ARTICLE

Missile Defense in Europe: Against Whom?

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ABSTRACT *This article debates the evolution, main purpose and real target of the missile defense system of NATO, entitled the EPAA, focusing on principal aspects of the project as well as political debate in and outside of the U.S. It argues that the EPAA, provided to NATO by the U.S., is one of the key regional missile defense projects of the global U.S. national missile defense system, which claims to protect Europe from the Iranian ballistic missile threat but actually is designed to protect the American homeland, and targets Russian Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles with nuclear warheads. It also asserts that the EPAA would result in a new and important arms race between NATO and Russia that will include offensive strategic and nuclear weapons.*

Introduction

The Cold War featured an intense offensive and defensive strategic arms race between the U.S. and the Soviet Union that included nuclear weapons, Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) and missile defense systems. The theory that defensive armament would result in an offensive arms race to penetrate existing missile defense systems prompted both sides to sign the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM Treaty). That treaty allowed only two missile defense systems to protect limited areas, later reduced to only one system through the additional Protocol to the Treaty in 1974. However, neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union stopped their efforts to develop missile defense systems. The Strategic Defensive Initiative (SDI), known as Star Wars and introduced by President Reagan in 1983 became one of the largest military projects in U.S. history; however, it was canceled after intense debate over feasibility and cost.

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The U.S. dream of a missile shield to protect the North American continent from any range of the ballistic missile, especially Russian and Chinese ICBMs

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equipped with nuclear warheads, never disappeared. America intensified its efforts on the National Missile Defense (NMD) project after President George W. Bush announced in 2002 that the U.S. would withdraw from the ABM Treaty, with the deployment of advanced interceptors in Alaska and California to protect the U.S. continent against intermediate- and long-range missiles becoming a cornerstone of the project. The U.S. also announced that it would deploy ten Ground-Based Interceptors (GBIs) in Poland and a fixed radar system in the Czech Republic, as part of the NMD.

U.S. authorities stressed that the system is designed to protect North America, U.S. troops abroad, and their allies against the missile threat from Iran. The Bush Administration heavily invested in the NMD project globally despite vigorous criticism inside the U.S. (including officials in the administration and Democrat politicians, over cost-effectiveness, feasibility, and reliability of the project), and opposition outside the country, especially from Russia and China.

The Obama Administration opted for important revisions and announced a layered phased missile defense system in Europe to protect NATO territory, population, and forces, including the U.S. and Canada, and named the project European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA). At the 2010 NATO summit in Lisbon, the Alliance welcomed EPAA as a valuable national contribution to the NATO missile defense architecture. Thus, the European part of the U.S. NMD project became a NATO asset to protect the Alliance against the Iranian missile threat, without naming Iran in the official papers. Burden sharing with Alliance members on the project also enabled the U.S. to invest more in NMD.

Russia vehemently opposed the American BMD efforts and especially the U.S. plans to deploy missile defense components in Europe (interceptors in Poland and a radar system in the Czech Republic). The American announcement of EPAA opened a new phase in U.S.-Russia competition over U.S. containment efforts. Russia insistently argued that the American NMD project and especially NATO EPAA are designed to target Russia's strategic missile capabilities and undermine the strategic balance, as opposed to the Western allegation that the two projects are against the Iranian ballistic missile threat. Russia declared EPAA a serious threat to its national security and intensified efforts to urge the U.S. and the Alliance to cancel EPAA.

Revision of the EPAA, especially canceling the fourth phase, in which advanced interceptors capable of intercepting ICBMs would have been deployed

in Europe by 2020, still did not appease Russia. Russian countermeasures intensified since the declaration of the EPAA, including increasing strategic missiles, deploying nuclear weapons at the border with NATO-aligned countries and accelerating missile defense projects, all of which will result in a strategic arms race similar to the one during the Cold War.

