describe a set of changes in the strategic context that have helped to produce a political and intellectual environment in the United States that is much more receptive to the idea of missile defense. Here I focus on three broad areas of change that have helped to create in the United States a climate favorable to missile defense: the transformation of relations with Moscow; the rise of new adversaries; and the emergence of doubts about the utility and desirability of deterrence. These factors, as we shall see, were conducive to missile defense even before September 11, but the terrorist attack experienced by the United States has given further impetus to the cause.

### **The disappearance of the old adversary: Russia is not the Soviet Union**

The ABM Treaty is an instrument that was intended to help regulate the nuclear arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States in the context of deep hostility between the two great Cold War rivals. In particular, it was meant to preclude an expensive and fruitless offense-defense arms race that could easily lead to even more prodigious accumulations of offensive forces (to offset defensive capabilities on the other side) with no net improvement in security. Moreover, in the context of vast and growing offensive arsenals, most (though never all) could rather readily accept the conclusion that any foreseeable defensive capabilities would provide little meaningful capability—because offensive forces could without difficulty overwhelm defensive postures. Now, everything about this logic is changed: the Soviet Union is no more; the deep and inherent hostility is no more; the nuclear arms race is no more; existing nuclear arsenals are smaller and shrinking; and missile defenses may be deployed against threats that cannot easily overwhelm them. In short, the political-strategic framework in which the ABM Treaty was embedded has been utterly transformed, indeed, almost reversed.

This reality has had (and should have) a large impact on the way in which the ABM Treaty is viewed and assessed. There is no reason to assume that the ABM Treaty has the same meaning, importance, impact, or implications as it had in the past. Similarly, the disappearance of the Cold War framework has changed the way many in the United States view the potential costs and benefits of defensive deployments. What struck a majority during the Cold War era as clearly undesirable now strikes a majority as clearly desirable (setting aside wide variations in the size and character of preferred missile defense deploy-

ments). This has contributed significantly to the substantial consensus in Washington that some sort of missile defense deployment should go ahead.

In this new context, many believe that there is less reason for Russia to object to US missile defense plans (because they are not directed against Moscow) and that Russian objections are less important (because the strategic relationship with Moscow is no longer so central to American concerns). Nevertheless, another feature of the current strategic context is Russia's continuing, albeit erratic, opposition both to the abandonment of the ABM Treaty and to the anticipated deployment of US missile defenses. Despite what outsiders think should be Russia's reaction, Moscow is clearly discomfited by the new American movement toward missile defenses.

Why might this be the case? What Russian interests are engaged by this issue?<sup>7</sup> Are there legitimate grounds for Russian objections to the shift in US policy on missile defense? One possible answer has to do with Russia's status in the world.<sup>8</sup> Bilateral nuclear arrangements with the United States represent one of the few settings in which Russia can function as something akin to a superpower. It is understandable that Moscow would be reluctant to countenance the elimination of such settings. Another, perhaps related, concern may be that missile defense represents yet another embodiment of US primacy, another military capability unique to the United States and offering it possibilities available to no other party. Those in Moscow who find the temptations of an anti-hegemonic policy to be attractive or irresistible (not a small number) are unlikely to welcome or to accommodate a development that in their eyes looks like another substantial stone in the edifice of American hegemony. Further, in pursuing missile defense, the United States heads down a path where Russia cannot follow, thus underscoring the inequality that now exists between the onetime superpower foes. Such considerations may be easy to dismiss by non-Russians, but they may be quite potent and politically salient in a Russia still struggling to grasp a role and an identity in the post-Soviet era.

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***Bilateral nuclear arrangements with the United States represent one of the few settings in which Russia can function as something akin to a superpower***

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Russia may have (or at least, Russians may perceive that they have) two more tangible strategic interests at stake in the missile defense issues. First, though both the Clinton and the Bush administrations have argued that the limited missile defenses under contemplation would not jeopardize the still enormous Russian nuclear arsenal, Russian authorities and analysts may still worry about the implications of US missile defenses in relation to the retaliatory nuclear capability on which Russia's deterrent posture rests. It is true that Russia still pos-



sesses large nuclear holdings, but they are in a poor state. The warning system has significantly eroded, many of its forces are in a low state of readiness, its command and control system has degraded. This force appears to be hugely vulnerable to a first strike. Moreover, projections suggest that Russia's strategic forces will decline dramatically over the coming decade due to budgetary constraints. Russian forces may reach their nadir just as US missile defense deployments are coming into being. US missile defenses may be a very serious concern if Moscow judges that its retaliatory deterrent capabilities will be quite small. Western analysts may be quick to point out that no one is going to attack Russia in a first strike and that this line of analysis represents the old, Cold War, way of thinking. Nevertheless, those who do Russia's worst case thinking and those responsible for the efficacy of her strategic forces may take this scenario seriously. Those Russians who wish to preserve its deterrent posture should take this scenario seriously. After all, these are two powers that continue to possess thousands of nuclear weapons largely oriented at one another; and their harmonious relations are not assured in the future. At a minimum, it is not hard to imagine that Russia's elite will wish to preserve the one capability that puts them on equal footing with the lone superpower.

Second, Russia may be worried about the impact of US missile defense on Chinese nuclear preparations. In the context of American primacy, Beijing and Moscow may find it convenient and advantageous to court one another in pursuit of their common anti-hegemonic interests. But these are still two states with a long history of difficult and conflictual relations. Russia cannot be entirely sanguine about China's rapidly rising power in Eurasia. Indeed, unease about China is not hard to find in Moscow, even among those who see the tactical utility in playing the China card against the United States. Hence, Russia cannot be happy at the thought that US missile defense deployments might provoke China to a larger and faster nuclear modernization than would have otherwise been the case. This could be a real complication for Russia in the future.

Outsiders may question the legitimacy of Russia's concerns about missile defense. But trying to see the world empathetically through Russian eyes, it does appear that it has meaningful grounds for opposing US moves on missile defense. Many in the West credit Russia's objections and worry about moving ahead despite Russian opposition. But for several reasons, many in the American debate discount Russia's concerns and objections.

**Friendly Relations Detoxify Missile Defenses:** American missile defense proponents are perplexed by Russia's position but continue to believe that Russia's objections can be overcome because the two powers are not adversaries, their

relations are not particularly hostile, greater partnership in the future is an articulated aspiration on both sides, and current US missile defense plans are not intended to thwart Russia in any way. With enough dialogue and persuasion, this view holds, Moscow will come to understand that it has nothing to fear from US missile defense deployments. Both the Clinton and the Bush administrations have put considerable stock in this proposition and made considerable effort to convince the Russians that missile defenses ought to be benign in the context of post-Cold War relations between Moscow and Washington. Perhaps eventually this campaign will succeed, but it has not been wholly successful so far. And any Russian analyst who stumbles upon the Heritage Foundation web site (among others) will soon discover that Russia—the Russian threat—is very much in the minds of the most passionate American advocates of missile defense and that their vision for missile defense (vast land-, sea-, air- and space-based deployments that would permit boost-phase, mid-course, and terminal interception as well as total dominance of space) would have massive implications for Russia’s strategic posture. It may not be easy for official US policy to overcome the mixed messages that emerge from the American debate.

**Arms Control is a Cold War Relic:** Russia (and many in the West who are sympathetic to Russia’s views) has remained committed to the ABM Treaty and seems to regard it as a cornerstone of the larger edifice of nuclear arms control. Moscow apparently continues to value this edifice and rues the potential harm that US missile defense policies may do to the existing treaty regime and to the prospects for future arms control. The Bush Administration, in league with many ardent proponents of US missile defense, operates from a completely different premise. It regards arms control in general, and the ABM Treaty in particular, to be an obsolete relic, neither necessary nor desirable, and further, not even appropriate in the context of friendly relations between Moscow and Washington.<sup>9</sup> As Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has commented, “Arms control treaties are not for friends.”<sup>10</sup> The Bush Administration sees the nuclear arms control legacy of the Cold War as something to be dismantled and supplanted rather than as something to be valued and preserved. It seeks to persuade Moscow that the time has come to move beyond these agreements to a “new strategic framework” in which missile defenses have a place and the ABM Treaty does not. Rather than accommodate Russia’s concerns about missile defense, the goal of the Bush Administration is to convince Moscow to accept, if not embrace, a new kind of strategic relationship. From the time it entered office, the Bush Administration has been optimistic that with persistence it can succeed in bringing the Russians around to this view.

**Economic Constraints Prevent a New Arms Race:** Even if Russia does not make its peace with American missile defense policies, the strategic consequences of going ahead with deployment will not be great because Russia cannot afford to respond. Indeed, for some time to come, budget pressures will cause Moscow's nuclear arsenal to shrink no matter what the United States does. Accordingly, US missile defense deployments will not trigger the costly offense-defense race that was so feared during the Cold War. A related, though subsidiary, point is that Russia is thought to be in no position to emulate Washington's pursuit of missile defenses (leaving aside, of course, the vestigial Russian missile defense system left over from the Cold War). Thus, there will be no defense-defense race either, and the United States does not need to worry about the strategic consequences of a Russian program to develop and deploy an advanced missile defense system. A corollary of this judgement is that to many in the United States (especially among strong supporters of US missile defense) it appears that the ABM Treaty has really been constraining only the United States—a perception that can hardly be congenial to an American administration that is reluctant to accept even multilateral treaties that constrain nearly everyone.

**Let's Make a Deal:** Gaining Russia's acquiescence to its missile defense plans has great value to Washington. It would allay the concerns of skeptical allies, undercut domestic critics, and prevent the unwanted complication of damage to the US-Russian relationship. The road out of the ABM Treaty and toward missile defense deployments would be much smoother if Russian cooperation were obtained. Reaching such a deal was a significant priority for the Clinton Administration. But even the Bush Administration, with its unilateralist instincts, rapidly came to understand the advantages of pursuing its missile defense policies in harmony with Russia if possible (though it continued to proclaim its willingness to proceed unilaterally if necessary). In this sense, Washington's embrace of missile defense has been a great gift to Russia. Moscow, which is otherwise largely bereft of leverage in its relations with Washington, was in a position to offer something that the United States wants. The makings of a bargain seemed to exist.

To be sure, it was never entirely clear that Russia was genuinely interested in achieving such a deal. Its sustained and occasionally intemperate criticism of US missile defense policy might suggest otherwise. But a deal could well have made sense for Moscow, despite its open discontent about US missile defense policy and despite its sometimes harsh rhetoric. It is a case that involves choosing the best among bad options, but that indeed is the circumstance in which Russia found itself. [See the essay by Vladimir Baranovsky.] For example, if the

US were prepared to proceed no matter what Russia did, as now turns out to be the case with the Bush Administration, then Moscow might as well have seen what it could get in return for its cooperation. Otherwise, it would get nothing but still have to contend with American withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and American pursuit of missile defense deployments. Similarly, if amendment rather than abandonment of the treaty were an option (which is no longer the case given the decision of the Bush Administration), then Moscow could have faced a choice between a modified treaty and a somewhat constrained US BMD program or no treaty and an unconstrained US program. Russian policymakers might regret that this was the choice they faced, but if these were the options the former is preferable to the latter. Moreover, negotiating a deal might have been the only means Russia had to influence the scale and pace of the US missile defense program.

Thus, arguably there were significant incentives for Russia to make a deal eventually even if its distaste for the direction of US policy is deep and genuine. There were also significant incentives for Russia to drive up the price by playing hard to get—a consideration that could explain Russia's ambivalent behavior, combining coy hints that it might be interested in a deal with strong denunciations of missile defense. Though a successful deal was certainly never inevitable, at the end of the day it would not have been surprising if a bargain had been struck. Such a bargain would have transformed the politics of the issue, reducing the diplomatic costs to the United States of moving ahead while undermining many of the arguments of missile defense critics at home. This is why the prospect of a deal with Russia has been so alluring to both the Clinton and Bush administrations; a deal would enable the United States to contain and reduce one of the major international costs and complications associated with the pursuit of missile defense. Even for the Bush Administration, this outcome was probably preferable to the alternative circumstance in which Moscow seeks to maximize the diplomatic costs to the United States of US missile defense policies.

What might Russia have obtained in return for its cooperation on missile defense? Both the Clinton and the Bush administrations sought to tempt the Russians into a deal with packages of inducements.<sup>11</sup> Some contemplated measures involved concessions on strategic forces, such as a commitment to deeper reductions in US nuclear forces and a willingness to accept the prolongation of MIRVed ICBMs in Russia's force despite START II obligations to eliminate them. Others involved the provision of military aid (help in repairing Russia's warning system, for example) and the willingness to buy Russian military goods; press reports indicated that the Bush Administration would be willing to buy even

Russian missile defense interceptors. Joint missile defense exercises were mentioned, as was the possibility of American assistance to or cooperation with Russia in the area of TMD. Further, these military inducements might have been combined with economic inducements to sweeten the pot. However, whatever was formally and officially offered did not win over the Russians, though it was evident that Washington was keen to find offerings that might be attractive to Moscow and that quite a lot of possibilities were put in play. Unless the published indications of the sorts of measures under consideration are far off the mark, it appears that there was enough on the table to envision a deal in which Russia came away with enough to satisfy it.

As it turned out, a deal could not be reached fast enough to suit the Bush Administration. President Bush and his team repeatedly claimed that they were involved in promising discussions with Moscow and publicly expressed hopes that a new strategic framework (one that would alter or do away with the ABM Treaty) could be negotiated with Russia.<sup>12</sup> The Administration professed a preference to move out of the ABM Treaty regime with the cooperation and assent of Russia. But at the same time, it was eager to press forward with missile defense efforts (which constituted one of its highest policy priorities), it was resolved to eliminate the constraints imposed by the ABM Treaty, and it was concerned that prolonged discussions with the Russians would interfere with US missile defense progress. [The essay by John Rhinelander argues that in fact the ABM Treaty would not have impeded US missile defense efforts for several years—the editor.] Thus, though the Administration may have been willing to find some sort of negotiated exit from the ABM Treaty, its patience was limited and was apparently exhausted before the end of its first year in office.

It is hard to say what Moscow's calculation may have been. Perhaps the Russians wanted Bush to bear the costs of unilateral withdrawal. Perhaps Moscow simply miscalculated how long the Bush Administration was prepared to spend seeking a negotiated arrangement. And perhaps there was an understanding between Washington and Moscow that negotiations on strategic nuclear issues would continue even if the United States exercised its right of unilateral withdrawal. In the event, Russia's reaction to the December 13 announcement of Washington's intent to withdraw from the treaty has been quite muted.<sup>13</sup> This fact has caused dismay among critics of the Bush Administration's policy (who had forecast strident Russian responses and serious damage to US-Russian relations), while the Administration and its supporters believe that they have been

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***The effort to find some sort of nuclear arrangement with Russia continues and Moscow's payoff for its restrained reaction to Bush's move on the ABM Treaty may yet be in the offing.***

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vindicated. Meanwhile, the effort to find some sort of nuclear arrangement with Russia continues and Moscow's payoff for its restrained reaction to Bush's move on the ABM Treaty may yet be in the offing—provided the Bush Administration can overcome its deep distaste for formal arms control agreements.<sup>14</sup>

In sum, there is a wide view in the United States, especially prevalent in the Bush Administration, that the ABM Treaty is an artifact of a bygone era. It was meant to solve a problem that no longer exists, in bilateral relations with a state that no longer exists, in relation to a strategic context that no longer exists. The arguments underlying the ABM Treaty during the Cold War (which many advocates of missile defense never found convincing even then) no longer apply in the post-Cold War environment of better relations with a weakened Russia. That Moscow itself has yet to accept this new US view is a serious complication, but even after the announcement of the unilateral US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, American policymakers remain hopeful that a “new strategic framework” can be negotiated with Russia, a deal that might involve at least Moscow's grudging tolerance of US missile defense plans. The key to overcoming Russia's objections is to find some sort of deal that suffices to gain Russia's acquiescence. This fact explains Washington's persistent efforts to find a bargain that will be convincing and acceptable to Moscow and why Washington is prepared to offer significant inducements to Moscow. So far, this approach has not worked, but it might yet succeed. Both sides may still believe that a US-Russian deal of some sort is preferable to unilateral US missile defense moves that damage or rupture relations with Moscow.

### **The rise of new adversaries: fewer missiles, weaker (but dangerous) foes**

Past missile defense debates took place overwhelmingly in the context of the strategic relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. China made fleeting appearances at times, but was never a genuinely central factor in the evolution of the debate. The current missile defense debate is being driven, at least for the time being, by an entirely different set of concerns. From the early 1990s onwards, proliferation was identified as the number one threat to American security. The worry is that the spread of missiles and other weapons of mass destruction into the hands of hostile proliferators will threaten American security. None of these threats fully exists today. Much energy is spent debating who will get these threatening capabilities, how, and when. Much effort is devoted to speculations about how hostile proliferators may behave if and when they possess WMD. Disagreements about these issues contribute to divergent con-

clusions about the present advisability of missile defense. Critics of current missile defense plans generally believe that the threat of missile proliferation is not large enough or imminent enough to justify the near-term pursuit of missile defense.<sup>15</sup> Critics tend to be more hopeful about the possibility that nonproliferation efforts can restrain the spread of long-range missiles. And critics tend to believe that even if additional states acquire WMD-armed long-range missiles, the appropriate and adequate response is not missile defense but deterrence. Nevertheless, the US move toward missile defense has been animated by a wide belief that malevolent powers—the so-called rogue states—are seeking and will eventually obtain (perhaps sooner rather than later) intercontinental missiles for the explicit purpose of jeopardizing American security and interests and intimidating American policymakers. Missile defenses are justified above all as a response to this emerging threat.

The preoccupation with the emerging missile threats feeds into the new climate for missile defense in two significant ways. First, the envisioned threats—from states such as North Korea or Iran or Iraq—are frightening enough to warrant defenses but small enough to make defenses seem feasible. There is no suggestion in the current debate that foreseeable missile defense deployments will be able to provide meaningful protection against thousands, or even hundreds, of warheads. If the issue were defending against Russia's thousands of warheads, there would be no case for moving ahead quickly with defenses that would be utterly ineffectual against any large attack. Instead, the concept is to deploy defenses of admittedly modest capability as an answer to the small threats that are likely to emanate from small and medium powers. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has often stated, for example, that the goal of current US missile defense policy is to be able to intercept perhaps "a few handfuls" of attacking warheads. Thus, the new adversaries are the ideal opponents if one wants to make the case for moving ahead rapidly toward deployment of presently available missile defense technology: menacing states with an appetite for weapons of mass destruction who are thought to be unable to pose a threat large enough to make near-term missile defenses futile.

Second, the current inventory of potential adversaries—the rogues gallery of alarming enemies—includes at least several states that appear to be ruthless, erratic, deeply hostile, headed by figures whose rationality can be questioned, and so on. This raises the question (to which I will return below) of whether these states can be deterred. Many advocates of defense (including the Bush Administration) have concluded that we are dealing with adversaries who are too unpredictable, too irrational, and too reckless to permit reliance on deter-



rence. Thus, in terms of capabilities, these adversaries make defenses seem more feasible; in terms of deterrence, they make defenses seem necessary.

There is one other potential post-Cold War adversary that is a particularly important factor in connection with US missile defense policies: China. During the Cold War, Beijing was a very secondary concern in an era dominated by the Soviet threat. But this is no longer the case. Indeed, China is viewed as the state most likely, over the medium to long run, to challenge US supremacy. Moreover, unlike the hostile proliferators who are the primary targets of US missile defense efforts, China does presently possess an intercontinental nuclear capability and does presently threaten the United States with a modest ICBM force thought to consist of approximately 20 missiles.

Because China's ICBM force is so small, even the modest US missile defenses presently contemplated can have significant implications for Beijing. Moreover, the initial missile defense site envisioned for Alaska is well situated to provide coverage against missiles launched against the United States from China. The United States, including the Bush Administration, has insisted that its missile defense policy is not directed at China and not intended to vitiate China's nuclear capability. Beijing does not appear to find this convincing, and in any case will need to contend with the strategic consequences of US missile defenses, whatever Washington's avowed intentions.

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Accordingly, China has been the most outspoken and unwavering international critic of US missile defense. [See the essay by Chu Shulong] Beijing has openly proclaimed that there will be adverse consequences if the United States goes ahead. There is particular concern, in the United States and elsewhere, that US missile defense deployments will provoke China to acquire a larger and more sophisticated nuclear force.<sup>16</sup> It has had a rather slow-motion strategic modernization program in place for some time, so it has been argued that China's nuclear force will improve whether US deploys missile defense or not. But it seems clear that China could do more, and faster, than it has done in the past. In fact, heretofore, China has stuck with a surprisingly small nuclear force for a surprisingly long time. Because there is little public information about the character and objectives of China's nuclear modernization program, it will be difficult to assess what portion of a Chinese buildup was provoked by missile defenses and what portion would have happened anyway. But if China feels compelled to acquire a larger and more sophisticated nuclear force than otherwise would have been the case because of a perceived need to neutralize US missile defenses, this will be an unfortunate and unwel-



come result (not only for the United States but also for Russia, India, and other Asian neighbors of China). Indeed, for the United States, this raises the possibility of a paradoxical result: the provoked growth in Chinese nuclear capability could be much larger than the handfuls of weapons anticipated to be in the hands of hostile proliferators, so that missile defenses to contend with the handful will have produced a net increase in the missile threat to the United States.

In order to avoid or dampen adverse reactions by China, the United States has sought to engage Beijing in a dialogue that is intended to allay China's concerns and to communicate Washington's interest in reaching understandings with Beijing that would involve mutual toleration of strategic moves by each side that are either not intended to be directed at each other or are not intended to initiate arms racing between them. A small controversy arose, in fact, over indications that the Bush Administration was prepared to drop objections to China's nuclear buildup and to accept Chinese nuclear testing if Beijing would abandon its opposition to missile defense; in a swirl of criticism, the administration subsequently clarified its position and denied that this was the case.<sup>17</sup> But the impetus to find some *modus vivendi* with China clearly exists and the Bush Administration has not given up its effort to persuade Beijing that it should not feel threatened.

Its ability to convince Beijing that official US missile defense policy is not directed at China is complicated, if not undermined, by the fact that many US advocates do in fact have China very much in mind. To be sure, these views do not constitute official policy. But many who represent the hard core of support for missile defense in the United States believe, and state publicly, that the United States ought to protect itself against the Chinese ICBM threat. In this sense, China, too, is a potential post-Cold War justification for missile defense.

