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Abstract

The idea of building a missile defense system in Europe was first proposed by the Bush administration in early 2002. President Bush planned to build a strategic missile defense system with land-based interceptors in Poland and a radar unit in the Czech Republic. The announcement immediately stirred intense debates in Russia and stimulated some very serious threats. In 2009 the Obama administration scaled back these plans and proposed a shorter-range system which did not threaten Russian ICBMs in its initial phases.

This new Phased Adaptive Approach (PAA) was approved at the 2010 Lisbon Summit of NATO. The PAA will set up a system in four phases between 2011 and 2020 and it will involve both sea- and land-based units. The first phase has already reached interim capability by 2012 and the United States is committed to move on with the deployment of the PAA regardless of the Russian threats.

The prospect of cooperation, however, is still on the table. Both sides are willing to work with the other, but there are certain lines which none of them is willing to cross. The aim of this paper is to highlight the roots of the deadlock between Washington and Moscow and to prove that mutual benefits can be assured by even a limited cooperation. An agreement on ballistic missile defense can be a game changer in the long run, positively affecting many other strategic and political fields, as well.
Abbreviations

ABM        Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty
ALTBMD     Active Layered Theater Ballistic Missile Defense
AN/TPY-2   Army Navy/Transportable Radar Surveillance and Control
BMDS       Ballistic Missile Defense System
DDPR       Deterrence and Defense Posture Review
ICBM       Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
MDA        Missile Defense Act
NIE        National Intelligence Estimate
PAA        Phased Adaptive Approach
SLBM       Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile
SM-3 IA    Standard Missile-3 Block IA
START      Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

Introduction

After the end of the Cold War the proliferation of ballistic missiles emerged as a new security threat. The 1999 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) report on foreign missile developments suggested that besides the already existing intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) threat from Russia and China, the United States would face new dangers from North Korea, Iraq and possibly from Iran, as well. It projected that during the next 15 years North Korea could convert its Taepo Dong ballistic missiles into ICBMs, directly threatening the territory of the United States. Analysts believed that Iran could test an ICBM in the second half of the next decade, based on Russian technology and they forecasted that the Iraqi Saddam Hussein regime could also test a North Korean-type ICBM in the same timeframe (FAS [1999]).

In light of these new developments, the US Congress approved the 1999 Missile Defense Act (MDA) which committed the nation “to deploy as soon as is technologically possible an effective National Missile Defense system capable of defending the territory of the United States against limited ballistic missile attack (whether accidental, unauthorized, or deliberate)” (106th Congress [1999]). After the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration put this issue high on the agenda. The 2002 withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) set the ground to improve US and NATO strategic missile defense capabilities against any
missile attack from the Middle East. President Bush proposed a plan to deploy 10 long-range missile interceptors in Poland and a radar system in the Czech Republic.

The announcement immediately stirred strong Russian opposition claiming that it would undermine the strategic balance between Washington and Moscow. The Kremlin argued that the location of these interceptors suggested that this is rather an anti-Russian ballistic missile defense system (BMDS) which targets Moscow’s ICBM arsenal. As a result, President Putin threatened to direct its ICBMs against Europe and proposed to deploy short-range Iskander missiles in its Kaliningrad territory – a Russian exclave which borders Poland and Lithuania, both of whom are NATO member states (Collina [2012/a]). These threats were suspended for a while when President Obama scaled back the Bush plans in 2009 and proposed to field shorter-range Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) units instead (Obama [2009]). According to his announcement, the United States would deploy a missile defense shield in Europe in four phases between 2011 and 2020. The key component of this “Phased Adaptive Approach” (PAA) is the Aegis missile defense system which involves both sea- and land-based interceptors. Over the four phases Washington plans to upgrade the SM-3 technology, improve the sensor and radar capabilities and integrate the command and control regime of the missile defense system.