Evolution of the EPAA

Missile defense studies in the U.S. after the Cold War were intensified during the Clinton Administration in 1997. However, the decision to establish the NMD was mainly based on findings of the Rumsfeld report in 1998, which argued that the U.S. underestimated the ballistic missile threat, and reports by the intelligence community, especially the National Intelligence Council (NIC) report prepared at the request of Congress in 1998, which estimated that during the next 15 years the U.S. will most likely face ICBM threats from Russia, China, and North Korea, probably from Iran, and possibly from Iraq. The report stated that "analysts differ on the likely timing of Iran's first test of an ICBM and assessments range from *likely* before 2010 and *very likely* before 2015."[1]

The 1999 National Missile Defense Act prompted the government to deploy an effective NMD system to protect U.S. territory against limited ballistic missile attacks.[2] The decision of President George W. Bush in 2010 to scrap the 1972 ABM Treaty, from which states can withdraw only under extraordinary conditions, was shaped largely by those reports. In announcing the NMD project, Bush stated that "the U.S. will take every necessary measure to protect its citizens against what is perhaps the gravest danger of all: the catastrophic harm that may result from hostile states or terrorist groups armed with weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them"[3] without articulating any threat from Russia or China. The Gulf War and especially the September 11 attacks played an important role in defining the new security environment and new adversaries for the U.S.

The period between 2001 and 2010 experienced important developments regarding nuclear weapons and ballistic missile threat from North Korea and Iran as well as technological advances and political decisions for the U.S. missile defense system. North Korea conducted 15 ballistic missile tests during this period in addition to two nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009, while North Korea's attempt to launch a satellite in 2009 was regarded as an important step in Pyongyang's acquiring ICBM capability. On the other hand, in addition to the revelation of its secret nuclear activities, Iran launched a rocket into space while expanding its missile capabilities to around the 2,000 km range. Thus, the U.S. intelligence estimates that Iran *likely* would acquire ICBMs before 2010 did not materialize, but these developments showed that Iran and North

Poland signed a $4.75 billion arms deal, its biggest in history, with the U.S. and agreed to buy the Patriot missile defense system on April 27, 2018.

CHIP SOMODEVILLA
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Korea achieved advanced capabilities in long-range missile technologies in addition to their nuclear capabilities.

On the U.S. side, from their first GMD interceptor deployment in 2004 to the revision by President Obama in 2010, the U.S. deployed 30 interceptors in U.S. territory (26 in Alaska and 4 in California) along with deployment of 18 AEGIS ships and several mobile and fixed radar systems around the globe. Thus the backbone of defending the U.S. continent from long-range missile systems was mainly established during the Bush Administration, while efforts for deployment of regional assets, including agreements with the Czech Republic and Poland to deploy BMD assets, were accelerated despite Russia's strong reaction.

President Obama declared on September 17, 2009 that the U.S. would reconfigure the Bush Administration missile defense program, guided by two principal factors: an updated intelligence assessment of Iran's missile programs, and specific and proven advances in U.S. missile defense technology, particularly for land- and sea-based interceptors and the sensors that support them.[4] The intelligence community now judged that the threat from Iran's short- and medium-range ballistic missiles was developing more rapidly than previously projected, while defense against the potential Iranian ICBM was not as urgent as previously estimated.[5]

Thus, the European Missile Defense Program designed by the Bush Administration, which aimed to deploy fixed interceptors in Poland and fixed radar in the

Czech Republic, was replaced with a phased adaptive approach. The revision was based on the findings of the 2010 BMD Review, which validated the mature role of missile defense in the U.S. national security posture, aligned the U.S. missile defense program with nearby regional missile threats, and provided the basis for allied participation and cooperation.[6]

Russia strongly denies these statements and argues that the U.S. NMD and the EPAA actually aim to intercept Russian strategic missiles rather than Iranian, and threaten Russian nuclear capabilities

At the Lisbon summit in 2010, the Alliance declared that "the scope of NATO's current Active Layered Theatre Ballistic Missile Defense (ALTBMD) program's command, control, and communications capabilities will be expanded beyond the protection of NATO deployed forces to also protect NATO European populations, territory and forces" and the leaders stated "the EPAA is welcomed as a valuable national contribution to the NATO missile defense architecture, as are other possible voluntary contributions by Allies."[7] Although not officially stated in the declaration, it is underlined that the system is designed to protect NATO against ballistic missiles launched from Iran. With the U.S. contribution, the Alliance seized an opportunity to update its theater missile defense project, which aimed to protect only troops in the theater, to an expanded missile defense system that will also protect the entire NATO territory and population, including the U.S. and Canada.