### **The erosion of deterrence**

The growing political support for missile defense has also been fueled in the post-Cold War era by new thinking about deterrence. During the Cold War, mutual deterrence was at the core of relations between the great antagonists of the age. This was an unwelcome reality for some, an unacceptable reality for others, but in general it came to be accepted as the best available framework for managing the nuclear relationship between Moscow and Washington. By the time both sides had accumulated large, modern nuclear arsenals, it was also widely accepted (though with considerable and often impassioned dissent) that missile defenses had little or no constructive role to play in this framework.

This was true if only because both sides had the incentive, the will, and the capability to negate any defensive deployments on the other side in order to preserve or ensure their own deterrent posture. But such reasoning no longer predominates. In today's strategic context, it is no longer taken for granted that deterrence is an appropriate, desirable, effective means of providing security. Without question, some (perhaps many) analysts still embrace deterrence and see it as a proven strategy for ensuring or enhancing the security of nuclear-armed states.<sup>18</sup> But it is being challenged, debated, reexamined, and questioned in a number of ways from a number of different vantage points. Many reconsiderations of the role and utility of deterrence lead to the conclusion that missile defenses are desirable or necessary.

There are at least seven lines of argument evident in the political discourse on and the academic discussion of deterrence. They are not equally important in the policy debate or equally visible in the public debate. Some analysts or schools of thought care deeply about one or a few of these points but not at all about others. But each feeds in some way into the broadening sense in the American policy community that the time for missile defenses has come.

**Deterrence is imperfect.** The most generic concern about deterrence has always been the reality that it might fail. Even proponents of deterrence, who argue for its efficacy and robustness, will concede that deterrence failure remains a worrisome possibility. In the Cold War context, this may have been an unavoidable risk; there appeared to be no feasible alternative to heavy reliance on deterrence. In a different strategic context, with different potential adversaries, smaller threats, and fewer obstacles, there is an argument that it is reasonable to invest in at least some missile defense if only to have some insurance against the possibility of deterrence failure.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, there are worries that deterrence will be harder to achieve, and more prone to failure, in the complicated regional settings that have been the preoccupation of the post-Cold War era.<sup>20</sup> This leads directly to the conclusion that "The United States must be prepared for the possibility that deterrence will fail."

**Deterrence is unreliable.** Second, the most fundamental assault on deterrence claims that it is not now and never was a reliable strategy for safeguarding security. This conclusion is based largely on the argument that deterrence relies on accurate perceptions between adversaries, which will rarely exist (perhaps especially in relations between very hostile parties) and on rational decision-making of the sort that does not conform to experience in the real world of policy-making. The point here is not simply that deterrence might fail, but that it is, in a profound way, conceptually flawed because it rests on unrealistic assumptions.

Hence, it is an inherently risky approach, with numerous in-built failure modes: misperception, miscommunication, misunderstanding, irrationality, madness, ill health, recklessness, and other such factors can undermine the effectiveness of a deterrence-based security system. Keith Payne writes, for example, that deterrence as articulated (and practiced) during the Cold War “cannot capture the reality of human decision-making. As a result, it is inadequate at best, and potentially grossly misleading.”<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Colin Gray argues that “Deterrence has to work not in a culture-free zone of emotionless rational choice, but instead in times of real crisis in the minds of flawed individuals, friction-prone policy processes, and some powerful incentives to gamble for very high stakes....The actual historical human object of deterrent messages does not strictly have to comply. He or she can choose not to be deterred.”<sup>22</sup> If deterrence is fundamentally unreliable, then defenses become imperative.

**Hostile proliferators are undeterrable.** A third claim is narrower, but fundamental to the argument advanced by many proponents of defenses. It is the proposition that leaders of potentially threatening states are not or may not be deterrable. They are too risk prone, too irrational, too impulsive or greedy or ruthless, to be deterred by the United States. This claim influenced the evolution of missile defense policy in the Clinton Administration and has been a core element of the Bush Administration’s case for its missile defense policies.<sup>23</sup> It is a hard claim to analyze, however, because there is no analytically compelling way of judging whether a hostile state is or is not deterrable. The assertion that hostile proliferators cannot be deterred is routinely contested by those who believe the opposite. A recent study concludes, for example, that even the most threatening and apparently crazy states are capable of cost-benefit calculations and therefore “these states should be considered potentially deterrable rather than clearly undeterrable.”<sup>24</sup> But many in the United States are swayed by the view that the forbidding mullahs of Iran, the ruthless and aggressive regime of Saddam Hussein, the surreal government of North Korea represent forces that might be unresponsive to American deterrent threats. And if proliferating states cannot be deterred, then again one arrives at the unavoidable conclusion that defenses are necessary.

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***A recent study concludes that even the most threatening and apparently crazy states are capable of cost-benefit calculations and therefore should be considered potentially deterrable.***

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**Deterrence is immoral.** A fourth claim centers on the idea the deterrence is morally dubious. Deterrence, it is argued, rests on the threat of harm to large numbers of innocent people. Holding millions of lives hostage cannot be the morally preferable position. As President Reagan put it, “Isn’t it better to save lives than to avenge them?” Lawrence Freedman has noted a post-Cold War

“weariness” in relation to deterrence, “reflecting moral unease about such dependence upon threats of mass destruction and the nagging fear that something could go terribly wrong...”<sup>25</sup> To many, now that missile defense looks more feasible, it is the morally superior course of action. This moral reasoning has a more parochial variant. At a minimum, some suggest, the US government has a moral obligation to do what it can to protect its own citizens from threats involving weapons of mass destruction. Continued acceptance of what some term the assured vulnerability system leaves American citizens completely vulnerable to missile-borne WMD attacks. For Washington to tolerate and perpetuate this circumstance is, in this reasoning, a distressing abdication of moral responsibility. A moral government will deploy missile defenses to defend its citizens.

**Deterrence works both ways.** The fifth claim is rooted in the belief that in crises or conflicts involving the United States and hostile proliferators, it is the

United States that will be deterred. When operating in regional contexts, the United States is not likely to have more at stake than the regional actors themselves. The “balance of resolve” may therefore lie with Washington’s foe—especially if the foe is of the undeterrable variety. As Keith Payne has commented, the United States needs to worry about “who deters whom?”<sup>26</sup> In this logic, WMD-armed missiles in the hands of America’s adversaries may be very potent in inhibiting US intervention and otherwise handicapping US foreign policy. If the US deploys missile defenses, however, it will be less vulnerable to the coercive—and especially the deterrent—threats of others. This has been a particularly prominent and influential argument for missile defense in the current debate, and was one of the major

components of the case that the Clinton Administration made for its missile defense plans.

**Deterrence is inappropriate.** Sixth, some have suggested that deterrence is both unsuitable and counterproductive in US relations with Russia.<sup>27</sup> It is not appropriate that friendly states exist in a mutual hostage relationship, that each targets the other with annihilating capabilities. In times past, stable mutual deterrence was the great holy grail of the US-Soviet relationship and the desired objective in many conceptions of arms control. Now, the persistence of deterrence in relations between Moscow and Washington is regarded as an impediment to the full transformation from adversary to partner. If mutual deterrence is no longer sought, but scorned, then the possible disruptive impact of missile defense on mutual deterrence does not matter. More important is the quest for some new basis on which to build a strategic relationship with Russia—a notion that at

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***Now, the persistence of deterrence in relations between Moscow and Washington is regarded as an impediment to the full transformation from adversary to partner.***

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least partially informs the Bush Administration's pursuit of a "new strategic framework."

**Deterrence is illegal and dangerous.** During the 1990s, there was mounting concern about how the United States should respond to the potential threat of chemical and biological attacks. Because it has forsaken its own chemical and biological weapons capabilities, the option of deterrence by symmetrical response is not available. Accordingly, many responsible for US policy (supported by many others) judged that the United States needs to deter chemical and biological threats in part by threatening nuclear reprisal. This is, of course, no answer if opponents are undeterrable. But two other considerations complicate consideration of this solution to these increasingly worrying threats. One is that when it signed and ratified the NPT, the United States assumed a legal obligation not to threaten the use of or to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states—but CBW attacks could easily emanate from such states. In the US debate, the illegality of utilizing nuclear capabilities for these purposes may seem a technicality, but to much of the world it seems more than that. Second, some argue that using nuclear threats to deter CBW attacks may result in dangerous escalatory pressures during crises.<sup>28</sup> Those who credit such arguments conclude that the United States should not rely on nuclear deterrence as an answer to the CBW threat. But once again, this leaves open the possibility that missile defenses will be part of the solution to this challenge.

To summarize, the notion of deterrence has been challenged and questioned from a number of different perspectives and in a number of different contexts. The more doubtful deterrence seems as an answer to missile threats, the more missile defenses can seem attractive, desirable, or necessary. Thus, the brewing debates about deterrence have contributed to the emergence of a political and intellectual climate conducive to missile defense.

### **The impact of September 11**

The stunning terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 have had little impact on the positions in US missile defense debate but a large impact on the fortunes of US missile defense policy and programs (at least for the short run). Few minds were changed on September 11. Those who favor missile defense believe that the attacks demonstrated conclusively the importance of defending the United States against those who will clearly use any available means to harm it. Those who oppose missile defense believe that September 11 reveals the fallacy of focusing on the missile threat. Large attacks can originate in a number of ways, and the missile threat is not the only or even the most likely threat; a missile defense,

it is said, would have made no difference on September 11. Thus, partisans on both sides of the missile defense debate felt that the events of September 11 supported their position.

If the debate remains on familiar grounds, however, the political context for missile defense policy changed quite dramatically in ways that seem likely to reinforce the momentum toward missile defense and hasten tangible progress toward that end. Five factors suggest this conclusion. First, in recent years, missile defense had emerged as an increasingly prominent issue. In the first year of the presidency of George W. Bush, it had become a central focal point in US relations with the external world. Indeed, it was one of the few discernible priorities in the defense and foreign policy of the new administration. It had become a core issue in relations with Russia, China, and with US allies, all of whom were uneasy about if not opposed to the direction of US missile defense policy. Every move on missile defense seemed destined to produce high-profile controversy. After September 11, however, missile defense (like all other issues) was completely overshadowed by the aftermath of the attack. All attention was focused on the war against terrorism and even major issues like missile defense faded somewhat into the background. It is arguable that the Bush Administration's missile defense policy benefits from being out of the spotlight, that this dampens or deflects potential criticism and opposition. Joseph Ciricione noted that the December 13 announcement of the US intention to withdraw from the ABM Treaty "comes while there is a war going on and we have lots of other things to talk about."<sup>29</sup> There seems little doubt that this unilateral step would have received far more attention, much of it negative, had September 11 never happened.

Second, the attacks of September 11 instantly stopped the domestic political fight over missile defense. Congressional opponents of the Bush Administration's policies, especially among the Democratic party majority in the US Senate, were prepared to battle on this issue. But this was no longer true after September 11. Though efforts were underway to impose legislative restrictions on the Bush program, these were almost immediately set aside in the aftermath of the attack.<sup>30</sup> As Senator Carl Levin (a powerful critic of the current missile defense plans) has explained, "With the country and the Congress understandably rallying around the President in the war on terrorism, it would have been a highly disadvantageous time to debate a controversial national security issue."<sup>31</sup> No doubt the debate will resume at some future point (the timing of which will depend in large measure on the status of the war on terrorism), but in the meantime construction in Alaska has begun, the ABM Treaty will soon be abrogated, and the budget for missile defense has significantly increased.

Third, domestic opponents of the Bush Administration's missile defense plans hoped that international pressure from allies, from Russia, and from China would impose delay and force moderation in American policy. These hopes had been somewhat disappointed even before September 11, as many states (especially among America's allies) seemed to take the view that Bush's unshakable commitment to missile defense made it inevitable—and therefore there was no point in resisting. But after September 11, most states scrambled to support the United States and to be a part of the anti-terrorist coalition. [See the essay by Thérèse Delpech] With the United States now at war and expecting support from all who regarded themselves a part of the civilized world, this did not seem like the right time to challenge Washington on one of its highest national security priorities. Thus, the December 13 announcement of the US intent to withdraw from the ABM Treaty provoked some grumbling, but for the most part the reaction was surprisingly subdued. Even the Russians and Chinese responded much less stridently than many had feared would be the case. As one missile defense advocate boasted, "Ironically, Russia seems more amenable to the President's decision than many of his hyperventilating critics."<sup>32</sup> The allies were undemonstrative (when they were not being supportive of US missile defense policy).<sup>33</sup> The Bush Administration expressed confidence that the international repercussions would be limited.<sup>34</sup> Just as the domestic debate stopped dead in the water on September 11, so did the attacks take the wind out of the sails of international critics of the Bush Administration's policy.

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***With deficit spending politically unacceptable, a large tax cut already enacted, and competing defense requirements to contend with, it seemed reasonable to expect that financial considerations would substantially inhibit US missile defense programs.***

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Fourth, many opponents of Bush's missile defense plans counted heavily on fiscal constraints to limit the President's options. With deficit spending politically unacceptable, a large tax cut already enacted, and competing defense requirements to contend with, it seemed reasonable to expect that financial considerations would substantially inhibit US missile defense programs. Questions of defense spending priorities and affordability were certain to be highlighted in the debate.<sup>35</sup> But on the morning of September 11, the fiscal barriers were swept away, at least temporarily. In the near term, there will be tens of billions of additional dollars spent on the military. In the medium term, the Pentagon is seeking an additional \$400 billion in defense spending for the period 2003-2007.<sup>36</sup> Deficit spending has once again become politically acceptable. Under these circumstances, fiscal discipline is considerably less likely to circumscribe the Bush Administration's missile defense aspirations. Some still hope that in a year or two the fiscal realities will resurface as a major factor in the



missile defense debate. Some still question the wisdom of spending much more on missile defense at this point.<sup>37</sup> But for the time being the Bush Administration will be able to substantially augment the funding for missile defense (something that they hoped to do even before September 11).

Fifth, the diplomatic demands of the war on terrorism have not compelled the Bush Administration to undertake sweeping reversals of policy. In the immediate aftermath of September 11, many experts believed or urged that Washington might need to alter course in a number of important respects in order to gain the cooperation necessary to conduct a successful global campaign against terrorism. This proposition was thought to apply to many aspects of the Bush Administration's foreign and security policy—notably those aspects found

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***The war on terrorism has provided a wider context within which the United States has been able to accelerate its march out of the ABM Treaty and toward the deployment of missile defenses with less friction and opposition.***

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widely objectionable by other significant states—including particularly missile defense. Russia is a key state in the war on terrorism, given its history in Afghanistan, its influence in Central Asia, its ties with important Muslim states, and its potential as a source of illicitly obtained weapons, including weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, after September 11 there appeared to be an opportunity to build a more positive and constructive relationship with Moscow.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, many recommended that Washington postpone, downplay, or abandon policies—such as NATO enlargement or missile defense—that would harm or prevent efforts to gain Russia's cooperation.<sup>39</sup> However, the Bush Administration has rejected this advice and has proceeded apace with precisely those programs that its critics suggested should be set aside for the sake of the war against terrorism.<sup>40</sup>

Instead, as noted above, the war on terrorism has provided a wider context within which the United States has been able to accelerate its march out of the ABM Treaty and toward the deployment of missile defenses with less friction and opposition.

In short, American momentum toward missile defense was substantial before September 11, and has certainly not been derailed by subsequent developments. On the contrary, domestic and international criticism of and opposition to the Administration's missile defense policies has abated, the missile defense budget has been significantly increased, and the ABM Treaty has been unilaterally abrogated (or technically will be on June 13, 2002) with remarkably few visible adverse repercussions. The effects of September 11 will likely fade with time and the normal politics associated with the Bush Administration's policies will revive, but meanwhile the fortunes of missile defense have been boosted.



## Conclusion

There are four broad categories of possible responses to the spread of long-range missiles into hostile hands:

- 1 Denial by nonproliferation efforts.
- 2 Deterrence of opposing capabilities.
- 3 Preemption of threatening capabilities to the extent that circumstances permit.
- 4 Defenses to thwart or minimize the consequence of any attack that does occur.

During the Cold War, denial and deterrence predominated in American policy. Nonproliferation efforts were devoted to preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction to additional states. Deterrence was the primary means of dealing with the vast Soviet nuclear threat. Preemption and defenses figured in the debate and in policy to some extent, but were subsidiary factors.

The changing strategic environment has created a milieu in which the balance of emphasis among these four approaches has altered significantly. Many in today's debate see nonproliferation and deterrence as less reliable, and preemption and defenses as more necessary, than in the past. The counter-proliferation initiative undertaken by the United States in response to growing worries about the spread of weapons of mass destruction includes elements of both: passive and active (TMD) defenses to help protect American forces against WMD attacks, and capabilities (primarily conventional) to destroy adversary WMD capabilities in the event of conflict.

And, as indicated in the discussion above, changes in the strategic context have created a milieu far more amenable to missile defenses. A substantial majority in favor of the ABM Treaty and against the deployment of missile defenses has, over the past decade, been transformed into a politically salient majority in favor of some form of missile defense. American policy has changed accordingly, gradually at first under the Clinton Administration but much more emphatically under the Bush Administration. The United States has abandoned the ABM Treaty and seems likely to deploy missile defenses in the relatively near future. The world has changed and the tide has turned.

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## Endnotes

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# The Dynamics of Russian Missile Defense Policy

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Thus far, Russia's reaction to the announcement by President Bush on December 13, 2001 that the US intends to withdraw from the ABM Treaty has been mild. There may be two ways of interpreting this phenomenon. One is that Moscow's reaction has been *surprisingly* calm — especially when compared to the huge political investments made by President Putin in his campaign over the last several years to preserve the Treaty. The second, however, is that this has been a *predictably* calm reaction, one influenced by the modalities of the 'quasi-alliance' relationship that has developed between the two countries following the September 11 terror attacks.

Both interpretations are likely correct. Although they might seem mutually exclusive, both attitudes accurately reflect the current geo-political situation. This is one of those times when, in order to explain (or gloss over) confusion, it is helpful to recur to the dialectical method (or pseudo-dialectics, with the borderline between them being very vague). On the one hand, Russian 'pro-ABM Treaty' arguments have by no means lost their validity, and none has been officially renounced by Moscow. On the other hand, the political and psychological pre-requisites for overcoming Russia's initial and adamant 'no' to any tinkering with the Treaty began to emerge long before the tragedy of 11 September.

Politically, the change of the presidency in Russia was the most important factor. Although Vladimir Putin emerged as the 'designated' heir to Boris Yeltsin, he was certainly both expected and better positioned than Yeltsin to carry out changes in Russian policy. While officially professing support for continuity and refraining from announcing a 'new course' in policy, Putin could nonetheless introduce important new elements into the foreign and security policies of the country. Moreover, the political resources of the new president were significant enough that he could easily initiate even radical innovations.

The most striking example of this was his decision to 'defreeze' Russia's relations with NATO. His decision to do so caught almost all analysts and observers by surprise — both because of Moscow's previous hard-line stand and, even more importantly, because Russian public opinion remained predominantly anti-NATO. This rapprochement with NATO seemed absolutely counter-intuitive

in light of Russia's vehement opposition to NATO enlargement and, even more so, in the context of Moscow's severe condemnation of NATO's Kosovo campaign that was criticized as unambiguous aggression against a sovereign state.

The ABM/missile defense issues belong to the same category. A softening of Russia's negative attitudes was politically *possible* for a president like Putin who was considered politically strong. Whether it was *necessary* is another question that has no clear-cut answer.

### **Dynamics of Russian policy**

Those in Russia who favored compromise on the ABM Treaty pointed to the fact that Russian arguments regarding the substance of the problem had not had any effect at all upon US policy, even under President Clinton. Of course, the incoming Bush administration was even less inclined to take Russian objections into account. Since many in the Bush administration tended to disregard, if not disparage, Russian policies and influence, Moscow was left with practically no possibilities for using 'non-ABM arguments' as political leverage. As for Europe, there was no reason to expect that opposition from US allies on the NMD issue would become politically salient enough to influence the determination of the White House to proceed with national missile defense. Under such circumstances, continuing to oppose US proposals for modifying the ABM regime appeared to have no chance of bringing tangible results.

Even the advantage of maintaining a consistent policy, of manifesting 'resoluteness' and 'continuity', could turn out to be counter-productive. By pursuing this line, Moscow was increasingly becoming the hostage of its own arguments, rhetoric and political inertia. The more it was held hostage by its policies, the more serious were the chances that the Kremlin would find itself deadlocked at the moment when the US decided to withdraw from, or disregard, the ABM Treaty. Russia would then have the unpleasant choice of two unsatisfactory options: either over-reacting in accordance with its self-imposed alarmism, or losing face by not reacting at all to what it had constantly described as the serious danger of dismantling the 'cornerstone of strategic stability.'

What was occurring, in fact, was an elementary dilemma of failed deterrence, be it strategic or political. Deterrence requires a very careful and thoroughly balanced policy line, in particular when there are doubts about the availability of the material resources and/or the political will needed for retaliation, should preventing the undesired action turn out to be impossible. In the case of Russia, it is worth recalling once again its vehement opposition to the enlargement of NATO. When the substantial political investments in opposing NATO enlarge-

ment proved fruitless, Moscow found itself in an awkward and embarrassing position: how to justify all these efforts spent in vain, how to find compensation for a defeat in a political struggle whose stakes were so imprudently raised, and how to avoid deteriorating relations beyond a point where the process might become irreversible?

In the case of NATO enlargement, these difficulties were resolved due to the political skill of the then Foreign Minister, Yevgeniy Primakov; indeed, the 1997 Founding Act was a remarkable achievement of Russian diplomacy, followed two years later by the adaptation of the CFE Treaty, which became a second consolation prize for Moscow when practically all its concerns regarding force levels on the southern flank were taken into account. But the lesson here might be that, instead of adapting to a defeat *post factum*, one should try to change the coordinates of the situation in such a way that it no longer looks like a defeat. Thus, Russia's current rapprochement with NATO might be helpful for minimizing the political and psychological impact of the forthcoming second wave of NATO enlargement due in 2002.

In accordance with this logic, the alternative to the hopeless line of preserving intact the 1972 ABM Treaty would consist of engaging in its modification, with the hope of determining the character of possible changes and making them 'less unacceptable' to Russian interests. In terms of practical politics, if there is no chance to get all you want, at least try to get something. Regarding the ABM Treaty, Russia would benefit by the continuation of certain constraints on strategic defense, whereas a US unilateral withdrawal would provide the Bush administration with complete freedom of action. Negotiating such constraints would have made the 'no-changes-in-the-ABM-Treaty' approach irrelevant and counterproductive.

