The politics of US missile defence cooperation with Europe and Russia

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During its first three years, the Obama administration compiled an impressive record on the politically fraught issue of European ballistic missile defence (MD) cooperation on three different levels: domestically, *vis-à-vis* Europe and NATO, and in relations with Russia.[1] The administration's MD design, known as the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA), will rely on land- and sea-based interceptors to shoot down missiles launched towards Europe by Iran or other Middle Eastern states. It has strong bipartisan support at home and is being implemented in close collaboration with NATO, which agreed in 2010 to make the protection of allies' territory from ballistic missiles a priority. Meanwhile, the Obama administration has ardently pursued MD cooperation with Russia, which has long regarded US missile defence as a threat to its own strategic deterrence capabilities. Given political realities in the US, the administration has little choice but to proceed with plans to deploy a European MD system. Nevertheless, its focus on MD cooperation as a kind of magic bullet in relations with both its European allies and Russia appears too ambitious, and risks doing more harm than good—unless the administration can do a better job of managing expectations, while embedding its ideas for MD cooperation into a broader security dialogue with both the Europeans and Russia.

Domestically, EPAA has allowed Obama to bridge much of the longstanding partisan rancour over MD. After loudly denouncing Obama's decision to modify the Bush administration's plans for European MD, Republican critics used the ratification hearings on Obama's signature arms control agreement (the New START treaty) to secure the administration's commitment to MD, including mandating the deployment of all four phases of the EPAA.[2] With this resolution, the Senate Republicans acknowledged that the Bush administration's plans for Ground Based Interceptors (GBI) in Poland and a radar installation in the Czech Republic, which many in the Republican Party had continued to advocate, were

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, the term missile defence (MD) in this article refers to territorial MD. Territorial missile defence systems are designed to protect large swaths of territory and (in theory) have the capability to shoot down enemy ICBMs. Theatre MD (TMD) systems, conversely, focus on knocking down shorter-range missiles targeted at forward deployed troop formations and other tactical assets.

[2] 'New START Treaty: Resolution on advice and consent to ratification', US Department of State, 22 Dec. 2010, http://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/153910.htm, accessed 3 Feb. 2012. The resolution also called on the administration to modernize the United States' existing Ground-Based Midcourse Defense system (based in Alaska and North Dakota) and to continue developing the Ground-Based Interceptor technology.

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dead. On the other hand, Republicans in Congress have never embraced Obama's commitment to MD cooperation with Russia; their opposition continues to limit the administration's flexibility in dealing with Moscow, reinforcing Russia's own suspicions that the system is in fact directed at countering Russian capabilities.

On the European front, the administration succeeded in having NATO declare, in the Strategic Concept released at the alliance's November 2010 summit in Lisbon, that it would consider MD a 'core element of [NATO's] collective defence', and that the EPAA would be designated as the United States' national contribution to this multilateral effort.[3] Transforming European MD into an aspect of NATO's collective defence obligations helped mitigate the intra-European discord that had attended the Bush administration's reliance on bilateral accords with Poland and the Czech Republic. It also gave the alliance a new focus for cooperation looking beyond the conflict in Afghanistan (and later Libya), which had severely strained NATO's cohesion and called into question its continuing relevance in the security environment of the twenty-first century. And since EPAA was designated as the United States' contribution to this common effort, NATO's decision to make MD part of its collective defence mandate helps encourage Washington's long-term commitment to NATO and to the defence of its European allies, though it does not resolve the underlying political, technical and financial challenges to deploying an effective European MD system.

Meanwhile, the policy of 'resetting' US–Russia relations, first officially announced by Vice-President Joseph Biden in February 2009, has created an opportunity for transforming MD into an area of cooperation with Russia as well.[4] The US and Russia successfully concluded a Joint Threat Assessment analysing the development of ballistic missile technology by Iran and other Middle Eastern states, and they continue to hold regular discussions through both civilian and military channels on opportunities for more extensive cooperation, such as the creation of joint centres to analyse tracking data. The 'reset' has created space for these discussions, but has not succeeded in overcoming Russia's longstanding suspicion of MD; nor has it resolved the contradiction between opposition across the US political spectrum to making Russia a full partner in European MD efforts and Moscow's insistence that it will only cooperate on a fully equal basis. Indeed, Moscow continues to warn that failure to agree on a shared way forward on MD could imperil the warming in relations that has taken place over the past few years, and could ultimately, as outgoing Russian President Dmitry Medvedev cautioned in his 2010 annual address to parliament, lead to a new arms race in Europe.[5]

Working out how to reconcile the at times irreconcilable demands of US domestic politics, Europe/NATO and the Russians will be Washington's biggest

[3] NATO, 'Active engagement, modern defense: Strategic Concept for the Defense and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation', adopted by heads of state and government in Lisbon, 19 Nov. 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm, accessed 3 Feb. 2012.

[4] Remarks by Vice-President Biden at 45th Munich Conference on Security Policy, The White House, Office of the Vice-President, 7 Feb. 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/RemarksbyVicePresidentBidenat45thMunichConferenceonSecurityPolicy, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

[5] Dmitry Medvedev, 'Poslanie federal'nomu sobraniyu' (Address to the Federal Assembly), 30 Nov. 2010, Kremlin, http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/9637, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

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political challenge as it moves forward with plans to develop and deploy the EPAA over the coming years. What interest Moscow has in collaborating on MD stems largely from its desire to construct a new framework for European security, one in which Russia itself is a full participant. The Obama administration has cautiously embraced this goal as well, but facing pressure on Capitol Hill and from some of its European allies, has repeatedly emphasized that 'NATO will defend NATO, Russia will defend Russia', and that it will not accept any limits on either the technical capabilities or the location of the system it is building in Europe.[6] It has moreover firmly rejected Russia's proposal for building a single integrated system in favour of what administration spokesmen describe as two separate systems (one operated by NATO, the other by Russia) that will be able to share tracking data, but will launch interceptors separately should they detect a hostile incoming missile.

The Obama administration has already made progress on all three tracks (domestic, Europe/NATO and Russia). It is nevertheless staking an enormous amount on the hope that it will be able to continue finessing the contradictions between what domestic realities will allow, what its NATO allies will accept and what Russia will tolerate. Impelled by domestic considerations to press forward with plans to develop and deploy the EPAA, the administration should nevertheless take steps both to reduce the likelihood and ameliorate the consequences of failure, by moving MD cooperation with both NATO and Russia off centre stage while simultaneously emphasizing other, lower-profile opportunities for deepening security cooperation with Moscow—opportunities that have increased substantially since the start of the reset.