The system is based on sea- and land-based configurations of the AEGIS missile defense system equipped with SM-3 interceptors and onboard radar systems supported by other mobile and fixed radar systems. AEGIS systems are capable of defeating short- to intermediate-range ballistic missiles in the midcourse phase and short-range ballistic missiles in the terminal phase. According to the U.S. administration, the system will incorporate proven and cost-effective technologies,[8] a significant improvement over the previous system. At its outset, the EPAA is planned to be implemented in four phases: (i) Phase One (by 2011): Deployment of AEGIS BMD capable ships equipped with proven SM-3 Block IA interceptors against short- and medium-range ballistic missile threats in Spain, fielding an early warning radar system and the establishment of a command and control center; (ii) Phase Two (by 2016): Deployment of land-based SM-3 Block IB interceptors, which are more advanced than the SM-3 Block IA, in Romania with expanded coverage against short-range and medium-range ballistic missile threats; (iii) Phase Three (by 2018): Deployment of more advanced SM-3 Block IIA interceptors in Poland with improved coverage against medium-range and intermediate-range ballistic missile threats; (iv) Phase Four (by 2020): Deployment of more advanced SM-3 Block IIB interceptors to protect the U.S. from medium- and

intermediate-range ballistic missiles and potential future ICBM threats from the Middle East.

Based on this program, the first AEGIS ships capable of BMD are deployed in the Mediterranean, a command and control center has been established in Germany and an early warning radar was fielded in Turkey in 2011. During the 2012 Chicago summit, the Alliance declared Interim Capability (IC) for the EPAA, which features a basic command and control capability. With the forward deployment of four American AEGIS ships to Spain in September 2015, the first phase of the EPAA was completed.

In the second phase, a land-based SM-3 site in Romania, opened in 2013, was certified in May 2016. Advanced SM-3 Block IB variants, which are meant to defend against short- and medium-range ballistic missiles with higher burn-out velocity, are deployed in Romania. Subsequently, the Alliance declared Initial Operation Capability (IOC) during the Warsaw summit in July 2016.

Another AEGIS ashore site in Poland will be operational in 2018 in Phase III with the replacement of existing SM-3 Block IB interceptors by advanced SM-3 Block IIA interceptors. The missiles were meant to intercept medium-range and intermediate-range ballistic missiles. Some analysts argue that SM-3 Block IB will also be effective for intercepting limited ICBMs.

The most important revision of the first proposed EPAA was the decision in March 2013 to cancel Phase IV, which was to replace SM-3 Block IIA interceptors with SM-3 Block IIB interceptors capable of intercepting intermediate-range and limited ICBMs. Thus the EPAA will achieve full operational capability in 2018 after the AEGIS ashore site in Poland will have been established, and the system will protect NATO troops, territories and forces against Iran's medium-range and intermediate-range missiles, as stated by officials and official papers of the Alliance. In all, the EPAA will have 182 SM-3 IIA interceptors[9] mounted on several AEGIS ships or fielded on land and deployed mainly in Spain, Romania, and Poland in 2018. The U.S. requested to field an early warning center in the Czech Republic, but the offer was declined by the Czech government which was furious about the cancellation of the Bush governments' project.

The Debate over the Real Purpose of the System

Since its unveiling, there has been intense debate over the real purpose and main target of the EPAA. The U.S. and NATO insistently argued that the EPAA is targeted against existing and future ballistic missile threats from Iran, with the U.S. further arguing that missile defense in Europe is not about Russia; it is about Iran, adding that the U.S. believes that Russia's objections stem not just

from particular capabilities of the missile shield but also from their general political and strategic opposition to expanding American military presence in Eastern Europe.[10]

Russia strongly denies these statements and argues that the American NMD and the EPAA actually aim to intercept Russian strategic missiles rather than Iranian ones, and threaten Russian nuclear capabilities. Since the declaration of the decision to construct an American NMD system and missile defense system in Europe, Russian National Security Strategies and Military Doctrines have described both projects as being amongst the largest threats to Russian national security.