The four phases will adopt the following steps: (Collina [2012/b])

The first phase (already deployed) fields sea-based SM-3 interceptors on Aegis ships in the Mediterranean Sea and a forward-based radar unit in Turkey. In total ‘Phase 1’ plans to deploy 113 SM-3 Block IA and 16 Block IB interceptors on 29 Aegis-equipped ships. At its May 2012 Chicago Summit, NATO already declared an interim capability (NATO [2012]). By that time, the first Aegis-equipped ship, the USS Monterey arrived in the Mediterranean Sea, the first AN/TPY-2 radar was delivered to the Kürecik military base in Turkey and the command and control element was also set up at the Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany.

The second phase (to be deployed by 2015) will increase the number of sea-based interceptors and ships (32 Aegis ships in total) and it will deploy the first land-based missile units in Romania. It includes an Aegis SPY-1 radar and 24 SM-3 missiles, tipped with SM-3 Block IB interceptors.
The third phase (to be deployed by 2018) will extend the land-based units with another SPY-1 radar and 24 SM-3 missiles in Poland tipped with a faster interceptor variant, the SM-3 Block IIA – which is believed to have a very limited capability to destroy an ICBM. Besides, the United States will continue fielding new sensor platforms (including a Precision Tracking Space System) and it will improve the combat system of the Aegis ships, as well.

The fourth phase (to be deployed by 2020) will not change the platforms of the PAA system but will adopt SM-3 Block IIB interceptors (with an increased capability against ICBMs) and it will also increase the role of space-based sensors.

<table>
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<th>Offensive Ballistic Missiles</th>
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<td>&gt;4.5-4.8 km/s (estimated)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SM-3 Block IA</td>
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The deployment of the system was announced on September 17, 2009 by President Obama. More than a year later, in November, 2010 the Lisbon Summit adopted NATO’s new strategic concept which approved the PAA as a joint missile defense program for the alliance (NATO [2010]). In their official declarations, the White House and NATO insisted that the system has no specific target and the primary aim of the PAA is to counter a short- and medium-range missile attack directed against any of the alliance members\(^1\) (Golan-Vilella [2010]). The alliance, in addition, constantly emphasizes that it would like to cooperate with Moscow on

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\(^1\) Despite these vague announcements, it is widely believed that the main target of the system is Iran. But in order to ensure Turkish support for the PAA, Washington could not specify in official NATO documents that the primary threat is Tehran and the radar unit deployed in Turkey is directed against it.
the system and benefit from several elements of the Russian national BMDS. The Kremlin on the other hand, raised new concerns and threatened to block any further nuclear reductions until the missile defense impasse is resolved and its demands are satisfied.

This paper focuses on the US-Russian bilateral dimension of the PAA, highlighting the main reasons of the misunderstandings and the boundaries which Washington and Moscow are not willing to cross. The primary aim is to prove that there are several areas where cooperation is possible without crossing these lines, and working together has more benefits than losses for both sides.

**Russian position on the Phased Adaptive Approach**

In contrast to the fierce opposition against the Bush-era strategic missile defense plans, Moscow first reacted positively to the Obama administration’s PAA announcement. The new proposal involved slower interceptors, which were not threatening the Russian ICBM capabilities (at least not during the first two phases). Many officials considered this development as a victory and an honest gesture to prove President Obama’s ‘reset’ policy (Pan – Wilgoren [2009]). This rhetoric, however, immediately changed as the United States started to deploy the first phase of the PAA. Russia again came out with a list of demands and proposed serious threats if its concerns were not attended to.

The Kremlin argued that ‘Phase 3’ deployment in Poland still reflected that the real target of the system is not Iran, but Russia, and two decades after the Cold War US nuclear war planning still follows the same old patterns, trying to undermine Moscow’s second strike capability (Heilbrunn [2012]). Moreover, they also expressed skepticism whether Washington was secretly planning to continue the PAA with a fifth, sixth or even seventh phase (GSN [2012/a]).

In light of all these fears, Russia repeatedly recalls the following demands: 1) full involvement in the missile defense system in Europe, 2) legally binding guarantees that

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2 It is important to make a distinction between strategic and non-strategic missile defense systems. Strategic missile defense is directed against strategic offensive forces – weapon systems deployed on long-range ballistic missiles and bombers. These offensive forces are much faster therefore it is much harder to intercept the missiles. The 1972 ABM Treaty limited the number of these strategic defense systems to two fixed, ground-based sites which was further reduced to one site in 1974. It allowed to field 100-100 missile interceptors for both Washington and Moscow.
the interceptors will not be targeted against Russian offensive forces, 3) all ballistic missiles should be pointed outside the Euro-Atlantic region, 4) agreement on the maximum number of interceptors, 5) limit on the maximum velocity of missiles, 6) restriction on the missile defense sites (Collina [2011/a]).