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***Instead of adapting to a defeat post factum, one should try to change the coordinates of the situation in such a way that it no longer looks like a defeat.***

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Russia's more general aim could be defined as keeping the US involved in the international arms control framework that the incoming Bush administration considered both unnecessary and contrary to American interests. Although Moscow's position about the ABM Treaty being the 'cornerstone of strategic stability' did not always sound convincing given post-Cold War realities, it nonetheless reflected Russia's attachment to both existing and forthcoming internationally-negotiated obligations. The collapse of the ABM Treaty, from this point of view, would be as much symbolic as substantive, heralding the beginning of a new era with no arms control. In this context, the choice was not only between either preserving the Treaty (even if making it 'less perfect') or losing it all together. At stake was a more challenging mission: to maintain the US com-



mitment to the process of arms control by making this process more attractive to Washington, even if this required accepting, in terms of changes to the ABM Treaty, what had heretofore been considered unacceptable.

In a still broader sense, the issue was one of minimizing incentives for US unilateralism in the world arena, which could be counterproductive in terms of international stability and potentially damaging to Russia's international interests. Given that the status of the US as the world's only remaining superpower was anything but conducive to making American policy internationally accountable, it was important for Russia to use any means at its disposal for counteracting this trend. Thus Moscow viewed US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty as also representing a serious step towards *further* unilateralism. Against this background, eventual Russian 'concessions' on some concrete parameters of the Treaty would be insignificant indeed.

All of these rationales, however, did not necessarily seem absolutely obvious and self-evident. Russian arguments against 'making concessions' were also rather coherent and consistent, even if based on traditional considerations.

The first of these arguments was that allowing strategic missile defense would undermine the logic of nuclear deterrence. While deterrence based on mutual assured destruction (MAD) could certainly be considered outdated (and was explicitly criticized as such by President Bush), it nonetheless continues to exist and cannot be eliminated merely by proclaiming the necessity of getting rid of it. In addition, what was proposed by the Bush administration as a substitute to MAD could be called 'assured survival', a policy that would have a distinctly unilateral character and would enhance the security of only one country, the US.

Secondly, missile defenses might have negative implications for strategic stability. However limited the initial missile defense architecture might be, it will inevitably point in the direction of a nation-wide system. This could push Russia to keep its nuclear weapons on higher levels of alert, or even to prepare its strategic nuclear forces for launch-on-warning. If nuclear arms control was based on eliminating the destabilizing elements of nuclear deterrence, then strategic missile defenses would bring about just the opposite. The other party (or parties) of nuclear equation(s) would be strongly pushed to respond by developing anti-missile countermeasures and/or by increasing strategic offensive forces. In addition, the arms race might expand to areas where it thus far has been limited or non-existent. For instance, one might refuse to accept as legitimate flights of surveillance satellites over one's territory and respond with countermeasures (as forbidden by Article XII of the ABM Treaty), making outer space an arena



of increasing military confrontation.

Thirdly, rather than constraining nuclear and missile proliferation, missile defenses could well provide additional incentives to such proliferation. The very intention to develop ballistic missile defense could stimulate the impression that the task of combating proliferation is no longer considered as important as it once was. Similarly, US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty could influence other states to consider withdrawal from other multilateral arms control regimes, including the NPT.

A fourth matter of serious concern is the eventual reaction of China. Because of its limited strategic nuclear force, China has far more reason to be concerned than Russia, and the Chinese reaction will likely be far more predictable. On the one hand, major emphasis will likely be placed on the modernization and build up of the Chinese nuclear missile arsenal (e.g., by MIRVing strategic nuclear launchers and developing nuclear-powered submarines). On the other hand, engaging China in nuclear arms control would then become more difficult, and Beijing might even abandon minimal cooperative efforts that it has carried out thus far in multilateral and bilateral forums. In addition, the Chinese nuclear build up could provoke a reaction from India, and in the longer run (but perhaps in a not very distant future) Chinese forces could pose a challenge to Russia's security.

Against the background of this controversial debate on NMD/ABM issues, Russia was showing clear signs of certain developments in its approach, even if these were slow, cautious and without radical breakthroughs. Such a breakthrough might have been possible in 1999, if Russia had offered modifications of the ABM Treaty at a time when these would have caused a real sensation. Yet the beginning of NATO's campaign against Yugoslavia made this impossible. Nonetheless, some rather indicative themes have been appearing in Moscow's approach during the last two to three years.

One of these concerned the assessment of new strategic threats. Indeed, one can date the erosion of Russian opposition to strategic missile defense to the Clinton-Putin summit in Moscow in June 2000, when Russian policymakers officially recognized for the first time that new strategic threats do exist and have to be adequately addressed.

Another element of this erosion concerned theater missile defenses (TMD). Russia's reaction to western TMD programs was in striking contrast with its energetic opposition to strategic missile defense. Moreover, some Russian analysts even argued in favor of involving Russia in efforts to promote TMD — for instance, in East Asia (with the clear political rationale of making Russia's pres-



**Russian ICBM**

ence there more salient). Of particular significance was President Putin's official proposal for a European ballistic missile defense system to be developed jointly by Russia, the US and the European NATO allies. Some analysts believed that this plan, if linked with, and based upon, the 1997 protocol between Russia and the US, would be an obstacle to US strategic missile defense efforts. However, most commentators pointed to the fact that this proposal undermined the very logic of Russia's opposition to NMD.

An interesting aspect of this proposal was that it focused on joint efforts with 'strategic adversaries'. The very idea of cooperating in such a sensitive area is usually met with significant skepticism. However, the European missile defense option was regarded as opening up certain avenues for joint development, in particular because it was assumed that Russia's contribution to this endeavor would be

substantive rather than symbolic. Even those who recognized that European missile defense would *not* represent an obstacle to American NMD expressed the hope that cooperative interaction on the level of theater defenses might be expanded to strategic missile defense. And if the latter was based on cooperative efforts, then its very character would fundamentally change—thus making Russia's objections irrelevant.

Finally, one more theme appeared in Russian discussions and was finally endorsed by Moscow, that of linking offensive and defensive systems. This had two major implications for Russia's position on strategic missile defense. First, this broader context opened up possibilities for discussing substantive issues in this area, which Moscow had not been willing to do before. Secondly, the idea of common or interconnected ceilings for offensive and defensive strategic weapons, attractive by its simplicity, might mean the possibility of replacing the existing limitations (including those that are fixed in the ABM Treaty) by a new comprehensive agreement.

Noteworthy, Russia reacted rather constructively to a major speech by President Bush given on May 1, 2001 that contained an energetic appeal for a new US-Russian strategic framework. It is true that some suspicions remained that this was only new rhetoric aimed at justifying Bush's stated objective of abolishing the ABM Treaty as an obsolete relic of the Cold War. Furthermore, Russian proponents of the 'old logic' still insisted on maintaining Russia's firm approach, arguing that this position had been the main factor influencing President Clinton to defer a decision on NMD in September 2000. In the end, however, a politically motivated desire to engage in a new relationship with the United States took the upper hand.

Since mid-2001, and especially after two meetings between Presidents Bush and Putin in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and Genoa, Italy, the bilateral dialogue on strategic issues has become more intensive than perhaps ever in US-Russian relations. Interestingly, Moscow seemed to believe that it had a strong position within this dialogue. Russia had a convincing and non-arrogant public position on maintaining the integrity of the ABM Treaty, whereas the Americans were in the position of having to explain what they really wanted in the area of strategic defense and in what ways the ABM Treaty was incompatible with their plans. Furthermore, as noted in other essays in this volume, changes in the US Senate (Rhineland), the position of the US allies (Delpech), and concerns about the Chinese reaction (Chu Shulong), were all believed to play into Russian hands. In other words, the Americans seemed to be on the defensive when it came to issues of strategic defense.

There were, however, confusing signals emanating from these bilateral consultations. The Russian participants soon became disappointed rather than optimistic; they complained that the US had not brought any new details to the consultations and remained reluctant to specify what plans might constitute a real subject for discussion. The consultations were increasingly viewed by Moscow as being used by the Bush administration mainly for addressing signals to allies and US domestic critics: 'we are negotiating with the Russians and doing our best to have them involved'. The message addressed to the Russians was in fact, blackmail: 'either you agree or we withdraw unilaterally'. In other words, not only a US readiness to compromise, but even a willingness to achieve it, was becoming increasingly doubtful. When Russian officials later stated that the US decision to withdraw from the ABM Treaty did not come as a surprise, they had more than sufficient grounds for saying so.

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***Russian participants complained that the US had not brought any new details to the consultations and remained reluctant to specify what plans might constitute a real subject for discussion.***

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## September 11 and missile defense

To be sure, the events of 11 September and resulting US-Russian cooperation on Afghanistan have put the problem into a new context. Whether it is a *fundamentally* new context for overall bilateral Russian-American relations and for the international system is not a matter of discussion here. Nonetheless, September 11 did have implications for Russia's attitudes towards NMD/ABM issues—both on the level of official policy and in public debate.

The general expectation (although colored with a certain skepticism) was that Russia's firm and substantive support for the US anti-terrorist campaign might open the way towards building a fundamentally new bilateral relationship. It was not at all clear, however, how this 'brilliant' prospect might affect those matters seriously dividing the two sides — in particular, the ABM Treaty and strategic missile defense. One way of thinking was to expect a more cooperative US attitude, not in the sense of paying the bill for Moscow's support against the Taliban, but in terms of reflecting an emerging close-to-alliance type of relationship. But this logic might also lead to a different conclusion: that Russia should get rid of its suspicions and concerns with respect to nuclear deterrence and other associated notions, since these are irrelevant in relations between allies, even if they possess nuclear weapons (as between the US and France or the United Kingdom).

There are also the consequences of September 11 for arguments about the very utility of missile defense. According to many Russian analysts, the tragedy of 11 September has clearly shown that no missile defense can protect against terrorism. However, these analysts also have to recognize that the arguments of NMD supporters likewise became more convincing, since the horrifying scenario of a missile attack by terrorists or irresponsible regimes can no longer be considered 'unthinkable', thus making protection against such an eventuality imperative. In a paradoxical way, then, incentives for cooperative bilateral interaction for settling the future of the ABM Treaty proceeded in parallel with additional incentives for the US to withdraw from it.

It is noteworthy that, on an official level, Russia carefully avoided establishing a linkage between the struggle against international terrorism and the issue of strategic missile defense. This was a clever policy in two respects. First, it did not turn Russia's support into a bargaining chip and devalue the importance of Moscow's support, thus leaving open how its partners, the US especially, might think of reciprocating. Secondly, it did not raise excessive expectations in Russia about how the US might respond in terms of compromising on NMD/ABM issues. This turned out to be politically important when Presi-

dent Bush, on December 13, officially announced that the US would indeed withdraw from the ABM Treaty. This time, at least, Russia did not have much basis for feeling betrayed, as had happened on other occasions.

### **Russia's reaction to December 13**

Russia's official reaction to the Bush announcement can be summarized in several points. Although considering it a wrong decision, Moscow has refrained from making much noise about it and seems in fact to want to downplay the issue. Stressing that the American decision did not take Russia by surprise, Moscow manifests its desire to avoid discrediting prospects of a new relationship between the two countries. Also, a clear signal is addressed to Russia's domestic 'alarmists': it is emphasized that the abrogation of the ABM Treaty does not cause damage to Russia's military security since the effectiveness of strategic missile defense is doubtful, whereas Russia's retaliatory potential will remain more than sufficient for many years to come.

One noteworthy aspect of Russia's reaction is its officially stated intention to refrain from any offensive counter-measures. This issue, extensively discussed during previous stages of missile defense/ABM debates, basically had two functions. Politically, Russian promises to engage in countermeasures was intended to deter the US from even pursuing missile defense, while in security terms, the envisaged counter-measures were to provide Russia with reliable guarantees against the devaluation of its retaliatory potential. President Putin used to refer to such measures, such as the MIRVing of the Topol M missiles, as the most 'natural' Russian response to the eventual deployment of US strategic missile defense. At present, the only statements made are those that Russia reserves the right to renounce its commitment not to deploy multiple warheads on its land-based missiles, but it does not seriously contemplate this step or investigate other symmetrical or asymmetrical counter-measures.

Unofficially, the tone of the Russian reaction has been quite different. The US intent to withdraw from the ABM Treaty at midnight on June 13, 2002 has been assessed as fraught with the most negative implications for the future of Russian-American relations. The Bush administration has been strongly condemned for operating unilaterally and renouncing any genuine attempts at reaching a compromise. Special attention has been paid to the fact that US withdrawal from the Treaty was not even necessary, for several years at least, in terms of what is needed to evaluate the feasibility of national missile defense (a point made in the essay by John Rhineland).

Indeed, at present, the architecture of NMD remains unclear, its feasibility

is doubtful, and the character of the threats it is meant to counter have yet to be specified. Testing of various systems and technologies to certify NMD feasibility will take years and could have been carried out either within the current limitations of the Treaty or on the basis of its modification. But, this would have required serious negotiations with Russia that the US was not interested in pursuing.

Moreover, many in Russia believe the US has profited handsomely from the exceptional post-11 September situation, especially on the missile defense issue. Domestically, American politicians and public opinion have rallied around the Bush administration, thus stifling any nationwide debate on the NMD/ABM issue. In budgetary terms, strong support for increased defense spending in the wake of September 11 also means that missile defense programs will likely not receive the same scrutiny they would have prior to September 11. Internationally, Russia's engagement in the anti-terrorist coalition has prevented Moscow from expressing its negative reaction to NMD/ABM energetically and vigorously.

In this regard, there are ominous signs that if President Putin, in response to his risky political rapprochement with Washington, should be confronted with the following package of US actions – US unilateral withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, unspecified and non-binding plans for strategic nuclear weapons reductions, post-Afghanistan arbitrary air-strikes against 'rogue states' (that are not necessarily considered as such by Moscow), new NATO enlargement to the east, and so on - this all might considerably promote anti-Americanism inside Russia. At present there are powerful trends in this direction in Russia that President Putin is directly challenging. Should such sentiments increase, he risks either losing domestic support or being forced to introduce sharp changes in his international policy.

There is one more strand in Russia's reaction to US policy on missile defense that deserves comment, one related to broader considerations. It runs as follows. The decision of the Bush administration to withdraw from the ABM Treaty clearly shows the limits of Russian-American rapprochement. This rapprochement was, and remains, based upon common interests with respect to a very concrete problem, that of international terrorism. Apart from this issue, it would seem that strategic rivalry between the two countries is doomed to prevail. The ideological excesses of the Cold War are certainly a thing of the past, but any hopes for a new 'strategic partnership' would be a dangerous illusion. Importantly, this factor is a predominant one in Russia's foreign and security policy-making circles, covering such issues as arms control, alliance building, and Russian military policy.

By and large, then, the alarmism and disappointment of these unofficial comments represent a striking contrast with Russia's official reaction. Certainly, the latter has turned out very different from what could have been expected from the government, at least until recently. What can explain Moscow's official quietude?

### A new strategic relationship?

First, Russia does not have the material resources or sufficiently convincing arguments that could substantiate a forceful, strident response. Due to various financial and political factors, Moscow has lost much leverage, as at the beginning of 2001 when Russia adopted the controversial decision on unilateral deep reductions and a restructuring of its strategic nuclear forces, sharply reducing incentives for the US to negotiate additional deep cuts in offensive forces.

Secondly, however, it must be acknowledged that Russia has some gains to show in its strategic dialogue with the US. During just the first year of the Bush administration, the US has taken a number of steps to meet Russia's requests and concerns. The US did engage in a dialogue with Russia on the NMD/ABM issue and on strategic offensive weapons, even though its initial rhetoric and intentions were to decide these issues unilaterally. At the Bush-Putin summit in Washington, DC and Crawford, Texas in December 2001, the US committed itself to a considerable reduction of its strategic offensive weapons, a move that Russia had made earlier and for which it expected the US to reciprocate. The forthcoming reductions of these weapons will be verifiable, something which had been resolutely rejected earlier by the Americans. Also, these reductions are due to be codified in an officially-binding agreement to be signed in June 2002, another point on which Moscow had energetically insisted. Thus, the total list of Russian 'gains', although not excessively impressive, does contain certain important items.

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***The recent evolution of Russian policy seems to be motivated by political considerations rather than by traditional security concerns and calculations. This in itself represents the most challenging aspect of the current situation.***

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Thirdly, there is an element of high political stakes regarding the 'new relationship' between Russia and the US in the post-September 11 environment. The recent evolution of Russian policy seems to be motivated by political considerations rather than by traditional security concerns and calculations. This in itself represents the most challenging aspect of the current situation. One could certainly ask whether these political considerations are well grounded and will indeed lead to a new relationship with the US, or whether they involve the risk of a new disillusionment. If the latter, there could be serious negative implications. If the positive scenario prevails, however, this might well open a new era,

not only in the strategic relationship between the two countries, but also in a broader geo-strategic configuration.

Should this happen, an increased responsibility with respect to the external world will be required from both states. Paradoxically, the logic of overcoming old patterns of mutual deterrence appears to be pushing them in the opposite direction, with *fewer* rather than *more* international commitments and accountability. A new strategic framework between the former adversaries may result in a 'no constraints pattern', with both parties granting to each other, openly or tacitly, the right to do whatever they want in organizing their offense and defense. The US is moving in this direction under the impulse of its technological, military and financial superiority, whereas Russia is doing the same precisely because of its weakness. China will hardly renounce the temptation to exercise the same independence of action.

In sum, each of the major international players could have convincing motives (convincing at least to themselves) for operating on their own, with little regard for the others' security concerns. To prevent this dynamic from spiraling too far out of control is a challenge that goes far beyond the current dilemmas of missile defense, and it is not at all clear whether this challenge is being adequately assessed in the current international environment.

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## Missile Defenses and East Asian Stability

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*Chu Shulong*

In the aftermath of the horrific terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington on September 11, 2001, the entire international community was shocked and saddened. The enormity of the assaults, resulting in the death of more than 3,000 people from as many as eighty countries around the world, was of such a scale that the international community now realizes that new and different threats now confront us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. After this great tragedy, the United States and other nations have recognized terrorism as the major threat to national and international security, economy prosperity and individual security. The war against international terrorism is being conducted on military, financial, law enforcement, diplomatic, information and other fronts, with many countries cooperating against a common threat and common enemy.

However, not all important security issues have been changed by the events of September 11. In the international security arena, the idea, the plan, the budget, and the work of missile defense has neither changed nor disappeared. Indeed, on December 13, 2001 President George W. Bush announced his intention to withdraw from the 1972 ABM Treaty, to take effect on June 13, 2002. Administration officials such as Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and National Security Advisor Condeleezza Rice argue that next time the terrorists may use a missile to attack America or other parts of the world, thus making missile defense all the more important.

It would seem that supporters of missile defense do not understand what was happening on September 11. In truth, the fact is that the terrorists did not use any military weapons in their attack which caused more than 3,000 lives. Similarly, the anthrax terror in the US following September 11 was non-military. The deployment of national missile defense would be useless in dealing with these new serious threats to the international community. Resources can be better used to combat these new emerging threats, now and in the future. In addition, US plans for missile defense remain a major controversial issue dividing the international community and complicating cooperation and coordination against international terrorism.

### **Asian perspectives**

The missile defense issue, and especially US-Japanese cooperation on theater missile defense (TMD), has become the most significant negative security issue in the Asia-Pacific region, causing serious rifts between the US, Japan, Russia and China. Russia and China in particular view US national missile defense as a serious strategic issue and worry that such a system will destroy the current strategic balance between the major powers in the region. Russian and Chinese leaders also argue that theater missile defenses will change the military balance in the region to the advantage of the US and Japan. Missile defenses could also spark a new round in the arms race in both offensive and defensive weapons in Asia in the new century. Missile defense has become a controversial issue in bilateral security talks among these major powers as well as a hot issue in multilateral arenas such as the United Nations and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), thus becoming even more of an obstacle to further arms control and disarmament agreements and bilateral and multilateral security cooperation.

To be sure, the theater missile defense system that the United States and Japan are going to build in East Asia will have different impacts on different nations in the region. While US-Japanese TMD may not greatly affect security policies and structures in Southeast Asia, such systems could well reshape the military and strategic balance in East Asia.

### **Missile defenses and regional alliances in East Asia**

Even though still in the development stage, TMD has become a core security issue affecting all the major powers in East Asia. Similarly, TMD has led to the restructuring of security relations between these same countries. US-Japan security cooperation, for example, has become even closer in the post-Cold War era, first with the security cooperation guidelines of 1997 and now with joint development of TMD. After an initial period of indecision, the Japanese government decided in 1998 to join with the United States in developing theater missile defense systems, and has made substantial investments in TMD in the past four years (as part of a growing defense budget that reached \$45 billion in 2001, second highest in the world after the US and greater than even Russia, the UK or France). Indeed, Japan is one of the few US allies around the world, especially compared to countries such as Germany, France, Italy and the Republic of Korea, which actively supports American missile defense programs.

For their part, Russia and China are united in their opposition to US missile defense, with the issue having provided the first real common ground on secu-



***Chinese ICBM DF-31***

rity issues between Moscow and Beijing since the end of the Cold War, if not the 1960s. Joint Russian-Chinese statements on US missile defense plans and the importance of the ABM Treaty were issued in December 1999 and again on July 18, 2000 during the Sino-Russian summit in Beijing prior to a meeting of the G-8 countries on Okinawa. In the latter statement, Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that “a non-strategic missile defense program and international cooperation in such areas, which is not prohibited by [the] ABM [Treaty], should not undermine the security interests of other countries, nor lead to the establishment of any closed military or political bloc, or threaten global and regional stability and security.” In a pointed reference to Japan, the statement emphasized that “China and Russia are deeply concerned that a certain country in the Asia-Pacific region might deploy any such non-strategic missile defense system, and steadfastly oppose this.” Sino-Russian joint statements since July 2000 have repeated this opposition to regional TMD deployments.

Other nations in Asia have joined Russia and China in opposing both national and theater missile defense systems. In July of 2000, the foreign ministers of the “Shanghai Five” - Russia, China, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan - issued a joint communiqué in Dushanbe calling for strict compliance with the ABM Treaty. These countries expressed concern that establishing regional security blocs based on theater missile defense systems would destroy peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. In June 2001, similar fears were

expressed during the summit meeting of the “Shanghai Cooperation Organization”.

In light of US plans for missile defense, there could well be a restructuring of the regional security system in East Asia. The US and Japan may strengthen their alliance in jointly developing and deploying theater missile defense systems, which might lead to changes in Japanese law and policy regarding the export of military technology. Beyond TMD, the US-Japan security alliance could expand to include both strategic offensive and defensive elements, as Japan will have not only an American “nuclear umbrella” but a “missile umbrella” as well. The end result could be a Japan that is more dependent on the United States in security matters and less able to voice an independent policy in Asia.