US missile defence: a brief history

Neither the notion of stationing US MD assets in Europe nor the idea of somehow including Russia in such a system is new. The current debate in Washington about MD is merely the third and latest iteration of a discussion dating back to the Johnson administration about whether and, if so, how to defend US assets against attack from ballistic missiles. The contours of that debate have not changed a great deal since the late 1960s, despite the development of new technologies and the end of the Cold War. In essence, all these debates centre on diverging threat perceptions, assessments of MD's impact on strategic stability, assumptions about technological capabilities, and the cost of developing one or another MD architecture. The first iteration of the MD debate began with President Johnson's 1967 proposal to station nuclear-tipped interceptors outside major US cities (a programme known as Sentinel). It was effectively ended in 1975 by Congress's decision to close the trial MD site in Grand Forks, North Dakota, which the Nixon administration had set up as an alternative to Johnson's more extensive (and controversial) Sentinel proposal. Ronald Reagan revived interest in MD with his 1983 Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI, called 'Star Wars' by its detractors) proposal, which relied on a

[6] See e.g. Ellen Tauscher, 'Remarks to Ninth Annual US Missile Defense Agency Conference', 21 March 2011, http://www.state.gov/t/us/158733.htm, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

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range of exotic technologies to address a threat that Reagan's successors argued was diminishing as the Soviet Union imploded. SDI was repeatedly modified and downsized, with the Clinton administration shifting focus to building a more modest and more feasible theatre missile defence system in the mid-1990s. MD again became a central preoccupation under the George W. Bush administration, which announced in 2001 its intention to defend the US homeland against the threat of missiles launched from 'rogue states' such as Iran and North Korea.[7]

The cases both for and against all these proposed MD systems are similar. Supporters argue that the US needs to develop the technology to defend itself against a growing missile threat, just as it would seek to protect itself from any other weapon hostile states might aim at its people and military assets. Opponents assert that the costs of developing effective MD technology are disproportionately greater than the threat, and that, moreover, MD could end up *increasing* insecurity by undermining strategic stability as embodied in the Cold War-era doctrine of mutually assured destruction (MAD)—thereby giving an adversary an incentive to build an even larger arsenal to overwhelm MD, and potentially to launch a pre-emptive attack.[8]

This belief in the destabilizing effects of MD led the US and the USSR to sign the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty constraining both sides' ability to deploy MD assets and ensuring mutual vulnerability. Ever since, Moscow has consistently opposed US MD plans on strategic stability grounds. With the end of the Cold War, strategic stability between Washington and Moscow became less salient, as the US increasingly focused on the danger of ballistic missiles from third states, above all Iran. Russia, however, remaining outside the US-led collective security bloc centred on NATO, continued to believe in the importance of maintaining strategic stability, and hence opposed any changes to the ABM Treaty that would allow the US to build an MD capability against Iran. To deal with Russian opposition, Washington tried on several occasions to work out how to incorporate Russia itself into a new MD architecture. The George H. W. Bush administration conducted talks with the Russians on the idea of a joint system to counter missile launches from rogue states (termed Global Protection Against Limited Strikes, or GPALS).[9] Bill Clinton agreed in principle with Russian President Boris Yeltsin to establish a joint centre in Moscow to share tracking and early warning data from third country missile launches.[10] The Obama administration's proposals for MD cooperation with Russia build on these earlier ideas.

[7] For an overview of these programmes, see James M. Lindsay and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Defending America: the case for limited national missile defense* (Washington DC: Brookings, 2002), pp. 3–16.

[8] Lindsay and O'Hanlon, *Defending America*, pp. 3–16.

[9] James Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, *Power and purpose: US policy toward Russia after the Cold War* (Washington DC: Brookings, 2003), pp. 288–91. See also Dunbar Lockwood, 'Bidding down', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, April 1992; Baker Spring, 'Clinton's failed missile defense policy: a legacy of missed opportunities' (Washington DC: Heritage Foundation, 21 Sept. 2000, http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2000/09/clintons-failed-missile-defense-policy, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

[10] 'Memorandum of Agreement between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on the Establishment of a Joint Center for the Exchange of Data from Early Warning Systems and Notification of Missile Launches', 4 June 2000, http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/jdec/text/000604-warn-wh3.htm, accessed 5 Feb. 2012. This Joint Data Exchange Center (JDEC) was never built. See Wade Boese, 'Russia halts missile launch notices', *Arms Control Today*, March 2008, http://www.armscontrol.org/print/2773, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

George W. Bush and the European 'third site'

The administration of George W. Bush put its full weight behind plans to build a missile shield to protect the US homeland from a ballistic missile attack, with critical components to be deployed on the territory of European allies Poland and the Czech Republic. While the Bush administration's plan was in part driven by an ideological commitment to missile defence, it also grew out of concerns that Iran was on the verge of developing intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) technology capable of hitting the United States.[11] Bush and top advisers such as Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz (many of whom had been working on missile defence issues since the Reagan administration) believed that the Cold War doctrine of MAD was obsolete. They argued that the actual prospect of a nuclear exchange between the US and Russia was all but zero, while the steady advance of Iranian and North Korean missile capabilities meant that the US needed the capability to defend against a limited surprise attack from a country that might not be deterrable in the Cold War sense of the word.[12] Bush consequently declared an end to MAD as the basis of US nuclear strategy in the 2001 Nuclear Posture Review, and announced in December 2001 that the US would unilaterally withdraw from the 1972 ABM Treaty, which the administration regarded as a relic of the Cold War that prevented the US from adequately addressing the danger of nuclear blackmail by a state like Iran.[13]

Neither of these steps was popular in Europe. In practice, they exacerbated intra-European divisions over missile defence—and on relations with Washington more broadly—which have repeatedly surfaced over US missile defence plans.[14] France, Germany and the Netherlands openly opposed US plans to abandon the ABM Treaty, and worried that the construction of a new MD system would spur a fresh round of proliferation, as rogue states sought to develop the capability

[11] Acting on instructions from the White House, the National Intelligence Council (NIC) established in late 2001 that Iran could be prepared to test an ICBM as soon as the middle of the decade, though a flight test closer to 2010 was more likely. See National Intelligence Council, 'Foreign missile developments and the ballistic missile threat through 2015', Dec. 2001, p. 9, http://www.dni.gov/nic/PDF_GIF_otherprod/missilethreat2001.pdf, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

[12] Mikhail Tsypkin, 'Russian politics, policy-making and American missile defence', *International Affairs* 85: 4, July 2009, pp. 790–1. See also Stephen J. Hadley, 'A call to deploy', *Washington Quarterly* 23: 3, Summer 2000, pp. 95–108; Massimo Calabresi, 'Behind Bush's missile defense push', *Time*, 5 June 2007; Stephen Hadley, press briefing, Budapest, 22 June 2006, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=60183#axzz1S29928F6, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

[13] See ABM Treaty Fact Sheet, The White House, 13 Dec. 2001 http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/12/20011213-2.html, accessed 6 Feb. 2012.