Taking into consideration their missile and nuclear weapons arsenal, it is clear that Russia and China would be regarded as the main threat for the U.S. rather than North Korea and Iran

Therefore, Russian authorities have been reacting strongly to the project since the beginning. As Lilly described, Russia's policies toward the construction of missile defense in Europe have been vacillating from measured opposition to assertive confrontation.[11] These policies included deployment of Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad, research for new ICBMs that can penetrate the U.S. missile defense systems, and its own missile defense system.

Both sides insist on the validity of their arguments. The debate has several dimensions –technological, political, and military– but certain important points provide guidance for a better understanding of the project, its purpose, and main target.

Integration of National and Regional Systems

Obama made important changes in the U.S. ballistic missile defense policies based on the 2010 BMD Review, which was the backbone of his administration's missile defense revision. The document stated that in addition to defense of the homeland, the U.S. will protect its allies and partners, enabling them to defend themselves, and will seek to lead expanded international efforts for missile defense.[12] Thus partnering with allies and integrating regional systems in Europe, East Asia and the Gulf States with the American NMD assets emerged as the new strategy for the Obama Administration.

This has been one of the main reasons for Russian opposition to the EPAA. For Russia, the existing systems may not pose a strategic threat against Russian capabilities. However, Russia is not so much concerned about the present system as what the system could become in the next several years to a couple of decades.[13] Like Moscow, many also argued that the regional theater BMD systems pursued

The mobility and flexibility of the system provide the U.S. the opportunity to deploy technologically mature systems anywhere in the world, including the Arctic Ocean, at any time in the future

by the Obama Administration could evolve into an integrated global American BMD architecture.[14] They are afraid that integration of U.S. national BMD and regional systems in Europe with advanced radar and interceptors would pose a serious threat for Russia in the future and upset strategic stability in favor of the U.S. and NATO.

This issue was also articulated in the executive order for the national BMD system. National Security Directive (NSD) 23, issued in 2002 by the Bush government, stated that "the U.S. will not have a final fixed missile defense architecture but will deploy an initial set of capabilities that will evolve to meet the changing threat and to take advantage of technological developments. The composition of missile defenses, to include the number and location of systems deployed, will change over time."[15] As we have seen, the original plan has experienced major revisions.

The 2010 BMD Review also stated that the EPAA will be able to improve on the protection of the American homeland against ICBMs currently provided by the GBIs located on U.S. soil.[16] These statements, like many others, clearly show that the main purpose of regional systems is to support the U.S. national missile defense architecture to protect the U.S. continent from ICBMs. The currently planned capabilities of regional missile defense systems and of the overall U.S. NMD system go far beyond just addressing the potential threat from North Korea or Iran.[17] Taking into consideration their missile and nuclear weapons arsenal, it is clear that Russia and China would be regarded as the main threat for the U.S. rather than North Korea and Iran.

Flexibility and Mobility

Mobility and flexibility emerged as one of the most important characteristics required for the EPAA. The 2010 BMD review highlighted that the American BMD capabilities must be flexible enough to adapt as threats change,[18] so system capabilities will be mobile and relocatable.[19] The Obama Administration replaced the fixed systems of the Bush Administration with mobile AEGIS systems in Europe, mobile Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) systems in Asia, and mobile radars. This mobility provides a missile defense architecture that is flexible and can be adapted as the threat picture evolves.[20]

These capabilities, however, refutes the American claim that interceptors in Romania and Poland do not pose a threat to Russian ICBMs because they would deploy AEGIS-based interceptors in the Arctic Ocean to shorten the

Representatives from the U.S., NATO and Romania cut the ribbon during the inauguration ceremony of the Aegis Ashore Romania facility at the Deveselu military base in Romania, on May 12, 2016.