For their part, Russia and China may deepen their “strategic coordination” based on their common opposition to American missile defenses. A specific outcome may be that Russia and China go a good deal further in coordinating their policies and in specific weapon cooperation, including conventional arms and missiles.

Other powers in East Asia may realign themselves according to their views on missile defenses, with the US-Japan on one side or with Russia-China on the other. Whatever the nature of such changing alliance relations, the likely outcome of missile defenses will be a deepening of divisions between Russia-China and the US-Japan in terms of security policies, strategic doctrines, military postures, and military capabilities.

### **Missile defenses and the East Asian military balance**

Most worrisome for Beijing and Moscow is the fact that the development and future deployment of missile defense systems in Asia will enhance American and Japanese military superiority over Russia and China.

Firstly, a combination of both NMD and TMD will increase American strategic superiority over Russia and China in the Asia-Pacific region. At the moment, the US and Russia have fairly similar strategic nuclear capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region. Indeed, Russia may still enjoy quantitative superiority in terms of warheads, but this will decline sharply by 2010 as many Russian strategic delivery systems (nuclear submarines, surface ships, aircraft and missiles) become obsolete and are retired.

Qualitatively, the US already enjoys superiority. In addition to more modern strategic systems such as ICBMs, strategic aircraft, and nuclear submarines, America has more and better conventional weapons which are able to fulfill strategic missions in Asia, such as the B-117, B-2, F-16, and F-15, which can

carry out strategic strikes over any target in East Asia.

The deployment of missile defenses will only enhance this American superiority over Russia and China. A combination of US offensive and defensive superiority in the Asian-Pacific region will certainly call into question China's nuclear deterrent, and over time may well undermine Russian nuclear deterrence as well.

As for Japan, it traditionally has been at a disadvantage in facing both Russian and Chinese strategic and conventional forces. The future deployment of theater missile defenses in and around Japan, however, could change the strategic equation between Japan and other major powers in Asia. With a TMD capability, Japan would have some strategic capacity to counter Russian and especially the less numerous Chinese strategic forces. At the same time, a continued modernization of Japanese conventional forces will result in at least some conventional military superiority vis-à-vis China, especially in terms of power projection in East Asia using more sophisticated naval and air forces.

In sum, the deployment of an American national missile defense system and various theater missile defenses in Japan and the western Pacific will enhance American superiority in offensive strategic nuclear forces over both Russia and China. This comprehensive strategic superiority, in conjunction with an increase in Japan's military capability, will almost certainly produce grave instabilities in the Asia-Pacific military balance in the early 21st century.

### **Missile defenses and the prospect of a new arms race in East Asia**

In light of the announcement by the Bush administration that it intends to withdraw from the ABM Treaty and proceed unhindered with the development of missile defenses, the prospects are very real for the initiation of a new arms race in East Asia.

In the short term, the easiest response to missile defenses is for Russia and China to increase their offensive capabilities. Because of economic constraints and an aging nuclear force, Russia will find it difficult to increase or modernize its strategic nuclear systems over the next several years. As the Russian economy recovers, however, and there are already signs of this, then many Russian experts believe that Russia could take steps (in terms of both delivery systems and offensive countermeasures) by the end of this decade to counter the American missile defense system. Russians now are debating about how to use their limited military resources. If the current debate in Russia on whether to emphasize strategic or conventional forces comes down in favor of the former, then

President Putin might be able to devote the necessary resources for countering missile defense even sooner.

China on the other hand, because of its growing economy, will be in a much better position to deal with US-Japanese missile defense plans in Asia. Admittedly, China may not dramatically increase the number of ICBMs capable of reaching the American continent because of cost factors. At present, according to international sources (China does not publish specific data on its strategic force), there are twenty DF-4 ICBMs with a range of 13,000 km; new systems under development include the DF-31 with a range of 8,000 km (2003) and the DF-41 with a range of 12,000 km (2010). Sea-based systems include 24 JL-1 missiles, with a range of 1,700 km, with the longer-range, 8,000 km JL-2 under development.<sup>1</sup> Within the decade, it is likely that that China's long-range nuclear arsenal will double from 20 to 40 deliverable warheads.

In terms of short- and medium-range nuclear missiles, however, capable of hitting Japan and US naval forces in East Asia and the western Pacific, China would be able to increase its missile power dramatically and quickly. There are now between 36 and 50 DF-21 missiles with a range of 1,800 km, and over 200 DF-15 missiles with a range of 600 km, with several new and longer-range missiles under development.

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***Over time, both Russia and China have the technological capability to develop and deploy some sort of missile defense system.***

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In terms of Russia and China developing their own missile defense systems in order to maintain the strategic balance in both offensive and defensive terms, it is unlikely that either country will be able to easily deploy such systems that equal those of the US because of the technological gap between them. However, one should not forget the history of the 1960s and 1970s, when both the Soviets and Chinese narrowed the gap with the US in terms of offensive forces. Over time, both Russia and China have the technological capability to develop and deploy some sort of missile defense system, to say nothing of the offensive countermeasures needed to reduce the effectiveness of US NMD or TMD.

What remains most worrisome for Beijing, however, is the joint development of missile defenses by the US and Japan, especially if Japan at some point acquires its own offensive missile capability. Given its technological expertise, already demonstrated in Japanese development of satellite and rocket systems for many years, Japan could easily move to develop and deploy a formidable missile capability, should it decide to do so. Similarly, Japan's nuclear technology provides a base from which the country could move to acquire its own nuclear weapons. Although such a prospect at present seems unthinkable, the

future possibility of a Japan having both missile defenses and its own nuclear deterrent is not something that military planners in Beijing can totally discount.

Even leaving aside the issue of nuclear forces in East Asia, the introduction of missile defenses will stimulate uncertainties and tensions between the major military powers in the region, who will do whatever they can do to strengthen their conventional and force projection capabilities in the area. As one role of theater missile defenses is to protect US troops when deployed for combat overseas, other countries in East Asia will likely respond by increasing their missile and aircraft capabilities. In addition, if national missile defense undermines strategic stability, then China and other countries will seek to increase their conventional military forces to offset the loss of strategic parity. Given that East Asia from the Koreas to Singapore is already witnessing worrisome levels of conventional force modernization, the introduction of theater missile defenses is only likely to make the situation worse.

### **Korea, Taiwan and Southeast Asia**

The much-welcomed summit of June 2000 and the initial improvement of inter-Korean relations that followed has thus far not changed the fact that the Korean peninsula remains the most densely militarized area in the world. The United States and South Korea still maintain high levels of alert and military deployments based on worst case scenarios. Similarly, despite dire economic conditions, North Korea has not changed its military posture. Should the US and Japan deploy theater missile defense systems in Asia, this will only encourage North Korea to respond in order to counter such forces. In addition, missile defense deployments will likely complicate both the missile talks between North Korea and the United States and any prospects for a non-nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

One of the stated purposes for US and Japanese deployments of missile defense in Asia is to counter “the Chinese missile build up” across the Taiwan Strait. From Beijing’s perspective, missile superiority is the only area in which mainland China can deter Taiwan’s independent tendencies. Accordingly, a US-Japanese missile defense system designed to neutralize this PRC capability would have to be countered with an increase in China’s missiles aimed at Taiwan in order to maintain deterrence. The outcome of such a scenario would a far more militarized and dangerous situation across the Taiwan Strait.

While countries in Southeast Asia may not be as directly affected by US-Japanese missile defense plans, the growing numbers and sophistication of conventional forces in the region already give cause for concern. With India and



*Aegis system*

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Pakistan on one side, and a deteriorating situation on the Korean peninsula and across the Taiwan Straits on the other, Southeast Asians might well find themselves being threatened by increased numbers of offensive missiles and deployments of missile defense. Feeling a need to counter such developments, the outcome could be even more weapons deployments in Southeast Asia as well.

### **Missile defense and regional security cooperation**

Despite the fact that missile defense deployments are several years away, the issue has already become a controversial one in East Asia and an obstacle to both bilateral and multilateral security relations in the region.

For the past several years, the issue of theater missile defense has been raised and discussed in almost every set of security talks between and among the United States, Russia, China, Japan and other countries such as Australia. Despite the close consultation that has characterized discussions of cooperation in combating international terrorism, little or no progress has been made on the missile defense issue. Russia and China are finding ever more common ground in opposing US missile defense plans, while relations between China and both the US and Japan have grown chilly over the NMD and TMD issues.

More than anything, missile defense has become the major obstacle to progress in arms control and disarmament. The US and Russia are unable to move forward with further reductions in their nuclear arsenals, and talks



between the US and China on strengthening the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) are dead because of US-Sino differences on the missile defense issue. New possibilities for security cooperation between China and both the US and Japan have become impossible because of the shadow cast by missile defense.

Missile defense has also complicated regional efforts at multilateral security cooperation. In both the United Nations and the Asia Regional Forum, efforts to expand multilateral cooperation in arms control and disarmament have faltered over the issue of missile defense. When missile defenses are actually deployed, the situation will become even more serious, further undermining the prospects for security dialogue and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Following the announcement on December 13 by President Bush that the United States intends to withdraw from the ABM treaty, the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a statement declaring that China hoped the US would seriously consider the opinion of the majority countries of the world and reconsider its position on the ABM Treaty.<sup>2</sup> Despite intensive dialogue between the two countries on missile defense issues, China considers that unilateral US policies will ultimately undermine peace, security and stability in the world. Especially in a region such as East Asia where potential military conflict is a real possibility, the need is greater than ever for bilateral and multilateral cooperation to defuse tensions and reduce nuclear and conventional armaments.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>. See Federation of American Scientists website, [www.fas.org](http://www.fas.org).

<sup>2</sup>. Xinhua News Agency, "Foreign Ministry's Spokeswoman on ABM," *Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily), December 15, 2001, p. A4.

## A New Transatlantic Deal on Missile Defense?

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*Thérèse Delpech*

Nine months after taking office, a catastrophic event overshadowed all of the other preoccupations of the Bush administration, except one. Homeland security. Not only will the preoccupation with defending America continue in the months ahead, it will without a doubt become the *primary* national objective.

In the wake of the terror attacks of September 11, future strikes against American soil, causing heavy civilian casualties, are now a dreadful reality, not a mere possibility. The consequences of this for the debate on missile defense are not too difficult to predict. Although strategic defenses would have been of no help in preventing or countering the terrorist attacks which destroyed the World Trade Center, American public support for national missile defense (NMD) is likely to increase for two reasons: US soil is for the first time felt to be highly vulnerable, and the United States faces adversaries who appear merciless. Intelligence operations and airport security have attracted more funds and care, but so too will missile defense. In October and November, as the US and Russia cooperated closely in the fight against al-Qaida and the Taliban, it seemed that similar cooperation might extend to amending the ABM Treaty and agreement on deep cuts in nuclear arsenals. By the end of the Bush-Putin summit in mid-November, however, agreement was still lacking. Although President Bush declared at the time that “We have a difference of opinion. Our differences will not divide us”, the President a few weeks later, on December 13, formally announced that the United States would indeed withdraw from the ABM Treaty, to become effective in six months on June 13, 2002. Thus far, as of January 2002, the Russian response to the US decision has been remarkably calm.

America’s European allies find themselves in a different situation as well after September 11. For the first time in the alliance’s 52-year history, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization invoked, on the day after the attacks, the mutual defense clause of its founding treaty, where an attack on one member is considered an attack on all. Beyond demonstrating political solidarity, the declaration had a (limited) military implication, with NATO AWACS patrolling the American skies and contributing to US domestic security with European crews.

The declaration may also change NATO's current position concerning potential 'out of area' operations and affect the reluctance of most European nations to accept military interventions outside of Europe. Finally, it may lead European allies to recognize that they face common threats, not only from acts of terrorism and sabotage as was already agreed in NATO's 1999 strategic concept, but also from ballistic and cruise missiles.

### **The evolving missile defense issue**

During 2001, significant changes in the dynamics of missile defense had already occurred prior to September 11, including:

(1) After a few months of excessive rhetoric from the incoming Bush administration, the exercise of power had a sobering effect inside the Beltway. A desire to differentiate itself from the Clinton administration initially led senior Bush officials to adopt an aggressive foreign policy, which was challenged worldwide. A more restrained period followed. In Europe, there had been changes as well. The issue of missile defense was progressively addressed in a more reflective and less emotional way. On both sides, the complexity of the issue in terms of threat assessment, diversity of systems, technological challenges, international law and strategic relations was clearer.

(2) Consultations with allies had become a priority goal. A team led by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz came to Brussels, Paris, London, and Berlin in May. Then President Bush himself came to Europe twice, in June and July. These occasions were all used to stress the importance of consultations with friends and allies. Genuine or not, this polite policy got results: Prime Minister Aznar of Turkey, Prime Minister Berlusconi of Italy, and some East and Central European States came out in support of the US initiative, while Tony Blair said he recognized the need for innovative policies and would keep an open mind, waiting for details. France and Germany remained reserved, but welcomed consultations with Washington.

(3) The Bush administration adopted a more global approach to defense. Missile defenses were presented not only as Homeland Defense, but as a necessary condition for US military involvement abroad (global leadership being more dangerous at a time when WMD programs flourish) and as an additional US security guarantee to its allies. Given low accuracy, most missiles that are manufactured or being developed in Asia and the Middle East are cost effective only when armed with nuclear, chemical or biological warheads. Missile defenses to mitigate these threats would provide more security for America, its friends and allies, and for its deployed forces overseas. At the same time, Wash-

ington was blurring the lines between theater and strategic missile defense, making it more difficult for the Europeans, many of whom favor the development of TMD, to argue against strategic defenses.

(4) The Bush administration also announced a more comprehensive missile defense testing program. The European view has always been that missile defense, if deployed, should at least work. A seeming “rush to deploy” having been one of the main European criticisms of Clinton’s NMD in the year 2000, this apparent “shift to testing” on the part of the Bush administration was welcome. Several US technical studies had emphasized the need to adopt a more realistic testing program, incorporating more complex decoys and incoming missile trajectories. These technological challenges to missile defense appeared to be taken more seriously by the new administration, resulting in a more careful and comprehensive Pentagon testing program. The understanding in Europe is that fifteen to twenty years might still be needed before an effective missile defense system can be deployed.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the more ambitious US testing program was also seen as providing an excuse for a lack of transparency on a final missile defense architecture, in turn causing many Europeans to remain cautious and reserved about ultimate US intentions.

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***A new strategic framework with Russia was being explored, in the context of a broad political scheme that might even include the long-term possibility of Russia’s integration within NATO.***

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(5) The US was also seen as adopting a more prudent diplomatic approach with Russia and China. The September terror attacks will probably only strengthen this policy. The US temptation to immediately withdraw from the ABM treaty was initially strong, but by May 2001 President Bush seemed convinced that, in the absence of a genuine attempt to reach agreement with Moscow, such a withdrawal would seriously damage America’s foreign policy abroad, while domestic opposition would remain high, particularly in the US Senate.<sup>2</sup> Thus the administration undertook a more cooperative approach.<sup>3</sup> On the Russian side, there was movement as well. After having accepted, in June 2001, the possibility of amending the ABM

Treaty in order to allow for tests planned by the US, President Putin agreed to hold talks on both offensive and defensive forces in July 2001. A new strategic framework with Russia was being explored, in the context of a broad political scheme that might even include the long-term possibility of Russia’s integration within NATO. When the US withdrawal from the ABM treaty was eventually announced in December 2001, the mild Russian reaction was largely due to a usually missing ingredient between US and Russia: mutual trust between the two leaders. The US also was pursuing a less controversial relationship with China. During his trip to China in July, Secretary of State Colin Powell down-

played any mention of China as America's 'new strategic competitor', apparently recognizing the uselessness of needlessly antagonizing Beijing. While China may be less important for Europe than is Russia, there is a growing awareness that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, security will to a large extent be determined by events in Asia.

(6) While this more prudent diplomacy was welcomed in Europe, Washington's overtures to Russia and China at times appeared to be going too far. While previously expressing a general fear about a renewed arms race, there was during summer 2001 a more concrete concern that Washington was ready to accept, not only Russia's re-Mirving of the Topol-M missiles, but also China's nuclear and missile buildup, so as to neutralize the opposition of both countries to NMD. The now contemplated reductions in US and Russia's nuclear stock-piles may eventually be codified in writing. This would be by far the preference in Europe, including on the issues of verification and control.

### **Post-September 11 attitudes**

European views on NMD had been largely marginalized by early September. Following the terror attacks of September 11, has the situation changed?

(1) Before September 11, Washington believed that the Europeans were either "won over" or less relevant. The importance of the Europeans in the NMD equation had sharply diminished once discussions with Russia had started. Although consultations with the allies continued to be on the agenda, their pace was slowing down and their substance was meager. In short, the Europeans were seen as having little choice but to go along with US NMD preferences. Now that America needs wide-ranging support from its closest allies, more comprehensive talks on the strategic implications of September 11 are likely to take place, including on missile defenses. In particular, the issue of defenses against cruise missiles, until now on the back burner, might also come to the forefront in the transatlantic dialogue.

(2) Prior to September, the Europeans had been unable to come up with a unified position on missile defense, which reinforced Washington's view of Europe as a place of many tongues. Intra-European consultations on missile defense had been minimal, even before the visits of President Bush and President Putin. As a result, European views were sometimes divergent and even confused.<sup>4</sup> Now, members of the European Union, who immediately supported the United States after the attacks on New York and Washington, will need to address more seriously global threat assessments and reassess accordingly their common defense policy. This does not mean the absence of differences with

Washington, but such differences might rest on firmer analytical ground.

(3) For many years, US missile defense cooperation programs have been far more developed with its allies in the Middle East and East Asia than with the Europeans. The Pentagon's most advanced partnership on missile defenses, with Israel, involves the Arrow theater defense system and the Tactical High Energy Laser. Then there are US cooperative efforts with Japan, where the development of some missile defense technologies (ceramics for instance) is even more advanced than in the United States. Given priorities in Europe to remedy weaknesses in conventional forces and a reluctance to participate in TMD programs, US-European cooperative efforts on theater missile defense, early warning and surveillance have lagged behind.<sup>5</sup> This might now change as well.

(4) The Europeans were often seen as fueling opposition by the Democratic party to Bush administration policies. Having questioned the nature and the growth of the threat, the Europeans had unwittingly had an indirect influence on US domestic politics, since this criticism was then "recycled" by the Democrats at home.<sup>6</sup> In fact, precisely for these domestic political reasons, some European views had received an unprecedented level of interest in Washington. Now, however, facing a major global struggle against a determined adversary, American partisan politics has receded, at least on security issues, and replaced by impressive bipartisan unity. The allies are expected to show a similar solidarity and such is their declared policy so far. Such solidarity is the only basis on which the Europeans can influence the debate concerning the complex response needed to discourage future attacks.

(5) Prior to September 11, European strategic concerns were perceived as being strikingly different from those of the US, with America increasingly interested in Asia, not in Europe, and Europeans worried more about their immediate periphery. Protecting the US mainland from missile attacks on the one hand, and protecting deployed forces and naval assets from short range missiles on the other, were priorities that did not easily match. Now, of course, the picture is dramatically altered, with a common wish to adopt a long term multifaceted strategy (involving police, intelligence, economic, diplomatic and military means) to eradicate the terrorist threat.

### **Future European role**

So, the Europeans may become less peripheral to Washington's concern with meeting international security challenges, including but not limited to debates on missile defenses. Some of the major issues to be worked through in the months ahead including the following:

(1) A new situation prevails concerning formulations of ‘common interests’ and ‘common threats’. The reluctance of the Europeans to acknowledge a ‘common threat’ was posing a significant problem for Washington; in May 2001, for example, when Washington tried unsuccessfully to persuade its European counterparts that NATO should take urgent measures to deal with threats posed by ICBMs being developed by hostile countries - since this could have endangered future joint military operations. Now, it appears essential for the transatlantic alliance to move beyond rhetoric and to compare US and European threat assessments.<sup>7</sup> If European and American views do differ on critical security issues, it is indispensable that these be clarified in times of crisis. The lack of a serious European effort at threat assessment, and a US tendency to shape its policies on ‘capabilities-driven’ as opposed to ‘requirements-based’ formula, have up to now been two significant difficulties in this respect. Progress needs to be made on both fronts.

(2) Upgraded radar facilities in Europe (Fylingdales in the United Kingdom and Thule in Greenland) will still be needed to protect US territory from missiles coming from the Middle East. This may now be seen as an even more important objective. The US has not yet sought formal permission from London and Copenhagen for these upgrades, but such will have to be granted. The planned X-band radars at Fylingdales and Thule would be difficult to replace with other options: radars on ships would cost a substantial amount of additional money, while radars on the US northeast coast would not have the same level of performance. While there is little doubt that the UK, Denmark and Greenland will avoid any decision that might severely damage the Alliance, particularly at a time of great risks, the choice will still be a difficult one domestically.

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***The Bush administration hopes that TMD can eventually be expanded to form a layered shield to protect both the US and its allies, as well as deployed forces.***

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(3) Proposals for ‘extending’ missile defense to the Europeans will have to be based on joint US-European agreement. In the absence of any transatlantic agreement on the threat, however, such proposals will be difficult to implement. As of now, only two areas of cooperation show promise: theater missile defense and early warning. Regarding TMD, limited European missile defenses for deployed forces and for point defense of critical assets appear increasingly necessary. The Bush administration hopes that TMD can eventually be expanded to form a layered shield to protect both the US and its allies, as well as deployed forces. But unless a dramatic European reassessment of the threat is adopted, defenses covering all European territory are not likely to be on the security agenda in the coming years, for strategic as well as financial reasons. As for early warning, European interest in reconnaissance and surveillance

systems will surely grow, since no European country today can identify the origin of an adversarial missile launch against its territory. Whatever the future evolution of ballistic missile proliferation, significant work in this area (satellites and radars) would be prudent. Finally, if X-band radars and interceptors are deployed in Europe to protect American territory, Europe would then become part of the US system, generating new perceived vulnerabilities (such as pre-emptive strikes or debris from interceptors).<sup>8</sup> Similar threats were accepted during the Cold War (US nuclear bases in Europe) but might be subject to deeper challenges today, even under the current circumstances, unless new attacks or crises change European minds.