[14] Divisions between Washington's European allies have been a longstanding impediment to missile defence, dating back to the 1960s. Generally speaking, the UK has been supportive on the basis of the 'special relationship' with the US, notwithstanding occasional concerns. (West) Germany has been more sceptical out of concern for strategic stability and the effects on its own relationship with Moscow. While Bonn agreed to participate in the SDI programme, for example, it demanded that the US continue to adhere to the ABM Treaty and insisted on far-reaching technology transfer provisions. France refused to participate in SDI at all, preferring to rely on its own nuclear deterrent and favouring the maintenance of strategic stability *vis-à-vis* Moscow. The intra-European debate has also tended to break down along left/right lines, with conservative governments (Tories, CDU/CSU, Gaullists) proving more favourable to SDI than left-wing (Labour, SPD, French Socialist) governments. See David S. Yost, 'Western Europe and the US Strategic Defense Initiative', *Journal of International Affairs* 41: 2, Summer 1988, pp. 295–314.

to defeat the new missile shield.[15] Others worried that Washington's MD plans would needlessly embroil Europe in a new round of confrontations with Russia.[16] Nevertheless, while seeking to incorporate individual European allies and NATO as a whole into its MD plans—and remaining open in theory to cooperation with Moscow—leading figures such as Hadley and National Security Advisor/Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice accorded sufficient priority to MD to press ahead with the plans in the face of significant opposition both at home and abroad. They did so with the support of strongly pro-American governments in Poland, the Czech Republic and other countries in the former Warsaw Pact (as well as Spain, Italy and the UK).

Moscow's response to the US announcement was even more negative, reflecting a continued belief that the ABM Treaty remained a critical guarantor of strategic stability.[17] Russia also clung to the treaty (and other vestiges of its superpower past) as a way of ensuring its continued role as a critical player in the post-Cold War world order. NATO expansion had already forced Moscow to confront its loss of influence on the European continent; now the US appeared to be seeking to undermine strategic parity and weaken one of the few remaining bases on which Russia could claim major power status. Moreover, Russia did not share the United States' perception that Tehran and Pyongyang posed imminent missile threats. Russian President Vladimir Putin argued during his November 2001 summit meeting with Bush in Crawford, Texas, that the most effective solution to the spread of missile technology was not to abandon a treaty that had guaranteed strategic stability for two decades, but to strengthen the worldwide non-proliferation regime.[18]

Since Bush was focused on the threat from rogue states—particularly in the aftermath of the attacks on New York and Washington of 11 September 2001—he believed that the Russians could be persuaded to accept some kind of cooperative arrangement that would allow the US to build a system directed against Iran (and possibly North Korea) and would also cement the nascent partnership between Washington and Moscow that was emerging in the context of the unfolding 'global war on terror'. Putin did not entirely discount the idea, proposing the creation of a joint NATO–Russia mobile MD system, while in June 2002 the NATO–Russia Council established a working group on theatre missile defence cooperation, which even conducted joint exercises.[19] Moreover, the immediate

[15] Frank Bruni, 'France and Germany caution Bush on missile defense plan', *New York Times*, 14 June 2001.

[16] Walter B. Slocombe, 'Europe, Russia and American missile defense', *Survival* 50: 2, April–May 2008, pp. 23–4.

[17] Vladimir Putin, 'Zayavlenie v svyazi s ob''yavleniem SShA o vykhode v odnostoronnem poryadke iz Dogovora po PRO 1972 goda' (statement in connection with the announcement of the USA's unilateral withdrawal from the 1972 ABM Treaty), 13 Dec. 2001, http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2001/12/13/0002_type63374type82634_28746.shtml, accessed 5 Feb. 2012. Washington initially hoped Moscow would agree to modify the treaty. See David E. Sanger, 'Putin sees pact with US on revising ABM Treaty', *New York Times*, 22 Oct. 2001.

[18] David E. Sanger, 'The Bush–Putin summit: the ranch: before and after Bush and Putin's banter, no agreement on missile defense', *New York Times*, 16 Nov. 2001; Vladimir Putin, interview with Robert Siegel, National Public Radio, 15 Nov. 2001, http://www.npr.org/news/specials/putin/nprinterview.html, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

[19] See Richard Weitz, 'Illusive visions and practical realities: Russia, NATO, and missile defense', *Survival* 52: 4, Aug.–Sept. 2010, pp. 101–103.

impact of the US decision to leave the ABM Treaty was limited by Putin's interest in maintaining good relations with the US in keeping with Russia's new-found role as an ally in Afghanistan and the war on terror. Under the circumstances, it made sense for Moscow to downplay its opposition to a decision about the end of the ABM Treaty that it had no power to change.[20]

Once the US had completed its withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in mid-2002, Rice, Hadley, Wolfowitz and other MD supporters pushed forward with their plans to develop and deploy a system to protect the US homeland. The architecture they ultimately settled on, the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD) concept, called for two MD launch sites in the US (at Fort Greely, Alaska, and Vandenberg Air Force Base, North Dakota); radar installations in Massachusetts, Greenland and the UK; satellite-based sensors; and a 'third site' in Europe, which would be stationed near the Polish village of Redzikowo near the Baltic coast. An advanced radar facility connected to the third site was planned for a mountain range south-west of Prague. This approach relied on a small number of untested heavy GBIs to knock out incoming missiles still in the boost phase. Such a limited missile defence system could not provide absolute protection, especially against an adversary like Russia with thousands of warheads in its arsenal. Yet if it worked, it would substantially complicate any attempted first strike even by a major power, knocking out enough incoming rockets to prevent the annihilation of the entire US arsenal, thereby ensuring a capacity to retaliate.

While a European interceptor would be closer to the launch site of any incoming missile from the Middle East (though in geographic terms, Poland was still too far away to be an ideal site), Bush administration officials also promoted the third site as a mechanism for strengthening transatlantic solidarity by creating a new, externally focused project requiring joint long-term planning and budgeting between the US and its European allies. President Bush and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld stressed the importance of making missile defence a cooperative endeavour with European allies.[21] They hoped that a common front with the Europeans would convince Tehran that its efforts to develop an advanced missile capability were not worth the trouble. They also saw MD cooperation as a mechanism for rebuilding the US–European trust fractured by the war in Iraq, which had fed a surge of anti-American feeling across much of the continent and had seen French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder join Putin in denouncing the US invasion.

In practice, however, the Bush administration's third site proposal did little to strengthen transatlantic solidarity. In the first place, European governments remained divided among themselves, both over attitudes towards Moscow and more philosophically over how deterrence should function in the post-Cold

[20] Richard Weitz, 'Time to give up on missile defense cooperation with Russia', *Aviation Week & Space Technology* 165: 6. Aug. 2006.