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AFP / Getty Images

time needed to intercept Russian ICBMs[21] if they aimed to target them. The mobility and flexibility of the system provide the U.S. the opportunity to deploy technologically mature systems anywhere in the world, including the Arctic Ocean, at any time in the future. No one can guarantee that the U.S. will not deploy AEGIS ships in the North Sea and the Barents Sea, which both U.S. and Russian officials consider ideal locations for interceptors to target Russian ICBMs.

The plan for flexibility and mobility of the project was often stated by U.S. officials. For example, Frank Rose, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance, declared that the U.S. cannot place artificial limits on the missile defense system, because the ballistic missile threats continue to grow,[22] thus hinting that the structure and location of the system will change in the future based on the assessment of the ballistic missile threat. That means that the U.S. does not have any restriction in sending to the Arctic Ocean or anywhere in the globe AEGIS ships of the EPAA with advanced SM-3 interceptors that will be capable of intercepting Russian ICBMs. The American refusal of the Russian offer for a legally binding guarantee that EPAA will not target Russian strategic missiles also bolsters the validity of this argument.

Technological Developments

President Obama stressed in his 2009 speech that the systems will be "proven" and "cost-effective," which is one of the main differences from the Bush project. The 2010 BMD Review also highlighted that before new capabilities are

deployed, they must undergo testing that enables assessment under realistic operational conditions. This is also consistent with the phased approach of the EPAA, and all phases are planned to be achieved after the technology is mature enough to deploy.

The critical question for technological development lies in the cancellation of Phase IV of the EPAA in 2013, which was the development of SM-3 IIB interceptors. These interceptors were planned to be deployed by 2020 to intercept intermediate- and long-range missiles, such as Iran's limited ICBMs.

Hagel stated in 2013 that the resources for these interceptors, which already was delayed until 2020, will be used to fund deployment of 14 more additional GBIs and research for other versions of the SM-3 interceptors, adding that "by shifting resources from this lagging program to fund the additional GBIs as well as advanced kill vehicle technology that will improve the performance of the GBI and other versions of the SM-3 interceptor, the U.S. will be able to add protection against missiles from Iran sooner while also providing additional protection against the North Korean threat."[23]

U.S. officials additionally argued that the revision was made in coordination with U.S. intelligence assessments for the Iranian and North Korean missile threat as well as technical and financial problems. It seems consistent with the declassified intelligence assessment of 2013, which pointed out that Iran's and North Korea's launch of satellites indicates their efforts to develop larger space launch vehicles and longer range missiles, including an ICBM.[24] The U.S. thus argued that the main reason for the cancellation of Phase IV was the decision to focus on proven technologies, because the threat from Iran and especially North Korea matured more quickly than expected.

However, even cancellation did not alter Russian opposition. Russian officials insisted that the EPAA's main target is not Iran's missile threat. Konstantin Kosachyov, Head of the Russian Federation Council Foreign Affairs Committee, for example, stated that "no matter what Americans say about Iran, the U.S. missile defense system is capable of intercepting Russian ballistic missiles, thus acting as a strategic weapon, disrupting the existing parity."[25]

We have seen even Western scholars and politicians supporting the Russian argument. Jaganath Sankaran, who wrote that the EPAA does not target Russian nuclear deterrence, even admitted that the SM-3 IIA interceptors to be deployed in Poland are able to intercept Russian ICBMs from only two of the Eastern Russian missile launch sites under an unrealistic zero-time-delay condition,[26] implying that the SM-3 IIB would easily be able to intercept. An article in *The New York Times* that justified U.S. arguments even admitted that Russian opposition to the project is right: "Moscow is correct that increasing

missile defense capabilities could undermine the balance in strategic offensive forces, but that problem will not arise for 15 or 20 years, if then."[27]

The U.S. and NATO should analyze whether Iranian missiles, with outdated technology and bad guidance systems, would or would not constitute an urgent threat to Europe without nuclear warheads

Many scholars and politicians argued that with the cancellation of Phase IV, the U.S. bowed down to Russian pressure and threats. Republicans and pro-BMD think tanks accused Obama of appeasing Russia by selling out its Central European allies[28] because Phase IV was one of the most crucial points of the Russian objection. From Moscow's point of view, while missile defense may be intended to intercept short- and medium-range missiles from rogue states, the program can easily be expanded by future administrations to stop all missiles, regardless of their origin and type.[29] Since the beginning of the EPAA, Russia has argued that the SM-3 IIB, which may intercept limited ICBMs, is intended to target Russian ICBMs.