(4) A new 'Strategic Framework' with Russia is proving more difficult to achieve than previously thought in Washington, as was demonstrated by the lack of any agreement to come out of the Bush-Putin summit in Washington and Crawford, Texas. In principle, the need for Russian cooperation on terrorism should stimulate Washington, even after the US announcement to withdraw from the ABM treaty, to come to a wide agreement based on nuclear cuts, increased consultations between Russia and NATO, and economic aid. Still, ultimate agreement could prove difficult, particularly if the next phase of the war on international terrorism, beyond Afghanistan, antagonizes Moscow. In an effort to facilitate a new era of cooperation with Russia, a British proposal to give Russia equal status with the alliance's 19 permanent members in devising and executing some policies was presented by the NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson, in November 2001. It was not accepted as such by Washington, but there is a common recognition that, as NATO and Russia must increasingly work together on terrorism and regional instability, NATO must reflect this new reality. In such a situation, Russia's sensitive sales of weapons and technology to states of concern would be expected to decrease and eventually cease.

(5) In 2002, the United States will face another important decision in a year marked by mid-term Congressional elections: to expand NATO further eastward (including some or all of the Baltic States). To this conjunction of events, a major and delicate campaign against international terrorism is now added, which could lead to significant choices. In a situation where Moscow's support appears essential, NATO expansion might be the subject of intense consultations with Russia. In the end, however, the issue is not likely to be as divisive as the first round of NATO expansion, partly because Moscow understands it can do very little to prevent it, partly because Russia's relationship with NATO is being recast.



(6) Finally, the Bush administration must rethink its ideological hostility to international law and multilateralism in light of present tragic events. The foreign policy approach of ‘à la carte multilateralism’ might protect America’s national freedom, but this approach endangers its international leadership and the international support it now needs. In six months, the Bush administration has shunned or threatened to leave a number of international treaties. Whatever the individual merits of the different texts, one of the most significant results of this policy has been to lower the American ability to shape international relations. According to most Europeans, the time has come to reassess multilateral ties, not just bilateral ones as with Russia and China. The US decision to withdraw from the ABM Treaty does not provide much hope in this direction. But such a reassessment is necessary if the United States wants to maintain a large coalition against international terrorism.

### Some conclusions

The implications of missile defense for Europe have been, until now, far less dramatic than for Asia, where such defenses directly affect the main regional strategic problems (Taiwan, the Korean peninsula, China/Japan and China/US relations; see the essay by Chu Shulong). But now, in the aftermath of September 11, Europe finds itself with America on the front lines of the fight against international terrorism because Western democratic societies have become the primary targets. This new reality leads to several conclusions:

(1) Before the terrorist attacks, the Europeans appeared ready to accept a limited missile defense initiative, with a convincing testing program, fewer nuclear forces and a wider non-proliferation strategy. The current US initiative is not limited; there are still no precise plans to constrain nuclear reductions; and a wider non-proliferation strategy is lacking. Predictability and consistency would be encouraged by a more precise idea of the final architecture and by commitments to irreversible nuclear cuts, while the use of missile defense as only one element of the US strategy to fight proliferation would be the clear preference by far. There is now a greater immediate need for a revised threat assessment, for nuclear reductions in the two major arsenals and for an enlightened foreign policy, than there is for large technological defense programs. Nonetheless, transatlantic cooperation on theater missile defenses, intelligence and surveillance is likely to grow, as will perhaps cooperation on defenses against cruise missiles.

(2) In the short term, missile defense efforts are not likely to diminish US security commitments to Europe or undermine European nuclear deterrents.<sup>9</sup>

But since the medium and long term objectives of missile defense are unclear, particularly under current circumstances, so too are its potential consequences. Any further destabilization of international relations will be risky and the main US objective, to deploy an anti-ICBM capability, is precisely what the European states have wanted to avoid for strategic reasons. Now, however, it is likely that the Europeans' desire to maintain and even strengthen their traditional security ties with the US will attenuate Europe's criticism. Policy differences might also be narrowed by a possible strategic evolution on Europe's periphery and a growing interest in protecting whatever military forces the Europeans might deploy abroad.

(3) Over and above the problem of "underdeveloped" European threat assessments regarding ballistic missile proliferation, differences between the US and its allies may nonetheless persist. As Winston Churchill noted, "The problem with allies is that they sometimes develop opinions of their own." America appears increasingly technologically-minded at a time when its diplomatic

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***America appears increasingly technologically-minded at a time when its diplomatic performance in regions of tension (the Middle East for instance) is particularly weak.***

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performance in regions of tension (the Middle East for instance) is particularly weak. The Europeans would like to see exactly the opposite view emerge in Washington: a United States able to refashion international relations in such a way as to increase predictability and lessen the likelihood of major conflicts. Missile defense cannot be a substitute for a pro-active US foreign policy. The current need to drive a wedge between moderate and radical Arab countries to end the terrorist violence is a reminder of the centrality of US diplomacy. Both sides of the Atlantic will now need to put criticism aside in order to work together effectively. It is time for Europe to back its diplomacy with military force, which entails not only modernizing its conventional forces but also providing a significant contribution to strategic intelligence and surveillance. In addition, more decisive policies have to be adopted in Europe to fight international terrorism, which benefited from lax security and excessive tolerance in a number of European countries. It is time for America to back its technological and military power with innovative and consistent diplomacy, particularly in regions of tension, like the Middle East and South Asia, which will be greatly affected by the on-going conflict against terrorism.

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(4) The missile defense debate has raised useful questions that Europe needs to carefully consider: Should a proper European threat assessment be undertaken? Should Europe develop its own early warning satellite system? Should cooperation not only with the United States but also with Russia be given a clos-

er look?<sup>10</sup> Should Europe broaden its strategic outlook and include Asian developments? The Europeans could acknowledge the relevance of these issues, while still considering US missile defense plans to be questionable in some respects (especially for those in Europe who believe the September 11 attacks justify their view of missile defense as little more than a modern Maginot Line). On the American side, it would be a mistake to downplay Europe's views. As Thomas Friedman rightly suggests: "The greatest danger today is not European anti-Americanism, but American anti-Americanism. The greatest danger is if America is no longer ready to play America – the benign superpower that pays a disproportionate price to maintain the system of which it is the biggest beneficiary." Recent events reinforce this judgment at a time when Washington prepares for a long campaign in order to prevent terrorism from bringing chaos to the international system.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>. An additional and significant advantage of the testing approach is Russia's tolerance: while in Washington, General Baluyevsky declared that "under the treaty, testing can be carried out, but only with notification." This interpretation of the treaty is generous. Experts normally consider a number of types of tests to be inconsistent with the treaty: testing either sea-based or mobile land-based interceptors against a long-range missile; testing the air-borne laser against a target missile in boost phase; and testing a space-based interceptor against any target ballistic missile.

<sup>2</sup>. In a poll conducted in July 2001, by the *International Herald Tribune* and the Pew Research Center, on European views in Europe, the responses to the question, "Do you approve or disapprove Bush's decision that the US should try to develop a missile defense system even if it means withdrawing from the ABM Treaty?" were as follows:

	APPROVE	DISAPPROVE	DON'T KNOW
Britain	20	66	14
Italy	24	65	11
Germany	10	83	7
France	14	75	11

<sup>3</sup>. The results in the US were also telling: Approve (39%), Disapprove (42%), and Don't know (19%).

<sup>4</sup>. Beyond seeking new limitations on offensive and defensive systems, Washington reportedly is offering plans to boost American investments in Russia, high tech

sales, and a sharing of some missile defense technology, while Russia is expected to stop its exports of sensitive items to “states of concern”. This last request will most likely be emphasized in the coming months.

5. For instance, Europe’s fierce support of deterrence appears inconsistent with the scepticism regarding nuclear weapons that is prevalent in many places in Europe. Although the fact that France and the United Kingdom place greater confidence in the deterrent value of nuclear weapons than does Washington is hardly surprising, this is not a common European view. In the missile defense debate, however, deterrence was widely thought to be a reliable answer to WMD threats in Europe. Concerning their effect on deterrence, it is fair to say that defenses do not automatically weaken deterrence since they can discourage ballistic missile attacks. Arguments related to coupling were equally confused in Europe. Contrary to what the Europeans first contended, defenses can strengthen coupling with the US if they facilitate joint military operations overseas. The main transatlantic divergence is related to robust strategic defenses. Limited defenses were recognized as useful tools by the allies in 1999: “The Alliance’s defense posture against the risks and potential threats of the proliferation of NBC weapons and their means of delivery must continue to be improved”, *The Alliance Strategic Concept approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington DC on 24 April 1999, Para 56*.
6. The MEADS (Medium Extended Air Defense System) project, conducted jointly with Germany and Italy, has been under development since 1994, but is not important either in Washington, Bonn or Rome. Technology sharing is limited and key data are not shared by the US with the two European partners, who consider the project as unequal; PAC-3 is equally sold with “black boxes”. The US Navy is working with Germany, Italy and the Netherlands to look into sea-based theater missile defenses, but the project is only two years old. Finally, NATO’s adoption of the Defense Capabilities Initiative in 1999 led to the NATO TMD Feasibility Study, which is meant to define the requirements of a limited missile defense aimed at protecting allied forces. The initiative is still in its initial stages with deployment scheduled to start in 2010.
7. The Senate majority leader, Tom Daschle, delivered a critique of President George W. Bush’s foreign policy in August 2001 at the Woodrow Wilson International Center, where he emphasized the importance of US allies: “The administration seems to have forgotten an essential fact of today’s global age. With the Cold War over, fear of a common enemy no longer keeps our allies by our side. Our allies will follow us only if we use our unparalleled strength and prosperity to advance common interests.” The speech paralleled another address at the beginning of August to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, by the House minority leader, Richard Gephardt, who had just returned from a trip to Europe. According to experts, the financial debate in the Senate, starting in September will, in the worst scenario for the administration, still provide 6 to 7 additional billions to missile defense, allowing major objectives to be fulfilled. Recent bipartisan unity after the catastrophic attacks will lessen the divide without succeeding in eliminating the differences on the main point: the priorities of American defense policy.

8. Indeed, NATO has approved consultations that will include assessment of threats. The European view may evolve in the coming years if long-range capabilities emerge in the Mediterranean area. The outcome of the current campaign against terrorism and its effects in Moslem and Arab countries may be decisive in this respect.
9. A nuclear missile fired at the US from the Middle East and intercepted by the US might have catastrophic consequences in Europe, according to some experts. See "Intercepted missiles could fall on Europe," *New Scientist* August 1, 2001.
10. In the future, nuclear deterrence might increasingly be questioned in the United States as sophisticated conventional weaponry is developed. See "Nuclear Deterrence as a Legacy System, and What Follows" by G.A. Keyworth, paper presented at the Command and Control Research and Technology Symposium, Monterey, California, June 2000; and Keith Payne, *Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence* (University of Kentucky Press, 2001). But deterrence might also remain the ultimate insurance of survival in case of existential threats.
11. US-Russia agreement on the Strategic Stability Cooperation Initiative reached on September 6, 2000 considered the possibility of cooperating on TMD systems and of involving third parties: "The United States and Russia are prepared to resume and then expand cooperation in the area of theater missile defense, and also considered the possibility of involving other states, with a view to strengthening global and regional stability." But cooperation between the United States, Europe, and hopefully Russia, would better focus its efforts on reducing the threat emanating from ballistic missile proliferation: joint intelligence, police surveillance, early warning and prevention.

# US Missile Defense and the ABM Treaty

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*John B. Rhineland*

*AUTHOR'S NOTE: This paper was originally completed two days prior to President Bush giving formal notice of withdrawal from the ABM Treaty on December 13, 2001. It includes various changes and an entirely new conclusion. As is made clear in the paper, US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty is totally unnecessary and is based entirely on a philosophical rejection of treaty constraints on US weapons systems in general and domestic political opposition to the ABM Treaty in particular. The ABM Treaty could have been interpreted, and amended if necessary, to allow a vigorous, ten-year research, development, test and evaluation (RDT&E) program that will be needed to determine whether an effective national missile defense is technically feasible. The Bush Administration refused to explore this approach and Russia failed to understand how to deal with the new American attitude.*

*When the termination of the Treaty becomes effective on June 13, 2002 (neither Congress nor the Supreme Court can stop it), this will mark the first time in thirty years that there will be no treaty constraints on strategic defensive systems, and probably none on the strategic offensive nuclear forces of the US and Russia. Bush's actions in terminating the ABM Treaty and probably accepting only reciprocal unilateral measures on offensive strategic weapons (but with a verification protocol) could undercut Putin again, and may make less likely Russian cooperation on sensitive nuclear matters in the future. Skillful managing of other agenda items leading up to the Bush-Putin summit in May will be critical to avoid this.*

*Further, China is now a major nuclear-weapon player. It may defer any precipitous response while evaluating the US ballistic missile defense (BMD) test program and the likelihood that this will lead to deployment of either TMDs in East Asia or a NMD that would blunt China's minimum strategic nuclear deterrent. If China eventually responds with new programs designed to negate US missile defense programs with augmented offensive capabilities, India may react to China and Pakistan to India. Strategic stability in Asia and nuclear proliferation generally could both be casualties. —JBR, 6 February 2002*

George Bush was elected President in November 2000 in the closest and most disputed election in 125 years. His Republican Party carried the House of Representatives by a narrow six-vote margin and the evenly-divided Senate remained under Republican control due to his Vice President's tie-breaking vote. The country was prospering and at peace. The Bush Administration dominated Washington for its first four months in office with its strongly conservative agenda at home and arrogant unilateralism abroad. The early deployment of national missile defense (NMD), the end of the ABM Treaty, and the general disparagement of treaties seemed to be its only foreign policy objectives. Then two events occurred.

In June, Republican Senator James Jeffords left his party and voted for Democratic control. The Senate agenda and scheduling were now in Democratic hands with decidedly different views from the President, particularly on NMD, the ABM Treaty, multilateralism, the importance of legal regimes, and domestic priorities. Yet as summer moved towards fall, the views of allies, adversaries and others on ballistic missile defense were apparently for naught. The NMD outcome was going to be decided by the White House on its own terms, and at the most influenced by the annual fall budget debates and decisions. A balanced budget was the rhetorical goal of both parties. There were not enough funds for all priority wishes, and Congressional conditions on appropriated funds might have made a difference.

All this changed with the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11. In the weeks and months following, the President's popularity in the US soared and he grew as a leader. He established an inner war cabinet with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld taking an aggressive, hands-on role.<sup>1</sup> The President's diplomacy was highly successful, including working with a UN special envoy that produced a UN-brokered interim government in Afghanistan under Hamid Karzai in December. Congress had earlier approved a use-of-force resolution focused on Afghanistan, unanimously in the Senate and with only one dissent in the House. Bipartisanship was in, and all partisan controversies were initially put off for another day. Forty billion dollars of emergency aid was immediately approved with another \$60 billion to follow. The budget surplus was a thing of the past. Further and more ominous, the US economy, and those of Europe and Japan as well, already weak, accelerated in toppling toward a global recession.

Internationally in its war on terrorism, the US sought and received support from its traditional allies, including NATO, Japan, and almost all others, including most Muslim states, at least rhetorically. Pakistan was key, being adjacent

to land-locked Afghanistan and its Taliban regime that hosted the elusive Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida network. President Putin supported the US campaign, as did three of the Central Asian Republics bordering Afghanistan to the north, with Russia facilitating American use of former Soviet bases in Central Asia. In return, the US moderated its views of Russian behavior in Chechnya. A fundamentally new US-Russian relationship seemed to be afoot, a huge transformation compared to the uneasy state of affairs between Washington and Moscow that prevailed after 1991 over such issues as NATO enlargement, the Balkans and missile defense. Overall, the need to build and hold together the international coalition against terrorism (the Coalition)<sup>2</sup> pushed all other foreign policy issues in Washington into the background, except for the escalating violence between Palestinians and Israel.

With the focus on terrorism, missile defense disappeared from public view until shortly before the November Summit between Bush and Putin. The preference of senior Bush officials for giving a unilateral, six-months' notice of withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in November 2001 (that would have become effective in May 2002) had seemingly stalled, notwithstanding the occasional outcry of some missile defense ideologues. Unilateralism did not fit the newly changed world of the Coalition. A US-Russian BMD deal seemed in the offing.

Momentum for a Summit compromise on both offensive and defensive strategic weapons dissipated, however, before and during the talks in Washington, DC and Crawford, Texas, and little was accomplished. Bush did announce unilateral cuts in US deployed strategic offensive weapons to a level between 1,700 and 2,200 over the coming decade, but he opposed codifying this pledge in treaty form or even in writing. Left uncertain was whether the excess US warheads would be destroyed or kept in storage as a "hedge" capability. Putin also announced cuts in offensive strategic weapons, but was vague on details even while insisting on a formal agreement. On NMD and the ABM Treaty, there was no progress at all. Bush made clear he wanted the US out of the Treaty entirely. Putin sought to preserve the Treaty, even if in amended form, but made no specific offer.

Several weeks later, when Secretary of State Colin Powell visited Moscow on December 9-10, significant progress was made on an offensive weapons agreement, to be signed at a Moscow summit in the summer of 2002. On the ABM Treaty there was no progress at all and in fact there was backsliding. Three days later the President announced that the US was giving six-months notice that it would withdraw from the ABM Treaty. This will take effect at midnight, June 13, 2002.



## The US missile defense program

US research development, testing and evaluation (RDT&E) of missile defense will proceed at the pace and in the areas that Congress funds, subject to the uncertainties of successful or unsuccessful flight tests which are scheduled for about one each calendar quarter. The most important near-term domestic constraint will be fierce competition for appropriated funds from the demands of domestic programs, improved intelligence and homeland defense, and the military. The President's proposals were detailed in his new budget proposed for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2002. They will be subjected to Congressional review, changes and final approval in the fall.

As was demonstrated during the November 2001 summit, a new strategic framework covering both offensive and defensive strategic systems was implausible at this stage. The US did not know what it wanted, or needed, for NMD, other than freedom to test as it pleases, and its views on offensive restraints were unformed. The US proposal not to withdraw for two years, made earlier, in exchange for Russia not challenging any US tests, legal or illegal under the Treaty, was a non-starter. It was as unacceptable to Russia as was a non-binding agreement on offensive systems, and did not lead to constructive, exploratory discussions. One part of an obvious, cooperative near-term approach should have been the adaptation of and amendments to the ABM Treaty for five-to-ten years to permit the US to undertake a vigorous RDT&E program, of a type outlined by President Bush in the summer of 2001. Treaty adaptations or changes to accommodate such testing could have been relatively simple, with brief documentation.

The problems facing such a solution were two-fold. First, the Bush Administration, at the working level, was and remains unalterably opposed to continuing the ABM Treaty in force for five to ten years, and incapable of formulating a position on amendments necessary to do so. Had traditional negotiations actually begun, the working level would surely have expended time and energy on deal-breakers not necessary for a sound RDT&E program in order to frustrate the reaching of agreement. Second, Russia should have been prepared to accept what the US would need if US efforts were limited to testing and did not include deployment, but was not. Further, Russia, was incapable of taking the initiative and making proposals that would benefit US RDT&E programs, especially prior to the details of a US program had been made public. In US eyes, Russia had backtracked in demanding the right to review each future test, which would have insured contention at least every quarter.

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While constructive negotiations could theoretically still take place prior to the June 13, 2002 termination date, the domestic politics of NMD in the US make such an outcome impossible. There will be no ABM Treaty in force starting June 14.

### **American domestic politics of missile defense**

In contrast to the debates over BMD in the 1950s and 1960s, NMD in particular is now a highly partisan issue in the United States. It has been so since President Reagan's Star Wars speech in 1983, reinforced subsequently by its inclusion in Newt Gingrich's Contract for America and in the quadrennial Republican Presidential platform. Under current President Bush, the partisanship of NMD has been joined by two new trends. First, arms control in general is under continuous attack, mostly from conservative Republicans, with one refrain being that the US honors its legal commitments while others cheat. Second, international security treaties in general are denounced by radical conservatives, some of whom now hold key positions in the Bush Administration. They argue that the US must remain free to act in its own interests in light of its "exceptionalist" status.

In the aftermath of September 11, these positions were muted, but remained just beneath the surface.<sup>3</sup> Although Senate Democrats withdrew their challenges to Bush's initial missile defense funding proposals in the weeks following the September 11 attacks, the differences between Democrats and Republicans have only been deferred, not conceded, and they will rise again during policy and budget debates this year. Looking ahead, these factors and trends make for a volatile mix, notwithstanding the immediate and continuing political need for bipartisanship in support of the Coalition against international terrorism.

### **The President**

President Bush came into office voicing strong support for deep reductions in strategic offensive nuclear weapons and deployment of effective NMD. His posture and programs are philosophically closest to those of Ronald Reagan, even though the Cold War is over. Key advisors at the working levels of the Defense and State departments, and the National Security Council, are not moderates or conservatives, but radicals. The most important exceptions are Secretary of State, Colin Powell, who is becoming the leading advisor and spokesman on foreign affairs,<sup>4</sup> and Powell's Deputy, Richard Armitage, both of whom are pragmatists. Even though the UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has acted as a junior partner and co-leader of the Coalition, with multi-faceted roles<sup>5</sup> and helping to

moderate some US positions, he has acquiesced in Bush's decision to give notice of withdrawal from the ABM Treaty.

In the summer of 2001, President Bush unveiled some, but not all, of his proposed missile defense program as part of the FY 2002 budget that started October 1, 2001. The Bush program featured a new NMD "test bed facility" in Alaska and vigorous funding of research, development and testing of a "layered defense" — boost phase, mid-course and terminal. Additional details will be forthcoming when the Congressional hearings on the proposed FY 2003 budget and the US defense posture begin, starting with the testimony of Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld.

Lurking behind NMD is Secretary Rumsfeld's interest in offensive and defensive uses of space, an issue of potentially intense domestic and international sensitivity that has received some rhetorical support but did not surface in any significant budget proposal during 2001.

## Congress

Prior to the 2000 Presidential election, a Republican foreign policy analyst ironically quipped that missile defense was "one of the most theological arguments in American politics" because "Republicans would be for it even if it were proven that it couldn't work" and "Democrats against it even if it were proven that it could work."<sup>6</sup>

Some weeks after the election, when George W. Bush was declared the winner, the new President expected to be working with a Republican-controlled House and Senate for four years, not four months. While the switch to a Democrat-controlled Senate in June 2001 was indeed a sea change in Washington, the situation is anything but stable. The Democrat's Senate majority of one could even increase prior to the midterm Congressional elections of November 2002, or be eliminated, on the death, disability or resignation of one Senator from a state where the Governor is from a different party.

In the summer of 2001, the Senate Armed Services and Appropriations committees initially cast very skeptical eyes on the nearly 60 percent proposed increase in funding for FY 2002 missile defense programs and the administration's professed intent to use some of these funds to violate the ABM Treaty. Carl Levin, the new Democratic Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, won a 13-12 partisan vote in Committee to reduce the requested funds and to provide a case-by-case review mechanism before any violation of the ABM Treaty would occur. Both initiatives were withdrawn after September 11, but these issues will surface again in the next budget cycle. In the fall of 2001,

Congress eventually accepted the President's \$8.3 billion budget request, but \$1.3 billion of this could be diverted to the fight against terrorism.