[21] Tomas Valasek, 'Europe's missile defense options', *Defense Monitor* 30: 3, March 2001, http://www.cdi.org/dm/2001/issue3/emd.html, accessed 5 Feb. 2012. US officials were not entirely clear about whether the third site's main role would be to protect Europe or to work alongside the sites in Alaska and North Dakota to enhance coverage of the United States itself. See Slocombe, 'Europe, Russia and American missile defense', pp. 19–24.

War world. Moreover, the Bush administration's proposal was based on bilateral arrangements between the US and the governments in Warsaw and Prague, and remained a US (rather than an allied) system. The third site's contribution to European security was also tenuous, insofar as it was designed primarily to knock down Iranian ICBMs heading for the United States, rather than shorter-range missiles capable of hitting Europe. While it would provide some coverage of European territory, south-eastern Europe (including Turkey and Greece) would be wholly excluded, and even the Poles and Czechs would have no say in the operation of the system, despite hosting elements of it within their borders. The 2002 NATO summit in Prague had meanwhile commissioned a study (released in 2006) on the feasibility of a common NATO missile defence system, but the Pentagon remained opposed to transferring responsibility for the defence of US territory even to Washington's NATO allies.[22] Moreover, public opinion across Europe was largely against the proposal; even 57 per cent of Poles and 68 per cent of Czechs opposed the third site deployment in the spring of 2007.[23]

Moscow also adamantly opposed the third site. It questioned the Bush administration's invocation of an Iranian threat to the US homeland—a judgement backed up by a joint independent commission of US and Russian scientists, which concluded that the missile threat from Iran 'is not imminent and . . . the system currently proposed would not be effective against it'.[24] Russian concern was also based in part on uncertainty about the third site's projected technical capabilities and potential to undermine Russia's strategic deterrent—as well as the precedent being set by the deployment of US military assets of any kind so close to Russia's frontiers. Many argued that such a step would violate the pledge made in the early 1990s and formalized in the 1997 NATO–Russia Founding Act that the Atlantic alliance would refrain from deploying significant military forces on the territory of former Warsaw Pact members.[25]

Russian leaders did, however, see cooperation on missile defence as a way to address the continued bifurcation of the European security space, which in their view NATO expansion had exacerbated. While rejecting the third site proposal, Moscow reiterated its interest in constructing a joint system that would simultaneously protect NATO and Russian territory from third country missile launches. In 2007, Putin offered to let NATO have access to information from the Russian radar facilities in Gabala, Azerbaijan, and another radar installation in Russia's Krasnodar Kray as an alternative to building the third site. Putin's proposal envisioned a broader joint US–NATO–Russian architecture, with Russia's contribution centring on data from these existing radar facilities.

[22] See Ronald D. Asmus, 'How missile defense could heal transatlantic relations', *New Republic*, 2 April 2007.

[23] Robert Burns, 'US might negotiate on missile defense', Associated Press, 24 April 2007.

[24] 'Iran's nuclear and missile potential: a joint threat assessment by US and Russian technical experts', East–West Institute, New York, May 2009, p. 6.

[25] NATO, 'Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France', 27 May 1997, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_25468.htm, accessed 5 Feb. 2012. See also 'Glavnoe dlya Vashingtona – sozdat' voennuyu infrastrukturu v Vostochnoi Yevrope' (The main thing for Washington is building a military infrastructure in Eastern Europe), *Vremya novostei*, 7 Sept. 2007. See also Peppino A. DeBiaso, 'Missile defense and NATO security', *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 51, 2008, pp. 50–51.

As relations between the West and Russia plummeted during the last years of the Bush administration (damaged by the Russo-Ukrainian gas crisis, the murders of opponents of the Kremlin including Aleksandr Litvinenko and Anna Politkovskaya, Putin's notorious 2007 speech in Munich comparing the US to the Third Reich, and growing tension between Russia and the pro-western government in Georgia), Washington began reconsidering its opposition to sharing responsibility for MD with its European allies. At the same time, the fact that the proposed third site would not provide coverage for all NATO allies led the alliance to revisit the idea of building its own complementary system to address the intra-European tension that the third site proposal had generated.[26] At its April 2008 summit in Bucharest, NATO therefore agreed to support efforts to integrate the US third site into a broader system that would offer defence coverage to all of Europe.[27]

Obama and the EPAA

The third site proposal created a dilemma for Barack Obama when he entered the White House in January 2009. Obama had campaigned on a pledge to cut what he viewed as wasteful spending on unproven MD technology, while many of his Democratic backers had been critics of MD since the days of Reagan's SDI. Shortly after his inauguration, Obama gave a major address on nuclear security in Prague. On the subject of missile defence, he said: 'As long as the threat from Iran persists, we will go forward with a missile defence system that is cost-effective and proven. If the Iranian threat is eliminated, we will have a stronger basis for security, and the driving force for missile defence construction in Europe will be removed.'[28] This formulation contained an implicit critique of the third site proposal, which the President's officials considered neither cost-effective nor based on proven technology. In September 2009, Obama announced that his administration was scrapping the third site proposal. Following serious criticism in the US press—and from the Polish and Czech governments, which had taken serious political risks to secure parliamentary approval for the third site deployment in the face of public opposition and resented the fact that they had not been consulted about the decision to scrap it—Obama announced a few weeks later that the US would back the creation of the EPAA instead.[29]

As the name implied, the EPAA's distinguishing characteristics were its fully European location and its ability to adapt over time in line with the evolution of the perceived Iranian threat. Unlike the third site, which was designed to operate as part of the United States' GMD system, the EPAA was both wholly in

[26] Ahto Lobjakas, 'NATO and Russia seek missile-defense solution', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), 14 June 2007, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1077124.html, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

[27] NATO, Bucharest summit declaration, 3 April 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm, accessed 5 Feb. 2012. See also Peter Baker, 'Missile defense endorsed by NATO', *Washington Post*, 4 April 2008.

[28] Remarks of President Obama, Embassy of the United States to the Czech Republic, 5 April 2009, http://prague.usembassy.gov/obama.html, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

[29] See e.g. 'Obama's missile offense', *Wall Street Journal*, 18 Sept. 2009; 'Polish, Czech officials slam Obama's missile defense shift as a betrayal', AP, 18 Sept 2009; 'Obama under fire for U-turn on missiles', *Financial Times*, 17 Sept. 2009.

Europe, and focused on defending European territory from Iranian medium- and intermediate-range missiles. It was also designed for deployment in phases over the decade to 2020. Each phase would add new capabilities to the overall system, and could be redesigned as necessary in line with the perceived evolution of Iran's capabilities; it was precisely this adaptability that worried Moscow.