The "Limited" Ballistic Missile Threat

The updated version of the 1999 National Defense Authorization Act in October 2016 stated that "the U.S. should maintain and improve a robust layered missile defense system capable of defending the territory of the U.S. and its allies against the developing and increasingly *complex* ballistic missile threat"[30] replacing the definition of "*limited* ballistic missile threat." The change started a new debate as to the real purpose of the U.S. ballistic missile defense system.

As Khoo and Steff argue, the word "limited" was understood to mean that the U.S. would remain directed solely against Iran and North Korea rather than Russia and China.[31] The White House refused to remove the word "limited" in June 2016, stating that "the inclusion of this word is specifically intended to convey that the U.S. homeland missile defense system is designed and deployed to counter limited attacks (in number and sophistication) from Iran and North Korea, and not to counter the strategic deterrence forces of Russia and China."[32]

However, the same administration accepted the removal of the term "limited," implicitly accepting that the EPAA and national BMD system target all ICBMs, including those of Russia and China. That openly supports Russian arguments that the real and final target of missile defense systems is Russian nuclear capabilities. It also supports the argument that the U.S. may change the structure, the target and its arguments anytime, as has already been experienced.

Considering that Iran has never threatened Europe, this remains a large question to be discussed by European states: Is establishing a BMD against Iran at the expense of fraying relations with Russia a rational policy?

Senator Trent Franks, who has been one of the two actors for the amendment, argued that Russia and China continue developing capabilities designed to exploit the gaps and seams in the U.S. missile defense architecture,[33] admitting that the amendment was directly linked to Russian and Chinese missiles. A related provision in the new document also called on the Pentagon to start research, development, test, and evaluation of space-based systems for missile defense,[34] thus pointing out that the U.S. has returned to Reagan's Star Wars project, which directly targeted Russian ICBMs.

Threat Assessments

There are two important points about the intelligence assessment for Iran's ballistic missile threat. First of all, as the U.S. was working to convince European leaders to deploy interceptors and radars in Europe against an Iranian missile defense threat, a report about Iran's nuclear intentions and efforts argued that they "judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program and they also assess with moderate-to-high confidence that Tehran at a minimum is keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons."[35] The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review prepared by the Trump Administration stated that "there is little doubt Iran could achieve a nuclear weapon capability rapidly if it decides to do so"[36] implying that Iran currently does not have a nuclear weapons program. John Rood, Undersecretary of State who led U.S. negotiators on European missile defense issues, reflected the U.S. position on the report when he argued that "missile defense would be useful regardless of what kind of payload, whether that be conventional, chemical, biological or nuclear."[37]

Secondly, the U.S. and NATO should analyze whether Iranian missiles, with outdated technology and bad guidance systems, would or would not constitute an urgent threat to Europe without nuclear warheads. As Friedman pointed out, it is unclear why a country with relatively few missiles would launch a strike at all, and totally unclear why their target would be Europe.[38] Considering also that Iran has never threatened Europe, this remains a large question to be discussed by European states: Is establishing a BMD against Iran at the expense of fraying relations with Russia a rational policy? While some European leaders, like the former prime ministers of Denmark and Britain, indicated that they supported the missile defense project, many saw in this initiative an unneeded military solution to a non-existent threat that could

While the U.S. places its missile defense system in Europe (L) with the claim of protecting the latter from the Iranian ballistic missile threat, in reality its purpose is to protect the American homeland from the Russian missile threat (R).

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Yuri Smityuk / TASS via Getty Images

only provoke divisions in the EU and NATO and had seriously complicated the already tense relations with Moscow.[39] As we have seen during the Cold War, policies to protect the U.S. land mass expose European territories as the main battlefield in a crisis.