The current Congress, narrowly divided, will exercise its power over NMD and other issues for one more fiscal year (i.e., the year beginning October 1, 2002). In November 2002, there will be midterm elections for the entire House of Representatives and for one-third of the Senate. The elections will be at the center of every political calculation made in Washington during the first ten months of 2002. They will take place against a political background that includes the current recession, the depth and length of which are uncertain, as well as a growing budget deficit with conflicting priorities for available funds.

### Treaties and arms control

While the Bush Administration has declared strong rhetorical support for non-proliferation efforts, its actions appear contradictory. Its adamant opposition to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) undercuts the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which was extended indefinitely in 1995. Its rejection of the draft Protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and other initiatives weakens BWC monitoring and verification efforts. Neither position will change. On the other hand, Congress ignored the administration's proposal to sharply reduce funding for the Nunn-Lugar cooperative threat reduction program that would have undermined US efforts to control fissile material in Russia. However, Congress did not significantly expand the program, as the Baker-Cutler commission and many others had recommended.

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The NPT, almost alone among international treaties, should actually appeal to the radical theorists in the Bush Administration since it is discriminatory on its face — the US is one of five countries benefiting from unequal NPT obligations as between nuclear and non-nuclear states. Nevertheless, the party line of many of these security theorists is to doubt the efficacy of any treaty and to avoid mutuality of legal obligations — the very essence of treaties. When it comes to particular treaties, different rationales are stated. Thus, the CTBT is not verifiable; the BWC Protocol will not catch cheaters; the Kyoto agreement on global warming is based on bad science; and the International Criminal Court would inhibit US peacekeeping. Most offen-

sive to these unilateralists is the ABM Treaty. Of all the arms control treaties, it alone is described as a relic of the Cold War. Not only does it allegedly block all useful research, development and testing on effective NMD programs, but it does so, they argue, in a discriminating fashion against the US alone. These

assaults on international law and treaties in general, and the ABM Treaty in particular, while muted in the immediate aftermath of September 11, nevertheless continue to represent the views of much of the national security working level in the Bush administration, and twenty or so conservative Republican Senators.

### Missile defense and the ABM Treaty

Philip Coyle, the former Director, Operational Tests and Evaluation in the Pentagon, testified before Congress in July 2001 that a decision on whether effective NMD is even feasible is nearly a decade away.<sup>7</sup> Of course, such timelines could be quicker, or slower, depending on Congressional funding and missile defense test results. Whatever the time frame, however, he and I have concluded that the necessary development and testing to determine feasibility need not have violated the ABM Treaty for years.<sup>8</sup> But leaving the ABM Treaty as traditionally interpreted was not an acceptable option for the Bush White House before or after September 11.

At a minimum, the Bush administration insisted on being freed from constraints of the ABM Treaty, to allow for US research, development and testing. For its part, Russia could have acquiesced to some changes in the ABM Treaty with little or no adverse strategic consequences, but never seemed ready to do so. Further, China could have found a US-Russian compromise less unsettling than either President Clinton's proposed three-phase NMD scheme, the deployment of which (including 200 to 250 interceptors) would clearly have blunted China's minimum deterrent, or the termination of the ABM Treaty.

Although the following points are moot given the US intention to terminate the ABM Treaty, it is worth remembering that an NMD compromise that meets the interests of both the US and Russia could have consisted of three simple basic factors:

(1) Russia could have acquiesced in a US "test bed facility" in Alaska with two ABM launchers at Kodiak Island (which could operate in conjunction with the one-third size, X-Band radar at Kwajalein to intercept target missiles from Vandenberg), five ABM launchers at Fort Greely (which will never be used for tests, for reasons of safety of the surrounding population), and the present radar on Shemya Island (which is oriented toward the Kamchatka Peninsula) upgraded to have some ABM capability. This three-prong facility could be accommodated under Article IV of the ABM Treaty, and the 1978 Agreed Statement, by a simple one-sentence US letter of notification to Russia.<sup>9</sup> No formal Treaty amendment would be required, *assuming* (a) that the US continues to have no more than 15 ABM launchers at all its ABM test ranges and (b) that Russia

acquiesces to Fort Greely and Shemya as part of this Alaska “test bed facility”. (Fort Greely may not become operational before 2006 since the new type of interceptor that would be “deployed” there is behind schedule and flight tests have not yet begun.)

(2) The US and Russia could have agreed to amend Article V of the ABM Treaty in two respects. First, the ban on development and testing of sea-based, air-based and land-mobile ground-based ABM systems and components could be suspended for a fixed period, such as 10 years, to remove the Treaty as an irritant in US-Russian relations. (The *deployment* ban on all mobile systems would remain in place during this period under this proposal, and the development and testing, as well as deployment, of space-based *interceptors* would also remain prohibited). Second, the current ban on development and testing of space-based sensors that substitute for ABM radars, such as the space-based infra-red system — low earth orbit (SBIRS-Low), could also be suspended (but not the ban on deployment). These two changes would give the US sufficient latitude to pursue vigorous RDT&E on boost-phase and other priority programs, including space-based sensors.<sup>10</sup> These limited changes, even with a near-term, limited-capability ABM system deployed in Alaska with five launchers

at Fort Greely, should have minimized Russian concerns of a US BMD breakout.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, amending Article V even in this limited way would set in motion a debate on the weaponization of space, particularly in terms of the differentiation of “weapons” from “surveillance” in and from space. This is sure to be an issue of intense international concern.<sup>12</sup>

(3) Under the current Treaty, NMD and theater missile defense (TMD) components may not be linked and cannot be tested concurrently at a test range. Logically this approach need not be changed and the current rules should be kept in effect.<sup>13</sup> If so, TMD would

proceed under the current ABM Treaty, as amended by the 1997 Demarcation Agreement that Russia has approved but which has not been submitted to the Senate for its consent. This 1997 compromise negotiated by the Clinton administration would probably have been a highly contentious issue for BMD supporters within the Bush Administration to accept. While joint testing of NMD with TMD is not necessary for a vigorous RDT&E program as the basic NMD components are developed and tested, the DOD had scheduled several tests (later postponed) of its Aegis TMD radar in conjunction with NMD tests. As long as the ban on concurrent testing remained, Treaty opponents would have a ready argument against the ABM Treaty. Nevertheless, there is no technical reason for

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change for many years. Further, former Senator Sam Nunn and other experts believe that TMD for defense of US military forces abroad should be the prime US deployment effort over the near term.<sup>14</sup>

A central question, of course, is whether either the US Senate or Russian Duma would have approved such a compromise on the ABM Treaty as part of a larger package involving reductions in offensive forces. The Senate would likely have been the easier challenge since, historically, Republican Presidents have successfully obtained consent to controversial treaties from a Senate under Democratic control. Even so, one can question the likelihood that President Bush would have sought to overcome the vocal and bitter opposition of twenty or so conservative Republican Senators, and Republican conservatives in general, on amending, while therefore keeping in force, the ABM Treaty. In fact, to raise the question is to answer it. Bush will not challenge his right wing on this matter.



***"Arrow" Interceptor***

## Conclusion

As of early February 2002, NMD remains in flux in the US. The Bush Administration outlined its initial program in the summer of 2001, but later details are still lacking. The Senate Democrats' first review was skeptical as to both scope and intent to violate the ABM Treaty, but they acquiesced, in a show of post-September 11 bipartisanship, in providing the funds Bush requested for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2001. The domestic battle over NMD will start anew with the President's programs and new budget, but from now on the ABM Treaty will be irrelevant. Realistic testing, though, will take years to determine the feasibility of effective BMDs.

Moscow's near-term focus on strategic issues appears to be on efforts to reach agreement to reduce offensive arms by the time of the next Bush-Putin summit, scheduled for May 23-25, 2002 in Moscow and St. Petersburg. US allies are, in large part, silent on strategic nuclear issues, at least in public. China



remains deeply skeptical of NMD, and particularly TMD in Asia. Under the circumstances, any conclusions are highly tentative, but several are proffered.

First, as to Russia, the strategic nuclear weapon dialogue is no longer central to the US perception of the US-Russian relationship. The US prefers to do as it wants, knowing that Russia cannot reciprocate whether in reversing reductions on the offense or deploying a defense.<sup>15</sup> Further, President Bush appears more interested in his personal relationship with his Russian counterpart than program specifics. It is unclear whether Bush comprehends that his proffered reductions between 1700 and 2200 deployed strategic warheads by the end of the decade amount to lesser reductions by 2007 than what his father agreed to at START II and President Clinton proposed for START III.<sup>16</sup> While Bush may agree to a “legally binding” document on offensive reductions at the forthcoming Summit, there will probably be no firm limits binding the US either to reduce or later not to increase. The reductions are likely to be stated in terms of reciprocal unilateral measures.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, other matters on the agenda, including

more transparency on warhead reductions and further closure on political issues, particularly NATO, will be central for success at the Summit. Unfortunately, there is no “sherpa,” as used for G-7 economic summits, responsible in the US government to ensure agreements are ready for signing at the Summit. The President’s reference to an “axis of evil” including Iraq, North Korea and Iran in his State of the Union address on January 29, 2002 may exacerbate relations with Russia. The state of probable US-Russian relations after the Summit in May and the termination of the ABM Treaty in June appears uncertain.

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Second, as to China, the US remains schizoid. On economic matters centered at the Department of State and the Trade office, the US enthusiastically supports engagement, change, binding international agreements and even international organizations, such as the WTO. On security matters focused on the Pentagon, there are deep suspicions of Chinese intents and capabilities and no willingness to consider a mutual deterrent relationship. US BMD programs will be of much greater concern to China than Russia. Whether the US will consider a BMD dialogue with China that goes beyond the vaguest generalities is unclear. For the moment China is focused on political stability and economic development. How US-Chinese relations will play out over the years if and when US RDT&E programs lead to the possibility of deployments of effective missile defense — either TMD or NMD — is speculative at the moment.

Third, on the US home-front, the economy will be the near-term dominant



issue even as efforts are made to limit vulnerability to additional terrorist attacks from air, land or sea. The missile defense issue over the next decade will be heavily influenced by the outcome of the Congressional elections in November of 2002, followed by Presidential and Congressional elections in November 2004, and subsequent November elections every two years into the future. Consistency over time has not been, and is not likely to be, a hallmark of US BMD politics or policy.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> See Thomas F. Ricks, "Rumsfeld's Hands-On War," *Washington Post*, Dec. 9, 2001, p. A1. The best account to date of the initial days of the war is "10 Days in September-Inside the War Cabinet," published by the *Washington Post* between January 27 and February 3, 2002.
- <sup>2</sup> Brent Scowcroft, the national security advisor to former President George Bush and now Chairman of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, has stated most forcefully the need to build, and the extraordinary challenge of keeping together, this new international coalition, in "Build a Coalition," *Washington Post*, October 16, 2001, p. A23.
- <sup>3</sup> On November 9, 2001, as the Bush-Putin Summit was about to begin, nine conservative Republican Senators, including Trent Lott and Jesse Helms, in a letter to President Bush that was leaked to the press several days later, fired warning shots against any compromise on the ABM Treaty and stated it was "imperative" to withdraw from the ABM Treaty.
- <sup>4</sup> Prior to September 11, Powell's star in Washington appeared to dim, as recited at length in *TIME* magazine's cover story that, ironically, was dated September 10. It now continues to brighten as made clear in Bill Keller, "The World According to Powell," *The New York Times Magazine*, Sunday, November 25, 2001, p. 60. This article stresses that Powell strongly favored retaining the ABM Treaty, and his first preference was to amend it, see pp 74, 88.
- <sup>5</sup> This included setting out the case against bin Laden and al-Qaida; see "Britain's Bill of Particulars: [Bin Laden and al-Qaida] Planned and Carried out the Atrocities," *New York Times*, October 5, 2001.
- <sup>6</sup> Quoted in E. J. Dionne, Jr., "Faith-Based Defense," *Washington Post*, July 27, 2001.
- <sup>7</sup> Prepared testimony before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, July 19, 2001.

8. Coyle and Rhinelanders, "NMD Testing Does Not Have to Wreck the ABM Treaty," in *World Policy Journal* (Sept. 2001).
9. The US and Russia would have to determine whether Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan are current parties to the ABM Treaty during any discussions on adaptation or amendments to it.
10. The urgency of this change is not now clear since Congress is resisting funding of SBIRS. The SBIRS-Low program is significantly behind schedule and over cost, and in any event the plan is to launch a half dozen or so satellites during a test and evaluation phase. It would take three years to launch a full complement of 24 satellites.
11. The name of the ABM Treaty could be changed in the process of amendments.
12. The best chronicle of the dream of space weapons is Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue – Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (Simon & Schuster, 2000). But dreams never die and this one seems to become even more grandiose; see Jack Hitt, "Battlefield: Space," *New York Times Magazine*, Sunday, August 5, 2001, p. 3.
13. This was the position of Michael O'Hanlon, a noted supporter of deploying limited NMD, as stated in his "Modify ABM Treaty to Allow Limited Missile Defense," *Baltimore Sun*, Aug. 28, 2001.
14. See the speech by Sam Nunn, "Toward a New Security Framework," given at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC, October 3, 2001.
15. The Bush approach was foretold in a report involving at least five future members of the Bush Administration. "Rationale and Requirements for U.S. Nuclear Forces and Arms Control: Executive Report", *Comparative Strategy* (April-June 2001), pp. 105-135. The author of that report, Keith Payne, chaired a key advisory committee on the recent Nuclear Posture Review (NPR).
16. As pointed out by Jack Mendelsohn, a former US negotiator, at the annual meeting of the Arms Control Association on January 18, 2002, the Bush proposals would reduce the US to only 3,800 deployed warhead by the end of 2007. Under START II, signed by his father and if timely implemented, the US would be down to 3,500 by that date. Under the START III framework agreed by President Clinton in 1997, the US limit would have been 2,500 by then.
17. Reciprocal unilateral measures have been used in times past, but never in the context of the executive branch in the US being adamantly opposed to Treaty constraints. See George Bunn and David Holloway, "Arms Control Without Treaties? Rethinking U.S.-Russian Strategic Negotiations in Light of the Duma-Senate Slowdown in Treaty Approval" (CISAC Working Paper, Feb. 1998).

## **Stability Effects of Limited Missile Defenses: The Case for the Affirmative**

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Walter B. Slocombe

*AUTHOR'S NOTE: This paper was largely written before either the 11 September terrorist attacks or the US formal notice of intent to withdraw from the ABM Treaty, announced by President Bush on 13 December 2001, to take effect on 13 June 2002.*

*The 11 September attacks and their aftermath have underscored the point that the threat of terrorist attacks by non-state actors (with varying degrees of support from nation-states) is both a more urgent problem than that of rogue-state regional aggression, and a problem to the solution of which missile defenses are essentially irrelevant. However, neither the attacks, the general problem of global terrorism, nor the increased world-wide effort against terrorism lessen the conceptually and strategically distinct threat to international stability posed by rogue states armed with missiles equipped with chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons. Indeed, the killings on 11 September and the deaths from the subsequent anthrax-laden letters (whose source is still entirely unknown as of the date this note was written) serve to remind of the potential terrible potential costs of a successful state-organized WMD attack with missiles, and, correspondingly, of the advantages of an effective defense against such an attack. Accordingly, the case for (and indeed the case against) limited ballistic missile defenses is essentially unaffected by the cataclysmic recent events.*

*The formal notice of US withdrawal from the Treaty, in accordance with its terms, and the declaration of very modest reductions in US strategic force levels below the START III limits, was, by the time it happened, recognized as all but inevitable. It drew only limited comment from Russia, China, or elsewhere. One may regret that neither side was willing to go farther at the time to create a new formal framework for the relationship, but the moderate tone of the US announcement, coupled with the commitment to seek to formalize elements of the future strategic nuclear relationship, and the measured response from Moscow, suggest that opportunities remain. It does seem possible that greater realization by the US Administration, in the wake of September 11, of the value of international support and sympathy—and greater US-Russian cooperation in the aftermath of the attacks—may make more likely the outcome advocated in the paper, that is, development and deployment of limited ballistic missile defenses in the context of US-Russian agreement on an updated framework for their strategic relationship. —WBS, 4 January 2002.*

The stability effects of missile defenses—or indeed any military measure—can usefully be considered as involving three distinct aspects:

*Crisis Effects:* Will the existence of missile defenses make it more or less likely that the parties to a crisis will act imprudently, accelerating the confrontation out of control?

*Arms Race Effects:* Will the deployment of missile defenses, and, prior to deployment, the initiation of a program to develop and deploy them, induce other countries to undertake offsetting military programs of their own that would themselves have negative stability effects, or would it tend to discourage such programs?

*Effects on Political Relations:* Will the existence of missile defenses, or programs to develop and deploy them, worsen or improve general political relationships among nations?

### Cold War analysis

In these terms, the conventional Cold War analysis was straightforward: Missile defenses, at least on a nationwide scale, were a Bad Thing:

(1) In a crisis, they could encourage their possessor to launch a disarming first strike at the other side's strategic forces, in the expectation, or at any rate the hope, that the defensive system would be able to defeat a reduced and uncoordinated response by the depleted missile force that survived the initial attack. Correspondingly, the very existence of missile defenses could provide an incentive for those facing them to pre-empt, precisely to avoid the risk of being subjected to such a first strike attempt.

(2) The mere effort of one side to develop defenses would stimulate competitive counter-measures, as the other side took steps to offset the potential advantages it feared its opponent would gain from defenses. These actions might come well in advance of any actual defense becoming operational, and would likely be based on limited, worst-case understanding of the characteristics of the defenses being developed. The overall result would be larger strategic arsenals, development of responsive technologies that were themselves destabilizing, and diversion of resources from other priorities—as well as stimulating mistrust and conflict.

(3) On the political side, perceiving the opponent as building defenses—with its implication of a design to gain the freedom of action that would come with immunity from retaliation—would confirm general perceptions of irresolvable hostility, and thereby heighten tensions. The potential of defense development programs to stimulate strategic arms competitions could exacerbate these political effects.

It bears noting that, even in Cold War conditions, some at least of these stability effects were more matters of abstract logic and analysis than experience, and were most valid where the issue was nation-wide defense (including fear of the prospect of such defenses). In terms of crisis stability, for example, the only missile defense programs that ever reached operational capability—the Soviet system around Moscow and the US system near an ICBM field in North Dakota—were designed and described as being for protection of command and control and of potentially vulnerable retaliatory forces respectively—both objectives that contribute to crisis stability. Similarly, while some of the US and Soviet programmatic responses to fears about the other's potential defensive systems were themselves sources of instability (notably the deployment of multiple warhead payloads for missiles because of the leverage afforded a successful pre-emptive strike against them), others, including increasing survivability of offensive forces (hardening of silos and command systems on both sides, shifts to sea-basing in the US case, and shifts to mobile land-basing in the Soviet) had positive crisis stability effects.

Nor was the impact in terms of fundamental Cold War political relationships necessarily as negative in practice as might have been expected. The fierce strategic competition of the ABM/MIRV buildup of the late 1960s and 70s was concurrent with, and to some degree the result of, what proved in retrospect to be grotesquely exaggerated concerns about missile defenses (the “Tallin”/SA-5 system in the USSR, the Sentinel/Safeguard system in the US). It seems to have had sobering effects. During that era political leaders on both sides with the impeccable Cold War credentials of Nixon and Brezhnev seem to have been convinced that neither side could hope for a decisive advantage even in an all-out strategic arms competition. This perception contributed to opening the door for agreement on limiting defenses and on first restraining and then reversing the buildup of offensive forces. The successive arms control treaties which ensued served a distinctly positive political function by moderating East-West tensions, in addition to making significant contributions to stabilizing the nuclear relationship at a more technical level. This is not to argue that US (or Soviet) ballistic missile defense programs (or any other particular aspects of the strategic buildup of that era) were justified simply because they may have helped induce political leaders to recognize the cost, difficulty and ultimate futility of the competition, and to take difficult decisions fostering mutual restraint. Rather the point is to observe that worsened political relationships are not an inevitable result of the concerns raised by defense developments where political leaders are prepared to consider the issues realistically.

## **Defenses and crisis stability in post-Cold War conditions**

In terms of the current debate, however, the critical point is less what the potential for defenses meant for stability in the Cold War than to consider to what degree the traditional analysis remains applicable now that the Cold War is decisively over. These stability effects, at all three levels, came in the particular context of the Cold War, in an international scene characterized by a world-wide confrontation between the US and the USSR and their respective coalitions of allies, clients, and associates. That was not only a world in which two roughly equal, powerfully armed, and fiercely hostile superpowers faced each other, but one in which virtually any local conflict presented a risk of escalation to a confrontation of the nuclear superpowers.

Moreover, for the forty-odd years of Cold War confrontation, there were no significant independent third country players on the nuclear stage. Britain and France—and for that matter Israel — were firmly in the Western camp. China's alignment was far more ambiguous, but ultimately its nuclear forces—which were (and are) in practice aimed equally at the US and Russia—were relevant only in relationship to their impact on China's relations with the USSR and the US—and theirs with each other.

## **Changes in the strategic context**

It is banal to observe how different that world is from today's, including in those aspects most relevant to questions of stability from the impact of nuclear-armed missiles and defenses against them. The Soviet Union and the international communist movement it led are gone forever, and with their demise has died also the threat they posed to Western societies. For their part, the US (and NATO) have drastically changed their relationship to Russia, substantially reducing their military forces, and realigning their foreign policies, treating Russia as, at worst, a potentially difficult major power, but not an enemy, much less a worldwide threat. To imagine that the US or its European or Asian allies have designs on Russia is to indulge in paranoia, not analysis.

But the twelve years since the end of the Cold War have also seen the emergence (or in some cases, the survival) of a succession of smaller conflicts. Most of these, dangerous enough in themselves, are essentially local. However, in a few cases, they have a special character because they involve countries — usefully, if somewhat clumsily, referred to as “rogue states” — that operate outside normal international standards and aspire to regional dominance or have conflicts with neighbors that threaten broader interests. Without exception, these

countries are in the process of trying to develop new military resources, including efforts to acquire the most advanced technological systems, such as high performance aircraft and precision-guided conventional munitions, cruise and ballistic missiles, highly sophisticated air and maritime defense systems, and capabilities for computer network attack.<sup>1</sup>

### **Rogue states, long-range missiles, and NBC warheads**

For the most part, these new military capabilities are chiefly threats to regional neighbors (and, of course, to the forces of any outside state seeking to assist those neighbors in their defense). However, in three important cases—North Korea, Iran, and (in a state of sanctions-induced suspension) Iraq — these programs of technological buildup already include development of very long range ballistic missiles and of nuclear, chemical, and/or biological payloads for them.