Compared to the Bush-era design, the EPAA had several advantages. In its initial stages, it was based on an existing technology, the SM-3 Block IA interceptor, stationed aboard the US Navy's *Aegis*-class cruisers. The early phases of the EPAA also focused on intercepting short- and medium-range missiles, which could hit Europe but not the United States if launched from Iran. The US intelligence community believed Iran was several years away from having ICBMs capable of reaching the United States, but Tehran already had medium-range missiles that could hit targets in Europe. Phase 1 of the four-phase EPAA entailed the deployment of *Aegis* cruisers in the Black and Mediterranean Seas, along with a terrestrial AN/TPY-2 radar facility, which would be deployed somewhere in south-eastern Europe (Turkey ultimately agreed to host the radar) starting in 2011. Phase 2 would introduce a more sophisticated version of the SM-3 known as Block IB, plus a ground-based interceptor in Romania (by 2015). The third and fourth phases involved a second land-based interceptor in Poland (by 2018, Phase 3) and a fourth generation SM-3 (Block IIB) capable of intercepting ICBMs launched from the Middle East (by 2020, Phase 4).[30]

The EPAA also addressed many of the European governments' concerns about the third site. Unlike its predecessor, the EPAA was designed principally to defend European territory, and its technical capabilities focused on Iran's existing medium-range missiles rather than on the intercontinental missiles that few Europeans (and few Russians) believed were imminent. The EPAA was also designed from the very beginning to fit into a broader European MD effort under NATO auspices, rather than operating on the basis of bilateral agreements with selected European partners. At Washington's urging, the 2010 NATO summit in Lisbon agreed to 'develop a missile defence capability to protect all NATO European populations, territory and forces', and the EPAA was designated as the US national contribution to this effort (Washington also promised ultimately to turn over operational control of EPAA to NATO).[31] This scheme was more concrete than NATO's 2008 declaration at Bucharest that it would develop some kind of MD system to fill in the gaps in the third site's coverage of Europe.

The Obama administration consequently portrayed the EPAA as both a focal point for strengthening NATO unity (strained by the conflicts in Afghanistan and later Libya) and a spur to the Europeans to shoulder a larger proportion of the overall NATO defence burden. The French Senate, at least, took up this challenge, releasing a report in August 2011 calling on Paris to seek a more active role in NATO MD to avoid falling too far behind the United States' technological

[30] US Department of State, 'Fact sheet: United States European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) and NATO missile defense', 3 May 2011, http://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/162447.htm, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

[31] NATO, Lisbon summit declaration, 20 Nov. 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

capabilities (the Elysée was non-committal).[32] Yet given the Europeans' differing perceptions of the Iranian threat, not to mention the difficult economic environment facing European militaries as a consequence of the global economic crisis, the 2011 bailouts of Greece, Ireland and Portugal, and turmoil over the future of the eurozone, it remains an open question whether the European NATO allies will commit the resources to develop an expensive MD system whose utility many continue to doubt. [33]

While NATO officially estimates the cost of a continent-wide MD system to be €200 million ($260 million) over 14 years, in addition to the €800 million ($1 billion) cost of necessary upgrades to NATO's interim theatre MD capability (known as ALTBMD), an independent industry group convened by the alliance and many independent analysts foresee far higher costs, given the use of unproven technology and an uncertain timeframe.[34] The role of EPAA in promoting NATO cohesion has, moreover, contributed to Russian scepticism about the project and the broader programme of MD cooperation, since many Russian observers saw the EPAA as dictated by the political needs of NATO rather than an objective assessment of the Iranian threat.[35]

While Obama insisted that the reconfiguration of US missile defence plans was not dictated by Russian opposition, the replacement of the third site with the EPAA helped to ameliorate tensions between Washington and Moscow. Russian President Medvedev welcomed the decision, and even Prime Minister Putin, who had been a leading critic of the Bush administration's plans, called Obama's decision 'correct and brave'.[36] However, as Russian officials examined the EPAA proposal more thoroughly, their initial assessment began to change. While the first stages of the EPAA clearly posed no threat to Russia's deterrent capability, Phases 3 and especially 4 appeared more problematic—as did the possibility that once in place, the system would continue developing. Phase 3 entailed deployments of interceptors along Russia's borders in Poland, which had been one of the principal reasons for Moscow's opposition to the third site proposal. Meanwhile, Phase 4 was explicitly designed to intercept ICBMs, which formed the backbone of Russia's strategic deterrent (since, like the United States, Moscow had abjured

[32] Jorge Benitez, 'A good step for NATO missile defense—from France', Atlantic Council, 2 Aug. 2011, http://www.acus.org/print/45358, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

[33] European publics continue to doubt the extent of the purported Iranian missile threat. In part, these divisions reflect differing assessments of Iranian capabilities by European intelligence services, but they also owe something to diverging attitudes towards Iran more broadly. Countries that see themselves as particularly vulnerable, or which have a history of difficult relations with the Islamic Republic (such as the UK and Turkey), are generally more concerned about the Iranian missile threat and more supportive of missile defence, while countries that have more extensive economic and political ties with Iran (especially Italy and Germany) are more cautious. See Steven A. Hildreth and Carl Ek, 'Missile defense and NATO's Lisbon summit', Congressional Research Service, Report for Congress, 11 Jan. 2011, pp. 1–2; Leo Cendrowicz, 'How should Europe respond to Iran?', *Time*, 2 June 2009.

[34] Richard Weitz, 'NATO's missile defense challenge', *World Politics Review*, 11 Nov. 2010, http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/7008/natos-missile-defense-challenge. See also Hildreth and Ek, 'Missile defense and NATO's Lisbon summit', p. 6.

[35] Vladimir Solov'ev and Yelena Chernenko, 'Gonka vozrazhenii' (The race of objections), *Kommersant*, 5 April 2011; 'Garantii nyet i ne budet' (There are no guarantees and will not be any), *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 15 June 2011.

[36] 'Russia's Putin hails US shield move, calls for more', RFE/RL, 18 Sept. 2009, http://www.rferl.org/content/Putin_Says_US_Shield_Decision_Correct_Brave/1825747.html, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

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shorter-range missiles when it signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 1987). As with the third site proposal, Moscow was also worried that EPAA would be just the first element in a broader US missile defence architecture or a broader deployment of US military assets in Central and Eastern Europe. Moscow feared that, even if the Obama administration was committed to working with Russia to find a common position, once the EPAA was in place a future US administration could use it as a platform for building a larger, more capable system that could pose a threat to Russian ICBMs. After all, the Obama administration had just overhauled its predecessor's plans; any future US administration could do the same.