This is also consistent with the argument that Poland and Romania, who will host the BMD assets, are more concerned with a Russian threat than a threat from Iran.[40] This is especially true after the 2014 Russian-Ukrainian crisis where both states in addition to the Baltic States became hysterical about the Russian threat. It is also worth remembering that during the Cold War the U.S. pointed to China as the rationale for the development of the Sentinel BMD system, while the underlying and unstated reason was for the U.S. to provide itself a measure of defense against the growing missile threat.[41]

Calls by some U.S. politicians for early deployment of AEGIS ashore capabilities in Poland in response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine also bolstered the Russian arguments.[42] Many Russian officials pointed out that these statements are clear evidence of the real purpose of the EPAA, exactly as was the refusal of the Russian proposal of a legally binding guarantee.[43] The Nuclear Policy Review (NPR) of Trump Administration underlined the need to enhance capabilities to compete with Russia supporting the idea that the U.S. regards Russian nuclear weapons capabilities as an imminent threat.

Conclusion

When the former Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the U.S. urged NATO members to replace the "massive retaliation" strategy with a "flexible response" strategy, arguing that this new strategy would prevent European territories be-

Efforts to reduce nuclear weapons both in the U.S. and Russia, as well as technological advances in the CPGS, would also support the U.S. goal of neutralizing Russian and Chinese nuclear deterrence

coming a nuclear warfare theater in a crisis. Robert McNamara, former American Secretary of Defense, visited the main European capitals to convince reluctant allies, who were aware that the main reason for changing the strategy was not to better protect Europe but rather because the Soviets had acquired the capability to hit the U.S. However, they bowed to American pressure, given that the U.S. was the main nuclear power in the Alliance, and accepted the American proposal because the U.S. was the main security guarantee against a possible Soviet threat.[44]

The story has not changed over time. The U.S. resorted to the same tactics and convinced European partners to accept politics that in essence will protect the homeland rather than the European side of the Alliance. Although officials of the U.S. and NATO vehemently deny it, most of the incidents signal that the EPAA mainly will function as the European component of the U.S. national missile defense system to protect the U.S. from Russian ICBMs, rather than countering Iran's missile threat to protect Europe.

It is undeniably true that Iran increased its ballistic missile capabilities so as to possibly reach most of Europe. Yet the U.S. intelligence community has stated there is no credible information that Iran continues with nuclear weapons activities, especially after the agreement with six states including the U.S. Thus, the main question is if Iran constitutes a ballistic missile threat against Europe, which requires deployment of interceptors capable of protecting European territory against ICBMs, in return for fraying relations with Russia.

Developments in regional and national BMD systems are consistent with American efforts to reduce nuclear weapon arsenals of both Russia and the U.S., especially Obama's vision of zero nuclear weapons in the future, Conventional Prompted Global Strike (CPGS), which aims to hit any target anywhere in the world in less than one hour, and finally an advanced missile defense system supported by regional systems to contain the nuclear power of Russia and China. All of these efforts would allow the U.S. to enhance protection of its homeland, and it is clear that the U.S. aims to nullify or at least neutralize Russian and Chinese nuclear deterrence.

However, Russian and Chinese steps to counter the U.S. activities, such as developing advanced offensive weapons or national missile defense systems, is expected to start a new strategic arms race; for example, Putin has stated that

Russia will add 40 more ICBMs to its arsenal due to the EPAA. It proves the theory that defensive actions can trigger adversaries to bolster their own offensive forces. The world should prepare itself for a new arms race that will include ballistic missiles, nuclear weapons, and long-range conventional weapons.

The Trump Administration announced that the U.S. will prepare a new Ballistic Missile Defense Review and a new Nuclear Posture Review by early 2018. Considering the recent crisis with North Korea, it is likely that the new document will urge the government to take a harder stance in East Asia. However, based on the allegations of Russian interference in Trump's election, we may expect a softer approach for the EPAA and a new step by the U.S. to appease Russian opposition. As history has shown, most likely the U.S. will continue with the BMD project, which aims to protect American territory from Russian nuclear ICBMs. Efforts to reduce nuclear weapons both in the U.S. and Russia, as well as technological advances in the CPGS, would also support the U.S. goal of neutralizing Russian and Chinese nuclear deterrence.

Endnotes

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