The purpose of these capabilities is neither of the two classic Cold War nuclear missions — deterrence of nuclear attack nor preparation to launch a deliberate pre-emptive disarming attack. Rather the purpose is to use the threat of nuclear (or other WMD) missile attack as leverage against outside intervention against regional aggression.<sup>2</sup> A state possessing such capability, when considering an attack on a neighbor, might convince itself that it could, by brandishing its long-range nuclear armed missile capability, either prevent, or sharply limit, the support its immediate victims would receive from the US and other extra-regional powers.

At the moment, North Korea, Iran, and Iraq are the only nations that combine potential for regional aggression and rejection of normal international norms with clear evidence of a determination to develop long range missiles armed with WMD.<sup>3</sup> However, it is impossible to be confident that these three exhaust the list of possible problems of this character. Given the political uncertainties of much of the world, and the increasing availability of the relevant technologies, it would be a brave forecaster who could be confident that, over the next decade or so, there will not be new “rogue states” to add to the list, perhaps a “Talibanized” regime come to power in one of the several states in the Islamic world that now combine massive internal problems, extraordinary corruption and weakness in the governing regime, and frustrated national pride and ambition, to offer a fertile field for a takeover by such a regime.

Since regional aggression threatens broader international security, the rogue state problem is a security and stability concern, not just for the US, its closest

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allies, and the prospective immediate targets, but for the world community—and for Russia, which has at least as much long-term potential for tension with the rogue states to its south as does the US and is in a considerably more exposed geographical position with respect to them.

### **Elements of a response to the rogue State problem**

To be sure, the larger part of the response to the “rogue states” problem has nothing to do with missile defense. It is one thing to maintain that limited ballistic missile defenses are a prudent measure in response to the rogue state problem; it is quite another to argue that they can be a complete answer. Indeed, it would seem that those who argue most strongly that the “rogue state” regimes are so dangerous a problem as to require missile defense against them have a particular responsibility to support every plausible avenue of diplomatic and political resolution, if they are to be consistent in arguing the urgency of the basic problem. There is, in all three immediate cases, a hope for an agreed and peaceful transition out of the current problems—the “sunshine policy” in the case of North Korea, the promise that pressures for internal reform in Iran will eventually lead to a moderated international policy, and the possibility that a different regime will come to power in Iraq that would realize that genuine compliance with the post-Gulf War UN resolutions is in Iraq’s interest.

Moreover, even if political efforts fail, or do not succeed quickly, there is much besides building ballistic missile defenses that can help address the rogue state problem. In particular, tightened controls on exports of the relevant technologies (and in the case of Iraq, maintenance of UN sanctions) can still be of some help in restraining the missile and the related nuclear/biological/chemical weapons programs (and can be very important in preventing new problems from emerging). And there are military answers as well—including clear commitments to assist in the defense of targets of aggression by rogue states, and maintenance of both the military capabilities and the political coalitions that are essential to such defense. The prospect that a direct defense against conventional attack would succeed is itself a deterrent to aggression, so maintenance of theater military capabilities, including defenses against theater-range ballistic and cruise missiles, makes aggression less likely.

Finally, with respect to responses to the rogue state problem, whatever else the term “rogue state” is intended to mean, it certainly does not imply that the leaders of these nations, or those internal elements in the security forces and political system whose continuing support is essential to their power, are immune to the influence of deterrence by the threat of retaliation. It is generally believed,



for example, that Saddam Hussein was influenced not to repeat in the Gulf War his use of chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq war (and in his internal control efforts) by the US warning of overwhelming response with its clear, if veiled, threats of the use of nuclear weapons.

All that said, there is still a reasonable possibility that deterrence could fail, and therefore a case for developing and deploying defenses capable of defeating the sort of limited missile attack of which a rogue state might be capable.<sup>4</sup> The architecture of such a defense is still very much uncertain, and the exact scale and pace of the program still more so, for technical, financial, and political reasons. However, there is little doubt that the US will in fact proceed over the next five or ten years to deploy a limited national missile defense, probably based on some variant of the ground-based system currently in test, meanwhile conducting an expanded program of research on other defense technologies.

### Stability considerations

In terms of stability, therefore, the issue is whether such defenses would have, on balance, sufficiently large positive effects, and sufficiently small and controllable negative effects, to be advisable. In particular, it is necessary to consider whether positive effects on the “rogue state” problem would be offset by negative effects on the relationship between the nuclear superpowers.

It is a critical element of the current issue that the defenses that the US is now considering are, as even their most avid advocates acknowledge, of a distinctly limited character—particularly compared to the SDI-Star Wars concepts of the 1980s. Whatever their technological content, they would be designed to deal only with the kind of relatively small and unsophisticated missile forces that rogue states must be expected to be able to deploy within the next decade or two. The stated objective of the US system is to have high confidence of defeating an attack by a few tens of missiles, equipped with relatively limited anti-BMD countermeasures. (There is, of course, a substantial debate about the technical feasibility of the programs underway achieving even this limited goal. The merits of that argument are beyond the scope of this note. However, for purposes of analysis of the stability effects, it is appropriate to assume that the defense will in fact be capable of doing what it is supposed to do.) Such defenses have very different stability implications from the massive national-scale defenses that were the focus of concern in Cold War conditions.

## Crisis stability

As for *Crisis Stability*, the most important implication is the potential of such defenses to reduce the risk of crisis produced by regional aggression. The purpose of rogue state long range nuclear-armed missiles is not, obviously, to attempt to disarm the strategic forces of the US (or, *mutatis mutandis*, Russia) but rather to serve as leverage, in support of regional aggression, by using the threat of attack on distant intervenors' homelands to block or limit the assistance given to the immediate victims of aggression. Correspondingly, the purpose of defenses able to negate such attacks is to remove this source of leverage or blackmail. Defenses would thereby supplement deterrence by threat of retaliation.<sup>5</sup>

In some sense the most dangerous situation for international stability would arise if a local aggressor *mistakenly* believed his missiles would deter an effective resistance, and went ahead and attacked. Even if neither his missiles nor the other side's missile defenses were ever used (because, e.g., deterrence worked, or the intervenors limited their response to less than the attacker's threshold for an actual missile attack<sup>6</sup>), the consequence would be a costly and avoidable war.

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***Insofar as limited ballistic missile defenses would make major regional aggression less likely, they would contribute importantly to avoidance of precisely those crises which are most likely under current conditions.***

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Insofar as limited ballistic missile defenses would make major regional aggression less likely, they would contribute importantly to avoidance of precisely those crises which are overwhelmingly most likely under current and foreseeable conditions.

Nor would limited defenses have significant negative effects in the wildly unlikely event of a US-Russian crisis in which nuclear options were seriously considered. Even assuming very large cuts in Russian strategic nuclear forces—whether as a result of economic pressures, agreed arms control measures, or adjustment of Russian military priorities toward rebuilding its conventional capability—Russia will have retaliatory forces that would totally overwhelm any plausible US defense.<sup>7</sup> It is no exaggeration to say that the 20 or so warheads a US defense could intercept—even if it worked perfectly—

are dwarfed by uncertainties about Russian weapon reliability, alert levels, and schedules for taking weapons off-line for maintenance, testing, and training. Moreover, Russia will—precisely because of the scale and sophistication of its strategic arsenal and the infrastructure that supports it—have options for tactical and technological measures to defeat limited defenses that no third nuclear power—much less a rogue state—could dream of.



*Vladimir V. Putin addresses the UN Security Council.*

### Arms race stability

The situation with respect to *arms race stability* is more complex.<sup>8</sup> Against the defenses the US is actually considering deploying, Russia<sup>9</sup> has no need to take offsetting measures—and any measures that were at all plausibly related to the scale of the defenses would have no significant international stability effects.<sup>10</sup>

It bears emphasis that most of the arms race stability concerns about ballistic missile defenses in the Cold War era applied chiefly to efforts to build *national-scale* defenses, and to the related concern that more limited systems (or even sophisticated air defenses) had some potential to be—or appear to be—the precursors of such large scale defenses. The ABM Treaty prohibits defense of national territory and contains elaborate provisions against creation of such a defense under the guise of other programs. Nonetheless, it was a critical part of the concept of the Treaty when negotiated that it does not ban defenses per se, but only defense of national territory, and that it explicitly permits defense of national capitals (and the command authorities they contain) and (since 1974, “or”) a portion of a nation’s land-based offensive missile capability. That such defenses were permitted was the product, not only of the fact that the programs involved were well along and supported by powerful interests in the respective superpowers, but also of acknowledgment that they did not represent any significant threat to the other side and were, in fact, conceptually consistent with a mutual recognition of the inevitability of mutual vulnerability.

The more plausible concern in terms of potential Russian programmatic actions arises from the potential of any BMD program to be seen as the precursor of a broader system. Indeed, it is hard to believe that any informed Russian analyst has any doubt about the insignificance for Russia’s deterrent capa-

bility of the kinds of defenses the US is actually talking about deploying. American advocates of limited missile defense should, however, acknowledge the more understandable Russian fear that once the US commits to a partial defense, it will inevitably proceed to technologies and scales of deployment that could conceivably put Russian retaliatory capability at risk.

Cold War secrecy and suspicion tended to produce over-reaction to the other side's strategic initiatives for defenses and otherwise, and it can be genuinely difficult from the outside to determine the intended scale and scope of any development program. There are, however, new opportunities now to deal with this problem. Given the breakthroughs already achieved in verification measures in the START, INF, CFE, and other agreements, and the potential for still more extensive verification measures, there are ample means to prevent such effects in the very different political context of today. Moreover, the time-scale and technological challenges of developing and deploying missile defenses are such that there will be ample time for Russia to assess the actual character of US actions, not rely on worst-case hypotheses.

In short, the answer to suspicions about the long-term course of the US program is not to persist in the hope of stopping all US NMD efforts, but to agree on a new framework of measures in which that work will take place. That framework would permit limited national defenses and allow development work on new concepts, but also set limits that will assure that those efforts do not threaten the Russian deterrent and provide measures of transparency and cooperation to the same end. The objective should be, not to attempt to limit defenses to a particular architecture for all time,<sup>11</sup> but to insure that what is actually deployed at any stage does not endanger the US-Russia strategic relationship. Whether that new framework should be, in form, a modification of the existing ABM Treaty, or a wholly new agreement, remains open –and indeed the relative merits of formally legally binding agreements as contrasted to more flexible politically binding agreements are very much matters of detail, not fundamental principle. What is fundamental is that there is still a need for a framework, but that framework must reflect new threats and new conditions.

### Stability of political relations

The issue of long-term intentions lies at the heart of the effects of limited ballistic missile defenses on the *stability of political relations* as well. It is an understatement to observe that the missile defense issue has become a major irritant in US-Russian political relations.

Russia, on the one hand, sees the US program as a potential threat, not just

to its deterrent, but to its status as the strategic nuclear equal of the US. Concerns for the long term shape of the US effort are, of course, increased in so far as advocates of NMD in the US maintain, not just that the 1972 ABM Treaty cannot be allowed to give Russia a veto over the US decision, but that the sooner the US withdraws from the Treaty the better and that no agreed limits on defense development and deployment—and perhaps no arms control at all—are still relevant in today's conditions. If Russia were to conclude that the US is determined to build missile defenses without limit and to abandon the very concept of an agreed US-Russian framework of their strategic relationship, the consequences for the overall political relationship could be very far-reachingly negative. Conversely, if Russia were to persist in refusing to make adjustments necessary to permit the US to build limited defenses against new threats, that would have serious negative political effects as well.

There is an interesting analogy between the US position now on the ABM Treaty and the Russian position in the mid-90s on limits imposed by the CFE Treaty on Russian conventional force deployments in the Caucasus. Russia argued that it faced genuine security threats in that region that required certain levels of military deployments in the parts of the Russian Federation subject to CFE Flank limits. Russia acknowledged that those deployments were inconsistent with the strict terms of the Flank limits, but argued that the political and strategic situation had changed in fundamental ways since the limits had been agreed to, and asserted that the measures it proposed to take were in no way inconsistent with the basic spirit and purpose of the CFE Treaty, only with certain terms whose effects were totally different from those contemplated when they were agreed. Rather than seeking to scrap the CFE Treaty altogether, Russia offered the other CFE partners the option to adjust the treaty to meet Russia's requirements in this specific respect—which, it argued, could be done without violence to the basic concept of the CFE Treaty, the security interests of the other parties, or their reasonable expectations of the Treaty's effects when it was signed. The other CFE participants, with varying degrees of reluctance, acknowledged that the Russian concerns were real and that it was neither reasonable nor in the other parties' long term interest to risk the collapse of the whole CFE structure by trying to insist on the original terms when there was an alternative of the limited adjustments Russia proposed. The result was a protracted and difficult, but eventually successful negotiation that adjusted the CFE Flanks regime, to preserve its essence while permitting Russia to do what it judged necessary for its security interests. The political lesson is that when an arms control agreement conflicts with fundamental security concerns

of a party and can be modified to accommodate those concerns without significant impact on the security interests of other parties, it is not only the party seeking modification, but the other parties as well, that have an interest (and from an international perspective, an obligation) to seek accommodation and adjustment, avoiding the extremes of insistence on the strict letter of past agreements reached in very different conditions on the one hand, or total destruction of the basic framework on the other.

## Conclusions

Central to managing the problem so as to address the reality of the rogue state issue while also addressing the reality of the potential of defenses to poison general US-Russia relations is recognition of the limited nature of what is at stake:

- For the US, a defense against rogue state missile blackmail is perceived as a high national security priority. Building limited defenses for the US and its allies does not, in itself, threaten any critical Russian interest.
- For Russia, the equivalent vital interest is maintaining both its nuclear deterrent in technical terms and its nuclear superpower status in broader strategic terms.
- For the world at large, as well as for the two nations directly concerned, preserving the principle that the US-Russian nuclear relationship proceeds in an agreed framework is important to overall international stability.
- The US has no legitimate interest in seeing Russia's deterrent called into question. Maintaining a solid agreed framework for the management of the US-Russian nuclear relationship is in no way inconsistent with US interests.
- And Russia has no legitimate interest in seeing the US open to rogue state blackmail. Indeed, President Putin has acknowledged that the problem of missile proliferation is a genuine one, however much he continues to object to the US NMD program as part of the solution.

This interrelationship of real interests suggests the possibility of an agreement that would serve the interests of both nations, and the world community as a whole:

- The US must treat Russian concerns about the long-term implications of an unrestrained BMD effort as real, and acknowledge the legitimacy of Russian interest in assuring that its deterrent is not threatened and that a framework for the US-Russian nuclear relationship remains "a cornerstone of international stability." It should not be reaching out for the opportunity to with-

draw from the Treaty, but instead making imaginative proposals for a new framework.

- Russia must acknowledge that the US has a legitimate interest in having an effective defense against limited missile attacks, and in pursuing future technologies to maintain that defense against emerging threats, and that updating the framework—not scrapping it—is necessary to reflect current conditions.
- Accordingly, the two nations should seek to agree on:
  - 1) Modification or replacement of the ABM Treaty by a new agreement permitting limited defense of national territory and that of allies, as well as more flexibility in work on new technologies, with measures for greatly expanded transparency—and, eventually cooperation.
  - 2) Strengthened controls on exports of missile and WMD-related technologies.
  - 3) Substantial cuts in offensive forces.
  - 4) Continued cooperation (including US financial assistance) on the mechanics of reductions and safeguarding retained systems.
  - 5) A serious start on the long-term problem of expanding the framework of limitation, transparency, and cooperation beyond strategic nuclear forces to include non-strategic forces, nuclear infrastructure, and stockpiles.
  - 6) Cooperation on measures to strengthen control and communications, including expanded information exchanges, maintenance of early warning capabilities, and perhaps ultimately, cooperation on active defenses.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Since these buildups usually include short-range ballistic missiles (to a deplorable degree imported either as technology or finished product from some of the countries most vociferously opposed to missile defenses), they create a requirement for other countries in the region (and their potential extra-regional supporters) to develop and deploy defenses against them. While there are some important differences between defenses against what are “strategic” missiles in ABM Treaty terms and against other sorts of missiles, there are also important overlaps, e.g., in boost-phase systems. Even if the US were giving no consideration whatever to national missile defense, the 1972 Treaty’s vague distinction between severely limited defenses against “strategic” missiles and unconstrained defenses against other ballistic missiles, aircraft, cruise missiles, and, for that matter, satellites would be under severe strain in the coming years.

2. Such leverage, that is, restraining American response to conventional attacks on its allies, was a purpose of Soviet nuclear forces during the Cold War, at least in Western eyes. No doubt Soviet analysts also considered that US nuclear forces had the objective of restraining Soviet responses to American provocations, e.g., against Cuba. An implicit rationale for US (and even more for British, French, and Chinese, not to mention Israeli) nuclear forces was to convey a threat that they would be used, in extremis, to dissuade potential opponents with a conventional force advantage to stop short of fully exploiting an initial conventional success.
3. Not all countries with nuclear and missile programs are “rogue states.” The extensive programs of India and Pakistan do not (at least under current political conditions) present significant strategic problems for nations other than the two of them, however serious the implications for non-proliferation policy and for stability in South Asia. Their relevance to the “rogue state” problem is—and particularly in the case of Pakistan—chiefly as potential source of technology and materials. Similarly, it is, happily, the case that not all rogue states have serious missile or WMD programs. Whatever ambitions Milosevic had for Serbia in that regard vanished with his ouster from power. Libya and Syria seem, at least for the moment, to be focusing on shorter range missile capabilities and chemicals, though progress in those efforts could lead—as they did with North Korea, Iran, and Iraq—to work on long-range missiles and nuclear and biological weapons.
4. It is also, unfortunately, true that effective defenses against ballistic missiles would not eliminate all possibilities for rogue states to threaten use of WMD. Other delivery means, from cruise missiles to terrorists, are, in principle, available. A comprehensive program to counter the rogue state threat (and the distinct, and more urgent, non-state terrorist threat) must therefore include measures aimed at these dangers as well. But, so long as there is absolutely no defense against ballistic missiles, using them as the delivery device has overwhelming advantages for a rogue state attacker—including very short interval between decision and execution, absolute maintenance of central control over the weaponry until the very last moment, and guaranteed success (if the missile works). These advantages are such that, at a very minimum, the possibility of alternative attack modes does not permit the conclusion that the ballistic missile threat is so marginal and easily substituted for that it can safely simply be ignored.
5. To advocate defenses against such blackmail attacks is not to deny the potential of deterrence by threat of retaliation, but rather to argue for the utility of a backup if deterrence fails. There is no question that successful deterrence is better in every respect than defense. However, deterrence could fail—particularly if the issue were a threat to the continuation of a rogue state regime in power, following a repulse of its immediate attack. If Iraq or North Korea were to initiate another regional war, there would be powerful voices in the US and elsewhere for going beyond simply repelling the attack, the outcome in 1991 and 1953, to eliminating the problem. (Secretary Rumsfeld recently spoke, in the context of US strategy for a major regional war, of “conclud[ing] it on the basis that you may wish to go to [the enemy’s] capital, you may wish to occupy a country for some brief period.”) Faced with so thoroughgoing a defeat, a regime that valued its own survival over that of



its population might well not be deterred from using whatever means it had to stave off disaster. (Indeed, NATO had—and nominally still has—a formal doctrine of readiness to use nuclear weapons if conventional defense failed, and the new Russian military doctrine similarly holds out the option of use of nuclear weapons in the event of attack on Russian national territory.) And once deterrence fails, successful defense is more attractive—militarily, morally, and in terms of costs on both sides—than a retaliation that would inevitably inflict massive casualties on individually innocent people, even if the targets were limited to military objectives.

6. It is sometimes argued that instead of defenses, the US should rely on supplementing deterrence by a policy of pre-emption against the missile capabilities of a regional aggressor. That is, of course, an option. However, even leaving aside the obvious intelligence and operational difficulties of relying on pre-emption, such a policy would have all the disadvantages of pre-emption as a strategic doctrine in the superpower context, albeit at somewhat lower levels. Those disadvantages include most obviously the pressure for early and overwhelming commitment of massive force.
7. One occasionally sees arguments based on the premise that at some point the Russian arsenal will have deteriorated so badly in material condition, personnel, command and control, and readiness that an initial US strike would leave only a few score Russian warheads surviving—perhaps in the range of what a limited defense can handle. Suffice it to say that there is no reason whatever to believe that the Russian force faces such a crisis of vulnerability, and that if it did, the US refraining from building a limited defense would do little or nothing to ease concerns. If 90% of the Russian force is vulnerable—which is not the case, but is the premise of such scenarios—the uncertainties in that estimate dwarf any effect of defenses.
8. The analysis of the effects of defenses on military programs ought not to be limited to considering what Russia might do in response to a US deployment, but should include consideration of the effects on the military programs of current and potential rogue states. Realization that the US has programs that would negate the black-mail potential of ballistic missile forces would tend to reduce the impulse for countries to acquire or continue them. (It is, for example, plausible that one reason North Korea has indicated a willingness to negotiate away its missile program is recognition that its continuation will produce far greater disadvantages than advantages.) On the other hand, some rogue states would no doubt pursue anti-defense countermeasures to maintain the potential of their missiles. The subject of countermeasures is highly controversial and far beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that the experience of those who have tried to build countermeasures, as contrasted to giving briefings or conference papers about them, is that developing countermeasures that work is itself a complex, lengthy, and expensive business. A rogue state staking its power on a technological competition of its countermeasures against US counter-countermeasures would be operating at a huge comparative disadvantage.
9. It is often argued that a major disadvantage of the US deploying even a limited NMD is that China will respond by substantially increasing its nuclear missile force, producing an “arms race in Asia” as India and perhaps other nations

respond. Whether it is conducive to stability in the Asia-Pacific region—much less US and Russian specific national interests — for China to have the capacity in a crisis to threaten the US (or Russia) with a nuclear attack is a debatable issue. China has resolutely rejected participation in most international arms control efforts, so the issue of departing from an agreed framework of a nuclear relationship does not arise. Moreover, it does not follow from the reluctant US-Soviet acknowledgment of the inevitability of their mutual vulnerability that mutual vulnerability among all significant nuclear states is conducive to international stability. In an important sense, however, all this is rather beside the point. To be sure, the missile defense the US is likely to deploy would have a substantial capability against the Chinese deterrent, if China simply maintained its current force of some 20 fixed-silo ICBMs. China, however, is already in the process of developing a new generation of ICBMs that will be mobile (and therefore far more survivable) and seems likely to scale its deployments to what it judges necessary to hedge against a possible US (or Russian) missile defense, whatever the US actually does. A US deployment may somewhat accelerate the Chinese program; it will not prevent China from having a survivable deterrent, and it is unlikely to have much effect on the ultimate size or shape of that deterrent. For the US, the practical question is whether it is better to be vulnerable to rogue state missile attack as well as Chinese—or just to Chinese (and of course Russian).