To address Russian concerns, the Obama administration both sought to convince Moscow that the EPAA did not pose a threat to Russia's nuclear deterrent and offered Moscow the opportunity to collaborate in building a missile shield that would provide coverage for Russia as well as Europe. Both of these approaches, however, have run into difficulties. Some Russian observers, particularly those associated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accepted the Obama administration's argument that even Phase 4 of the EPAA lacked the technical capability to shoot down Russian ICBMs, which would fly over the Arctic, not Europe, during any strike on the United States.[37] Others, though, distrusted the information in US presentations about the EPAA's proposed capabilities. Many of these sceptics were associated with the Ministry of Defense, the general staff and the military command, whose voices have become increasingly dominant in the discussions over missile defence.[38]

Meanwhile, following President Medvedev's decision to attend the 2010 Lisbon NATO summit, the NATO–Russia Council agreed to adopt missile defence as an area for future cooperation between Russia and the alliance.[39] While turning missile defence into an area of cooperation with Russia was a relatively old idea, dating back to the George H. W. Bush administration's GPALS concept, the Lisbon agreement marked the first time it had been officially adopted as a policy aim by both Russia and NATO.[40] Lisbon, though, did not establish what such cooperation would look like in practice.

Agreement remains elusive because NATO and Russia have fundamentally different visions of what MD cooperation is designed to accomplish. Russia put forward what it termed a 'sectoral' approach, which then Russian ambassador to NATO and special envoy for MD Dmitry Rogozin described in his blog as 'two knights standing back to back', each fighting off dangers that appeared in his own

[37] Aleksandr Khramchikhin, 'Komu budet plokho, yesli ne dogovorimsya? (Whose problem is it if we don't agree?)', *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, 3 June 2011.

[38] Yury Gavrilov, 'Opasnye "standarty"' (Dangerous 'standards'), *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 24 May 2011. See also Tsypkin, 'Russian politics', p. 788.

[39] Hildreth and Ek, 'Missile defense and NATO's Lisbon summit', pp. 5–9. See also Lisbon summit declaration, 20 Nov. 2010.

[40] Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Interv'yu zamestitelya Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii A. V. Grushko' (Interview with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs A.V. Grushko), Interfax, 2 Oct. 2010. See also Valasek, 'Europe's missile defense options'. For a concise history of attempts to engage Russia on missile defence under Clinton and George H. W. Bush, see Lindsay and O'Hanlon, *Defending America*, pp. 117–23.

geographical sphere of responsibility.[41] In practice, such a system would require a high degree of integration, including of highly sensitive command-and-control functions and fire control. Given the impossibility of drawing straight lines in space, it would also mean that the NATO and Russian sectors would overlap, essentially outsourcing the defence of some NATO territory to Moscow. NATO and the US were understandably reluctant to leave the defence of their territory and populations in Russia's hands. Rejecting the sectoral approach, they proposed instead the creation of two parallel, interoperable systems that would be able to share data, but that would leave defence of NATO members' territory, and command-and-control functions, solely in the hands of NATO, and suggested as the first stage in cooperation conducting a joint threat assessment.[42]

Realizing it was not going to get a unified system, Moscow next sought to impose legally binding limits to ensure the US/NATO system could not undermine Russian capabilities (since it is the US that has taken the lead within NATO on MD, the bulk of the negotiations with Russia have proceeded bilaterally). That is, Moscow's fallback position is not the more limited cooperation Washington proposed; it is rather to impose constraints as the price for not making trouble. While it has offered different assessments of what such limits would entail, Moscow has suggested some kind of formal, legally binding agreement that would be subject to legislative ratification and would cap the velocity, number or location of interceptors stationed in Europe. Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov summed up the Russian position thus:

> It's worth [asking] a simple question: substantively, what do they need this MD system for? They tell us that there's a threat of missile proliferation. Which ones? Short and medium range. Fine, to deal with these classes of missile, one [only] needs certain capabilities. That is, the speed of an interceptor does not need to be as high as if it were designed to hit an intercontinental ballistic missile.[43]

In other words, if the US believed its own rhetoric about the real threat coming from rogue states like Iran, then Washington should not object to putting in writing its promise that the system it was building would have the ability to knock out only Tehran's short- and medium-range missiles, not the Russian intercontinental variety. The Obama administration, however, made clear that it would not accept any binding constraints. What the US stood to gain from accepting such constraints was not clear, and in any case the debate over New START ratification—in the course of which demands (ultimately incorporated in the Senate's resolution of ratification) were made that Washington reject any constraints on its ability to deploy MD assets—demonstrated that getting an agreement through the US Senate would be all but impossible.[44] Washington also reminded the Russians

[41] 'Rogozin urges missile agreements with NATO', Voice of Russia, 22 Nov. 2010, http://english.ruvr.ru/2010/11/22/35414738.html, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

[42] See e.g. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, press conference after the NATO–Russia Council Defense Ministerial, 8 June 2011, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_75261.htm, accessed 5 Feb. 2012. The NATO–Russia joint threat assessment (JTA) was parallel to, but separate from, the bilateral US–Russia JTA. At the time of writing, it remains unfinished.

[43] 'Dokazatel'stva ot protivoraketnogo' (Proofs from the ABM), *Kommersant*, 6 June 2011.

[44] 'New START Treaty: Resolution on advice and consent to ratification'.

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that the ABM Treaty was legally binding, which had not prevented the Bush administration from jettisoning it.

As Antonov hinted, part of the problem centred on Moscow's and Washington's diverging views of Iran. Even if Tehran was years from developing an ICBM capable of hitting the US homeland, Washington argued that Iran's short- and medium-range arsenal already posed a threat to Europe, endangering US troops stationed there as well as the territory and population of NATO allies. Moreover, the US feared that an Iranian capability to strike Europe threatened to undermine NATO solidarity—since Tehran could use nuclear blackmail to prevent NATO members from intervening in a regional conflict in the Middle East (presumably a clash between Iran and Israel).[45] At the same time, western officials pointed out that an Iran with nuclear-tipped missiles poses a more direct threat to Russia than it does to Europe—much less the United States—and it has historically nursed ambitions of expanding its influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asian regions that Russia still considers its own sphere of 'privileged interests'.[46]

Moscow, though, has never seen Iran as a rogue state.[47] To the extent that Russian officials see a threat from the proliferation of missile technology, they worry more about China—and about Pakistan, which has both a well-developed missile programme and nuclear weapons, and whose government is increasingly threatened by Islamist radicals. Yet if Iran is not the principal threat, then the EPAA, the related NATO MD architecture, and Russia's role in missile defence cooperation all need to be fundamentally rethought.[48] Moscow has another reason for its scepticism: assuming that the Obama administration is sincere when it declares (as in the President's 2012 State of the Union address) that it will prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, Russian officials wonder what, precisely, is Washington's real motivation for deploying MD assets in Europe if it is determined to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons in the first place.[49]

Missile defence and the future of European security

A deeper challenge has to do with the lack of security integration between Russia and the West and the continued bifurcation of the European security space.[50] The Russian preference for a sectoral approach to MD cooperation is directly connected to Moscow's longstanding argument that it remains outside the European and

[45] See Aleksandr Khramchikhin, 'Sektoral'noe PRO dlya Rossii i NATO' (Sectoral BMD for Russia and NATO), *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 Nov. 2010.