10. It is sometimes argued that the problem of Russian response to a US deployment of a national missile defense can be dismissed simply on the ground that Russia's economic problems make any significant response impossible. Certainly the obsolescence of key elements of the Russia strategic nuclear force and the rudimentary character of most development programs would mean any actual buildup in Russian force levels would take considerable time, though retirements could be deferred and systems kept nominally in the force despite serious operational limitations. (Generally speaking, the same would also be true for any US effort to increase offensive force levels.) More broadly, economic constraints—and strongly competing military priorities—would tend to make Russian policy makers forego countermeasures that were based on illusory dangers. It is equally true that Russia would be at a far greater economic and technological disadvantage than was the USSR, in a renewed all-out arms competition. However, for Russia (as for other nuclear powers) strategic forces have the highest priority for defense resources and it would be a delusion to doubt that, once the Russian political and military leadership decided action had to be taken to maintain Russia's deterrent, they would somehow find the resources.
11. Despite the contrary claims both of BMD zealots in the US and of extreme opponents of any changes in the 1972 Treaty, that agreement does not purport to impose limits valid for all eternity. Instead, it explicitly provides for adjustments in light of changes in strategic circumstances. Of course, such changes can only come by mutual agreement, but the Treaty contemplates there will be a mutual effort to reach agreement, not either a fixed determination to have no agreement at all or a fixed refusal to contemplate any changes.

# Ruminations on the Utility of Nuclear Weapons and Missile Defenses

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*George W. Rathjens*

**T**his paper is predicated on a belief that in consideration of international security issues, it is likely to be more useful to focus on what government leaders are likely to believe to be their own short-term interests and/or their narrow national interests, and on what their constituencies will likely support, than on what others might believe would be in the broader, long-term interest of mankind or the world community.

I here take up three related topics: the motivation of states to acquire and retain nuclear weapons; the utility of defenses, mainly, but not exclusively, against the delivery of such weapons; and the utility of arms control agreements relating to such weapons.

## On nuclear offensive forces

I begin by rejecting two views held by many about nuclear weapons: that, without major political changes in the international system, they can be, and should be, eliminated by agreement(s) binding on all states; and that they can have utility or legitimacy only as a deterrent to the use of nuclear weapons by others.

One might hope that with each passing year since World War II of non-use of nuclear weapons the norm of non-use will become more widely accepted and firmly established. It may, particularly among the status-quo powers, but with the prospect of continuing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the continuance of serious continuing grievances over sovereignty and self determination, most notably in Asia, I have my doubts.

Odious as the prospect of world government is to me, I do not see how the world can be made *assuredly free* of nuclear weapons without such government and, indeed, without a highly intrusive one. I grant that this must now be seen as a remote prospect, in my view probably not realizable within at least the next century, unless possibly as a reaction to the use of nuclear weapons; but, I believe that it is the price we must ultimately pay for the discovery, and exploitation in them, of nuclear fission.

The second proposition, implying that nuclear weapons can have no utility against states not armed with such weapons, is inconsistent with history: to wit,

the reality of the United States' having used them against Japan, and almost certainly with the desired effect of shortening World War II. Moreover, we have seen evidence since then of states acquiring nuclear weapons, and considering using them in war against adversaries not possessing them: Israel in the Yom Kippur War of 1973.

Of relevance to the subsequent parts of this paper is the likelihood of some states being motivated to acquire nuclear capabilities as a deterrent to the use of force, nuclear or conventional, by stronger states (or coalitions). It is the case of the weak against the strong. Examples are Pakistan against India; Iraq, Iran, Russia and China against the United States; and, more remotely, perhaps Taiwan against China. I shall make no attempt here to justify such action by the weak, nor to question the legitimacy, rationales, or wisdom that might underlie such action. Rather, I argue simply that the likelihood of some relatively weak states being so motivated should be taken seriously in contemplation of international security questions. Without considering here whether their concerns might be justified, I would suggest:

- that Pakistani leaders might feel that they should keep, and further develop, Pakistan's nuclear capabilities to deter attack by India and to deter the Indians from bringing overwhelming conventional force to bear against Pakistan in war, regardless of the circumstances of initiation;
- that the leaders of China might, in considering its nuclear weapons posture, feel similar needs to deter the United States from intervening, with, say, its Seventh Fleet, to prevent a forced unification of Taiwan with China; and,
- that Russian leaders might want to continue to maintain nuclear forces, capable of striking at the United States and/or other NATO countries, as a deterrent to NATO military intervention that might be triggered by Russian actions with respect to what used to be called its "near-abroad".

The question arises as to what might be done to counter the impetus of the weaker states in potentially confrontational dyads to rely on nuclear weapons for deterrence of feared actions by the stronger states. Leaving totally aside efforts, through constraints on access to technology and critical materials, to prevent nations from acquiring nuclear capabilities, here are the possibilities:

1. Force might be used to prevent weaker states from acquiring nuclear capabilities, as Israel did in its attack against Iraq's Osirak reactor, and as the U.S.-led coalition did, again against Iraqi nuclear facilities during the Gulf War. Experience suggests, however, that the stronger powers may not be willing to do this in all—maybe, even many—such cases. Neither the United States nor the Soviet Union was willing to preemptively attack China's nascent weapons pro-

duction facilities prior to its getting “the bomb”, nor was any power willing to attack North Korean facilities during the last several years, even though North Korea was a party to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and in violation of its NPT obligations, and was—or at least was reported to be—continuing with its nuclear weapons-related efforts.

2. Positive inducements—bribes—might be offered, as the United States eventually did in the case of North Korea, to weaker states to forego nuclear capabilities. Yet this is not a universally popular non-proliferation approach, nor, given continuing uncertainties and doubts about North Korean intentions (reflected in the Bush administration’s continuing to raise the specter of North Korean nuclear-armed missiles as a justification for its national missile defense program), an obviously successful one.

3. The conflicts between states in a confrontational dyad that might motivate the weaker of the two to acquire and/or retain nuclear capabilities as a deterrent to aggressive action by the stronger might, through the “good office” efforts of a third party, be resolved, or at least be mitigated sufficiently so that the weaker state’s perceived need for nuclear capabilities would be allayed. Arguably, the Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt, facilitated by President Carter, might have been a factor in reducing whatever motivations Egypt might have then had to acquire such capabilities, though, at least in this case, US commitments to both countries, and large amounts of aid, suggest that this might be just another example of some state, in this case, the United States, being willing to pay enough to induce the two parties to bury or at least sublimate their differences.

4. Stronger states might reduce their intervention-capable forces or re-deploy them so that they would appear to be less threatening, or they might take other actions indicative of a reduction in interest and/or commitment in areas of potential conflict.

5. Third parties, nations or coalitions, might guarantee the security of the weaker of the two states in a dyad against attacks by the stronger, as the United States did in respect of its NATO partners and Japan against the Soviet Union. But would the United States, any other strong state, or any coalition, be prepared to guarantee the security of Pakistan against India or of India against China? And, would even an explicit guaranty of Israel’s security by, say, the United States suffice to induce Israel to give up its nuclear capabilities?

I shall say no more here about the first three of these approaches to the nuclear non-proliferation problem. I have raised them mainly to suggest that, in a world without major political change, they are likely to have only limited

utility. The last two are, in my view, of greater interest here because of the relationship between what might be done in respect of them and missile defense questions.

Regarding options four and five, I would note that the propensity of the United States to intervene in places remote from its own shores in support of the weak against the strong, or for other, perhaps less noble reasons, ought logically to depend on whether or not such intervention might result in a devastating nuclear attack against the United States proper—or against its intervening forces. Proponents of a US national missile defense generally hold that National Missile Defense (NMD) might thwart such an attack. To the extent that one believes that this might be the case (I later question this assumption), there arises an interesting and potentially portentous and difficult trade-off question: can it be expected that the pay-off of intervention will justify the direct costs, and, in addition, the costs of NMD, or should the United States forego NMD and not respond to intervention challenges that it might take on, if it did have NMD? Or, to put it more bluntly and succinctly, would/should *not* buying NMD imply a retreat towards an isolationist American foreign policy?

I turn to these and related questions in the next section after some observations about the technical feasibility and political implications of defense against ballistic missile delivery of nuclear warheads. In the interest of brevity and because the only possibility of deployment of an NMD now of concern, is that by the United States, I focus mainly on it, believing that most of what I have to say would also be appropriate to other NMD programs, the principal purpose of which would be to deal with possible nuclear attacks.

### **National missile defense**

I address, first, three questions that are of particular concern in defense of populations and social infrastructure against the effects of ballistic-missile-delivered nuclear warheads:

- Might defenses that can be developed be effective enough so that they could be policy-relevant in crises?
- Can defenses be developed and deployed that are actually likely to be effective against a missile attack?
- What might be the impact of development and deployment of defenses on the pre-crisis policies of other states?

My answer to the first question is an unqualified ‘no’. This follows because (1) nuclear weapons are so powerful and cities and societies so fragile that the delivery of a single warhead against any large city would be catastrophic, and



*Russian SS-20*

because (2) there is not the slightest possibility that any American NMD could guarantee that some nuclear warheads—at least one—could not be detonated over, or in, an American city, if for no other reason than because of the possibility of their being delivered by means other than ballistic missiles. Thus, I would not expect that any American president would, when confronted with a crisis, decide on a different course of action should the United States possess NMD—and no better capabilities than are now available for preventing delivery of nuclear weapons by other means—than if it had no NMD. And, even putting aside all other means of delivery, a defense on which a US president could rely with such confidence as to base policy on it is not in the cards, not only because of the technical problems discussed in other papers for this and previous workshops but because of two other considerations which make the problem more difficult than in bygone years, when, even then, it seemed hopeless: (1) the fact that the United States is pretty well committed—and may well remain so—to using non-nuclear warheads on its interceptor vehicles, thereby making mid-course interception of adversary warheads accompanied by penetration aids much more of a challenge than would be the case were nuclear-armed interceptors to be deployed; and (2) that in the post-Cold War context, where the principal task of US NMD would presumably be to deny “rogue states”, and perhaps some others, a deterrent capability against the US, the rogue—or other—

state(s) would have the advantage of being able to select a very small number of American cities to hold hostage—maybe only one—while the defender, here the United States, would have to defend all of its major cities. In the jargon of the trade, the attacker would have what we call the advantage of “preferential offense”.

(Having said that I would not expect any American president to take actions, which he would not otherwise take, based on the assumption that an NMD would work with 100 percent effectiveness, the possibility of a president coming along who would be so naïve or foolish as to do so can not be completely excluded: a good enough reason for me for the United States to forego building such a defense.)

If an American NMD is likely to have as little utility to the US in crises as I have suggested, there would seem not to be much of case for a military reaction by other states to it. Assuming that Russia—or China—might feel the need for a nuclear deterrent to American intervention around its periphery, the more critical consideration for sizing and deployment of its offensive capabilities would likely be having a force, some small fraction of which could likely survive an American preemptive attack. (This does not necessarily mean that Russia—or China—would not improve its offensive forces if it could afford it in reaction to a US NMD deployment. It might well do so as a result of overestimating the effectiveness of the defense.)

Any such military response would, of course, increase the strains on a thinly stretched economy and would, *ceteris paribus*, increase the likelihood of accidental use of nuclear weapons. And, whether or not there were direct military responses to an American NMD deployment, there could well be political consequences that would be adverse from the perspective of the United States and some of the other—perhaps all—major powers: a worsening of the relations between the United States on the one hand and Russia and/or China on the other might make it less likely that conflicts involving the United States and either of the others could be resolved amicably, and less likely that these three great powers could act in concert in dealing with crises involving other parties.

I believe the answer to the second question above is a highly qualified ‘yes’. I can envisage a defense that might be able to intercept a few missile warheads that otherwise would destroy life and property, particularly if a putative adversary had not taken actions—increasing the weight of its attack or adding penetration aids—to negate the effect of the defense. The possibility of the defense being able to destroy at least some incoming warheads would also be enhanced if the defense included a significant boost-phase component; if there were some



tactical warning of attack; if the attack were very light, as might be the case if it were by a rogue state or the result of “accidental” launch of a few missiles by a better-armed power; and/or if the attacker’s interest were not in “preferential offense”, but instead in the destruction of a very limited number of specific targets, with the defense pretty well knowing which targets to defend. With some of these conditions obtaining, a “prudential” defense could conceivably be worth buying. The critical question would be that of “opportunity cost”: would such an investment in NMD make more sense, with all uncertainties considered, including possible reactions by other states, than investing equivalent resources in other ways: for example, in defense against nuclear weapons being delivered clandestinely, in defense against biological weapons, in hedging against global warming, or in improving public health or education? What else? Maybe even in defense against asteroids? My belief is that any NMD would fail this opportunity-cost test miserably, certainly for the United States and probably for all states.

In addition to NMD, two other missile defense possibilities merit at least a little discussion: (1) defense against ballistic missiles carrying conventional—or chemical—warheads, and (2) defense of offensive missile launch facilities, particularly hardened missile silos. For these kinds of defense the demands will generally be dramatically lower than for defense against nuclear warheads aimed at cities, and the balance between the offense and defense in any confrontation might even shift to favor the defense.

As to (1), since the amount of destruction that can be caused by an ordinary high explosive warhead will generally be orders of magnitude less than that which can be caused by a nuclear warhead, a moderately effective and not very costly defense might drive the cost of destroying targets up to the point where it would exceed the sum of the value of the targets destroyed and the cost of defense, a point at which it would no longer be cost-effective to attack targets, assuming, of course, comparable resources available to both sides. (The last condition aside, this was the situation that obtained in the Gulf War when American Patriot interceptor missiles were employed in defense of Saudi and Israeli targets against attacks by Iraqi-modified Soviet Scud missiles, carrying conventional warheads. The results were hardly, however, exemplary of what might be expected with well-designed ordnance on both sides. The Patriots had been optimized to defend against aircraft, not ballistic missiles; and the Scuds had been modified by the Iraqis to extend their range, one of the results being their failure in many instances to survive the stresses of reentry.)

As to (2), the demands on the defense are much reduced from those for



**US SLBM Trident**

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defense of urban targets for three reasons: (a) whereas the objective of defense of cities against nuclear attack will presumably be to achieve very high levels of survival, moderate, or even low, levels of survival could well be acceptable in the case of offensive missiles: twenty percent survival of a force of fifty nuclear-armed missiles would leave a nation with a very powerful retaliatory capability; (b) given that the defense might tolerate a relatively high level of destruction of its missiles, it might concentrate its efforts on defending only a small fraction of them, while the offense, not knowing which ones were to be defended, would, almost perforce, be driven to allocate excessive numbers of warheads against undefended missiles, or inadequate numbers against defended ones, or very probably, both—such are the advantages of “preferential defense”; and (c) because missiles can be deployed to resist the destructive effects of nuclear explosions—and generally have been to an extreme degree by the United States and the Soviet Union—they are likely to be able to survive nuclear bursts that take place more than a kilometer or so away, whereas cities, and people, are inherently incapable of surviving such explosions several kilometers away. This means that the interception of warheads aimed at missile installations, particularly at hardened missile silos, can be delayed until they are well into the atmosphere, by which time it will be relatively easy for the defense to distinguish between real warheads and simulated ones (decoys)—and between warheads likely to impact close to their targets and those that will not—and so concentrate its defensive efforts against the worrisome objects, whereas in the case of defense of cities, much defensive effort is likely to have to be wasted on objects that are, in fact, non-threatening.

There have been, and are, people who have been quite generally critical of ballistic missile defense, and there have been, and are, advocates who have been quite generally critical of BMD opponents, often charging that such opposition has its basis in a misguided belief that the maintenance of a mutual hostage relationship between adversaries is desirable. I have included these last few paragraphs in reaction to such thinking: specifically, to warn against such generalizations. In the world in which we now live it seems to me that the case, if there

is any, for an American NMD is exceedingly weak, but it does not necessarily nor obviously follow from this that all other kinds of BMD deployments would be without merit.

### On the ABM and other treaties

During the late 1960s and on through the early '80s a reasonable case could be—and was—made for the ABM Treaty. It seemed implausible that either the United States or the Soviet Union could be protected from devastating attack by defenses it could develop and deploy. Any increment of defensive capability that one country might buy could be—and very likely would be—offset, and, perhaps, more than offset, by its adversary's improving its offensive capabilities at a lower cost. Thus, defense seemed like a losing game, at least between two countries able and willing to spend comparable resources on arms. A treaty banning or severely limiting ABM defense could be mutually advantageous, particularly if coupled with an agreement limiting offensive developments and deployments. It offered the prospect of preventing, or at least making less likely, a ruinous arms race that would not result in an improvement in the security of either side.

We now, though, live in a radically different world. Neither Russia nor any other country is in a position to run much of a race against the United States. Indeed, far from it. Russia's strategic offensive capabilities have been declining, and, with obsolescence, seem likely to continue to do so. In contrast, the United States is in a position, economically and technically, to improve both its nuclear warheads and its delivery vehicles, not that much of a case can, in my view, be made for its doing either. Proponents of scrapping, or, at least substantially modifying, the ABM Treaty apparently, however, believe otherwise, just as many of them believe that the United States should not ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, with some now even advocating that the United States should go on developing and testing new nuclear warheads.

But the situation as regards the two treaties is fundamentally different. The CTBT would be a barrier to the testing of nuclear weapons by nearly all states, some of which might actually test if there were no CTBT, something the United States would presumably deplore. In contrast, the ABM Treaty is now not a *meaningful* impediment to development or deployment of an ABM system of any kind by any country other than the United States. Thus, political arguments aside, the Treaty has to be seen as very much a one-sided deal. While it is a barrier to the United States' going ahead with some activities to which the Bush Administration is committed, there is nothing in it, from anyone's objective per-

spective, of value for the United States, whereas there is something in it for Russia, China, and perhaps some other countries, where important political/military leaders labor under the impression that deployment of an American NMD system could be, and might be, exploited to their disadvantage.

And, no treaty can be expected to long survive if the strongest party to it believes it is, in important ways, not in its interest.

With this asymmetry in perceptions, and assuming a continuing relationship between the United States and Russia and/or China that is in significant respects adversarial, it might still be possible for the United States and Russia to agree on amendments that would be acceptable to both, though I think it unlikely and, moreover, without China's involvement and approval as well, probably unwise.

Alternatively, it could be conceptually interesting to speculate about, and perhaps even explore, possible concessions that Russia and/or China might make to US interests to offset the apparent inequalities in the utility of the ABM Treaty. I would, however, see little merit in this, since I believe (1) that the expressed concerns about it from Russian and Chinese spokesmen are based on perceptions of the utility of an American NMD capability that have little basis in technological and political realities, and (2) that serious efforts to put together a package that would include concessions to American interests as compensation for termination of the U.S. NMD program would likely fuel both unwarranted beliefs about the utility of NMD and the adversarial aspects of the relationships between the United States, on the one hand, and Russia and/or China, on the other.

I conclude by adding, though I suppose it superfluous, that I see no basis whatsoever for the commonly expressed view that the ABM Treaty should be seen as the keystone to stability as regards nations' interests in acquiring and/or retaining nuclear arms. For Americans, a continuation of the Treaty and concomitant termination or limitation of its missile defense efforts could be significant for economic reasons, but neither the Treaty nor an American NMD program is likely to have much impact on the nuclear weapons programs of other states.

It would make more sense to focus attention on the political implications, including on *crisis stability*, of the US's going ahead with NMD, rather than focusing on the sanctity, utility, and inequalities of the ABM Treaty per se.

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## Acronyms

AEGIS – US Navy AEGIS class frigates and destroyers equipped with anti-ship and TMD missiles

ABL – Airborne Laser, megawatt class laser developed for Boeing 747 against theater missiles

ABM Treaty – Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (1972)

BMD – Ballistic Missile Defense

BMDO – US Ballistic Missile Defense Organization

BTWC – Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (1975)

BW – Biological Weapons

C-1, C-2, C-3 System – Stages of deployment proposed for President Clinton's NMD program

CFE Treaty – Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (1992)

CW – Chemical Weapons

CWC – Chemical Weapons Convention (1997)

DSP – Defense Support Program satellites

EKV – Exoatmospheric Kill Vehicle

GBI – Ground-Based Interceptors

GHz – Gigahertz

ICBM – Intercontinental Ballistic Missile

IFICS – In-flight Interceptor Communications System

INF Treaty – Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (1988)

IRBM – Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile

LEAP – Light-weight Exo-Atmospheric Projectile, developed by SDI

MEADS – Medium Extended Air Defense System, low-level TMD for ground forces

MIRVs – Multiple Independently-Targetable Reentry Vehicles

MRBM – Medium-Range Ballistic Missile

MTCR – Missile Technology Control Regime

NMD – National Missile Defense

NPT – Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968)

PAC-3 - PATRIOT Advanced Capability-3, terminal phase interceptor developed for TMD

RV – Reentry vehicle

SALT – Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I – 1972; SALT II – signed by US and USSR but never entered into force)

SAM – Surface-to air missile

SBIRS-High – Space-based Infrared System – High earth orbit

SBIRS-Low – Space-based Infrared System – Low earth orbit

SDI – Strategic Defense Initiative (“Star Wars”)

SLBM – Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile

SM-3 Interceptor, developed for US Navy Theater Wide TMD

SRBM – Short-Range Ballistic Missile

START – Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I – 1994; START II – signed in 1993 but not yet in force)

THAAD – Theater High Altitude Area Defense

TMD – Theater Missile Defense

UEWR – Upgraded Early Warning Radar

WMD – Weapons of mass destruction

X-Band Radar – large, phased-array radar operating at about 10 GHz

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## PHOTO CREDITS

page 32	Russian ICBM	from the FEDERATION OF AMERICAN SCIENTISTS website
page 41	Chinese ICBM DF-31	from the FEDERATION OF AMERICAN SCIENTISTS website
page 46	Aegis System	US BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE ORGANIZATION photo
page 69	“Arrow” Interceptor	US DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE photo
page 81	Vladimir V. Putin	UN PHOTO 204428C
page 93	Russian SS-20	from the FEDERATION OF AMERICAN SCIENTISTS website
page 96	US SLBM Trident	US DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE photo





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