[46] See Simon Saradzhyan, 'A historic opportunity for missile defense', *ISN Insights*, 14 June 2011.

[47] Some observers note that Russia's scepticism about a potential Iranian missile threat has diminished in recent years as Moscow's own relationship with Tehran has cooled, while others see in the recent unrest across the Arab world the potential for new missile threats to emerge across the Greater Middle East. See Aleksey Arbatov, 'Sovmestnaya PRO nikak ne poluchaetsya' (Joint MD will not happen no matter what), *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, 17 June 2011; Weitz, 'Illusive visions', pp. 99–120.

[48] Khramchikhin, 'Sektoral'noe PRO dlya Rossii i NATO.'

[49] Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address', The White House, 24 Jan. 2012, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/01/24/remarks-president-state-union-address.

[50] For instance, the Russian Military Doctrine, published in 2010, identifies NATO expansion and the globalization of NATO's role as the most significant military threat to Russia. See Voennaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 5 Feb. 2010, http://news.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/461, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

Euro-Atlantic security architecture that emerged after the Cold War—in other words, its belief that the existing NATO-centric model remains focused on containment of Russia, and prevents Moscow from playing a constructive role in European security. In the 1990s, this analysis led Moscow to call for NATO to give way to the more inclusive Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), while in recent years it has underpinned Medvedev's campaign for a new treaty on Euro-Atlantic security.[51] With the West showing little interest in the idea of a new treaty, Moscow seized on Obama's offer of MD cooperation as an opportunity to achieve some of the same ends, namely the construction of a more inclusive model of European security that would focus on threats emanating from outside Europe, while upholding the principle of equal and indivisible security for all European states, including Russia—a line of thought similar to that underlying Putin's offer to share the Gabala radar facility. As Foreign Ministry spokesman Aleksandr Lukashevich noted in April 2011, European MD cooperation is 'the main direction in which we are testing the possibility of moving toward an indivisible security space'.[52]

This aspect of cooperation was precisely what made it appealing to the US and NATO as well—namely, that it offered a way to address concerns about Russia's role in European security without requiring major concessions on the part of the US or a major redesign of European institutions. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen even spoke of missile defence cooperation helping to build 'one security roof that protects us all' from Vancouver to Vladivostok. [53] Nevertheless, Washington and Brussels remain unwilling to cede enough control to build the joint system such a transformation would require, and Moscow knows it. There are good reasons for their reluctance, but it undermines the Obama administration's hope that MD cooperation can be the vehicle for transforming Russia's relationship with the West.

While the Obama administration sought to expand the range of areas where the US and Russia could cooperate (for example, through the creation of a bilateral presidential commission and the expansion of economic links), for the time being hard security remains the pivot around which the relationship turns. Tellingly, apart from the creation of the commission, the two most important milestones in

[51] See Jeffrey Mankoff, 'Reforming the Euro-Atlantic security architecture: an opportunity for US leadership', *Washington Quarterly* 33: 2, April 2010, pp. 65–83.

[52] 'Interv'yu ofitsial'nogo predstavitelya MID Rossii A.K. Lukashevicha RIA-Novosti v svyazi s predstoyashchim neformal'nym zasedaniem Soveta Rossiya–NATO v Berline' (Interview of Foreign Ministry Spokesman A.K. Lukashevich with RIA-Novosti in connection with the upcoming informal NATO-Russia Council meeting in Berlin), Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 April 2011. See also V. Trubnikov, 'Sotrudnichestvo Rossii i NATO v oblasti PRO—klyuch k bezopasnosti yevroatlanticheskogo soobshchestva' (Russia-NATO BMD cooperation is the key to the security of the Euro-Atlantic community), *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'*, no. 7, 2011; 'Vystuplenie zamestitelya Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii A.V. Grushko na mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii "Voenno-politicheskoe izmerenie yevropeiskoi bezopasnosti: Predlozheniya i perspektivy"' (Statement of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs A.V. Grushko at the international conference on 'The political-military dimension of European security: proposals and perspectives'), Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 May 2011.

[53] Anders Fogh Rasmussen, 'Building a Euro-Atlantic security architecture', speech given in Brussels, 27 March 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_62395.htm, accessed 5 Feb. 2012. See also Weitz, 'Illusive visions', p. 99.

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US–Russian relations during the Obama administration's first year were the New START arms control treaty and the adoption of an accord on civilian nuclear cooperation (the so-called 123 Agreement). Both Moscow and Washington wanted to provide ballast for the relationship by creating new areas of cooperation, but those areas were bound to remain secondary as long as the two sides continued to view each other as political and military rivals. The administration thus saw MD cooperation as the tool it needed to build a more positive security relationship with Moscow.

Conclusion

Washington attempted to make a virtue of necessity by holding out missile defence cooperation with Russia as an elegant solution to a series of interlocking challenges: addressing Russia's longstanding concerns about the indivisibility of security in Europe and providing a cooperative endeavour to maintain transatlantic solidarity and ensure NATO's continuing relevance in the twenty-first century, while continuing to build the US missile defence capabilities required by domestic political considerations. It was an audacious strategy, but a risky one. Balancing the demands of domestic politics with US interests in both Europe and Russia requires the administration to carry out an extraordinarily deft juggling act.

One challenge is technical. Notwithstanding the Obama administration's stated confidence in the SM-3 missile and the *Aegis* cruiser, the technology remains unproven and expensive. Critics charge the Pentagon with rigging the tests designed to prove that the system works—and even so, results of the tests have been mixed.[54] The plan to have Phase 4 of the EPAA, with its ability to track and destroy incoming ICBMs, deployed by 2020 entails a high degree of optimism about the pace of technological development, especially given the squeeze defence budgets will inevitably face over the coming decade. Given the opposition of European publics and the reality that Europe will be absorbed for years to come with the impact of its financial crisis, MD will remain a tough sell in Europe under the best of circumstances. Technical setbacks, exacerbated by Washington's promising more than it can deliver in terms of coverage and timeframes, will weaken European leaders' resolve to press forward with a project few of them see as a priority.

Moreover, NATO's middling performances in Afghanistan and Libya have highlighted problems closer to home, including underinvestment in conventional munitions and airpower, which are likely to take precedence over MD for years to come.[55] Facing significant cuts in defence spending across Europe (as well as in the

[54] The US Missile Defense Agency reports that 84% of tests carried out with the SM-3 system, starting in 2002, have been successful. Critics charge the agency with misreporting data, particularly by counting tests in which the target was hit but not destroyed as successful and by rigging the test to make the target easier to hit. See William J. Broad and David E. Sanger, 'Review cites flaws in US antimissile program', *New York Times*, 17 May 2010. For a rebuttal, see Richard Lehner, 'Missile Defense Agency responds to *New York Times* article', US Missile Defense Agency, 18 May 2010, http://www.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/05/missile-defense-agency-responds-to-new-york-times-article//, accessed 6 Feb. 2012.

[55] Sarwar A. Kashmeri, 'NATO's surreal world', *New York Times*, 22 June 2011.

United States), NATO will have trouble in any case finding the resources to make a significant contribution to the US MD effort. The likely failure by NATO's European members to match the US financial and political commitment would vitiate NATO's pledge to erect a broader European MD architecture of which EPAA is just one piece. Establishing a US MD architecture in Europe without significant European commitment risks repeating the problem of the Bush years, when Washington's decision to press forward with the third site fractured the alliance and undermined US influence in Europe. If anything, the situation could be worse this time, since governments in countries like Poland (not to mention Turkey) are less likely now to withstand public opinion in order to accommodate a weakened United States whose own Atlanticist credentials are increasingly in doubt.

Russia has grudgingly welcomed Washington's push for MD cooperation out of a recognition that the US will proceed with its MD plans no matter what Moscow does, and that it is preferable to work with the relatively cooperative Obama administration than to risk finding itself confronting a White House more ideologically committed to MD and less willing to compromise with Russia. Yet the tortured negotiations involved in producing the US–Russian Joint Threat Assessment (finalized in the spring of 2011) and Russia's continuing push to impose constraints on the US/NATO system are evidence that Moscow still has little appetite for European MD in any form—short of the joint architecture it initially proposed (and even if the US and NATO were more flexible on the question of a joint system, there are serious doubts about whether Russia has the financial and technological capacity to contribute to it in a meaningful way).[56] Washington therefore needs to be prepared for the increasingly likely possibility that it will be unable to find a workable formula for compromise with Moscow, and to work out ways of mitigating the damage such failure could cause to the overall US–Russian relationship.

The US–Russia 'reset' has made Moscow more receptive to Washington's push for MD cooperation than it might otherwise have been, but in consequence, the Obama administration's *rapprochement* with Moscow and MD cooperation are increasingly interdependent. Failure to reach an accord on MD could itself cause the reset to go into reverse. Medvedev's invocation of a new arms race if the two sides fail to reach agreement, and his November 2011 threat to deploy Iskander missiles targeting any new MD assets in Europe, are signals that Moscow is at least contemplating alternative possibilities.[57] At a minimum, a failure of the Obama administration's push for MD cooperation with Moscow would make the Russians much less receptive to further reductions of offensive nuclear weapons, a critical step towards the nuclear-free world Obama invoked in his Prague speech. Conversely, should the reset go off track because of political change in either

[56] Aleksandr Stukalin, 'Missile defence: old problem, no new solution', Moscow Defense Brief 2, Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (CAST), Moscow 2011, pp. 15–7.

[57] 'Zayavlenie Prezidenta v svyazi s situatsiei, kotoraya slozhilas' vokrug sistemy PRO stran NATO v Yevrope' (Statement of the President in connection with the situation surrounding the NATO countries' BMD system in Europe), Kremlin, 23 Nov. 2011, http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/13637, accessed 5 Feb. 2012.

country (Putin is likely to return to the presidency following Russia's March 2012 election, while the US faces a less scripted election in November) or a new crisis in the former Soviet Union or for any other reason, MD cooperation will be an early and prominent casualty. Having made MD cooperation the centrepiece (along with WTO accession and deepening economic ties) of its strategy for building a more cooperative relationship with Russia over the longer term, the Obama administration has neither thought through the consequences of failure nor apparently come up with a Plan B that would alleviate them.

Missile defence should be one area of security cooperation among many, not the headline goal of US–Russian cooperation. If only for reasons of domestic politics, it is highly unlikely any US administration from either party will dramatically scale back plans for missile defence in Europe. The US can also take steps to mitigate some of the difficulties its MD plans have precipitated. First, it should move MD off the front burner of its conversations with both NATO allies and Moscow. With the US and its allies beginning to wind down major combat operations in Afghanistan ahead of the planned withdrawal of most international forces in 2014, incorporating the lessons of that conflict (and Libya's) should be the top priority for NATO. The endgame in Afghanistan should also be a higher priority for US–Russian relations. The establishment of the Northern Distribution Network and NATO–Russia cooperation on issues ranging from transit to intelligence-sharing to counterterrorism creates much more scope for future cooperation than does missile defence. The US and Russia should also actively explore new areas of security cooperation, including joint out-of-area operations and humanitarian relief efforts. Such endeavours are less visible than missile defence, but precisely for that reason are more feasible and likely to build and sustain the trust that is ultimately necessary to build a more collaborative relationship between Russia and the West.

The US will also need to do a better job of managing expectations. The aim of having Phase 4 of the EPAA in place by 2020 appears hopelessly ambitious given the present state of technology and concerns about funding when the Pentagon is set to absorb a massive budget cut. Openly acknowledging that the deployment of future phases remains far off will help lower the stakes in discussions with Moscow, and enhance Washington's credibility with allies who are themselves often suspicious of US MD plans. Moreover, extending the deployment timeline would also make it easier for Obama or his successors to allow EPAA to die quietly on the vine if developments in technology, funding or the political environment over the coming years render it unnecessary or infeasible. Not only is it possible that the SM-3 will simply never work as planned, the likelihood of deep cuts to the US defence budget over the coming decade will force the Pentagon to reassess its priorities, raising questions about the wisdom of allocating funding to such a controversial, unproven system. The possibility of dramatic political change inside Iran itself (along the lines of the Arab Spring revolts that have already brought down regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya—or as a result of foreign military intervention) represents an element of uncertainty in the strategic environment

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the US will be facing in a decade's time when the final phase of EPAA is supposed to be ready for deployment. Nevertheless, wary of the response on Capitol Hill, the administration remains hesitant to discuss the future of its European MD plans in the event that the Iranian threat evaporates (either because of political change in Iran or through a successful military strike on its nuclear facilities). Through its reluctance to take on Republican proponents of MD, the Administration is making it harder to get anywhere with Moscow.

The Obama administration does deserve credit for taking seriously both European interest in providing continent-wide protection and Russian complaints about the continued bifurcation of European security. Yet making missile defence cooperation the vehicle for transforming both these relationships seems overly ambitious. It increasingly appears that either the whole European territorial missile defence undertaking will be an expensive failure—or, conversely, that it will emerge for all intents and purposes as a unilateral US endeavour that undermines rather than strengthens transatlantic unity, and contributes to reinforcing rather than erasing the line isolating Russia from Europe. Missile defence in Europe is not a bad idea on its own; making it the main vehicle for the Obama administration's efforts both to create a new era of relations with Russia and to breathe new life into NATO is simply asking too much of it.

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