In a way, most of these demands were addressed by Russian proposals during the last three years. The cornerstone of their strategy towards the missile defense system in Europe is a sectoral approach – building a joint system, where Russia would be responsible for the protection of several Eastern European states (Collina [2011/b]). First, it would guarantee that the missiles are not directed against Russia and second, it would provide Moscow with an equal say in the management of the system (information exchange as well as decision-making on missile launches). This, however, was unacceptable for the alliance, and the White House immediately refused to give up the protection of certain NATO member states – Rose Gottemoeller, under-secretary for arms control and international security in Washington, cited the President as saying “NATO will protect NATO, and that’s the bottom line as far as we’re concerned” (Collina [2011/b]).

Compared to this sectoral approach, the next Russian proposals reflected a somewhat softened standpoint. In March, 2011 Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov seemed to accept that “NATO should defend the territory of NATO member states while Russia defends its own territory, with no shared authority to launch” (Collina [2011/c]). Moscow, however, still insisted that the basis of cooperation should be: first, a legally binding guarantee provided by NATO and second, early-warning information sharing.

In parallel with these proposals, it makes cooperation extremely difficult that the Kremlin pursues a very hard rhetoric to pressure the White House. Presidents Medvedev and Putin have repeatedly threatened to deploy an early-warning radar unit along with short-range missiles in Kaliningrad and warned that they would destroy the PAA interceptor sites (GSN [2011/a]). Besides, it also raised concerns that Moscow brought up plans to withdraw from the 2010 New START Treaty and made threats to counter-balance the missile defense system in Europe with a strategic offensive build-up. This strategic build-up would include developing a heavy ICBM which is capable of evading the PAA system’s SM-3 missiles (GSN [2011/b]).
In order to emphasize these threats, the Kremlin has already taken some retaliatory measures. After his reelection, President Putin did not attend the May 2012 NATO Summit in Chicago and he committed Russia to a 23 trillion roubles ($760 billion) investment in the country’s military infrastructure\(^3\) (Podvig [2012]). Moreover, he also proposed an anti-BMD alliance, trying to gain support from China against any US ballistic missile defense program (Riedy [2012]).

On the whole, the Russian position on the missile defense system in Europe is like a roller coaster. Compared to the Bush-era plans, Moscow first welcomed President Obama’s PAA announcement, but it soon returned to its old rhetoric. Although the Kremlin seems to recognize that its sectoral approach is unacceptable for Washington, it is still not ready to give up on the question of legally binding guarantees and technical limits.

**US position on Russian involvement in the Phased Adaptive Approach**

President Obama’s ‘reset’ policy was a good starting point to open a new chapter in US-Russian BMD-talks. Both NATO and US officials confirmed on numerous occasions that the alliance wants to enhance cooperation instead of an atmosphere of mutual mistrust and threats. In practice it means that the United States wants to include Russia in the PAA, but only on its own terms.

In this regard, the most important line which Washington is not willing to cross is the insistence on a NATO BMDS separate from the Russian defense capabilities. Giving up the protection of any NATO member state and providing Russia with a “quasi veto” on the management of the PAA is out of question.\(^4\) Instead, the White House tries to set the ground for US-Russian cooperation based on three proposals: 1) information sharing and establishing a joint data fusion center, 2) enhancing greater transparency in the PAA, 3) offering access and monitoring to BMD exercises.

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\(^3\) The nuclear modernization programs have already started during the Medvedev presidency. So far Russia has deployed a new multiple warhead Topol-M missile and an improved submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) which is able to carry 10 warheads instead of the current 4. Moscow, in addition, works on a new multiple warhead ICBM and the already mentioned heavy ICBM.

\(^4\) A Russian veto on the management of the missile defense system is unacceptable not only because of political considerations but also because of legal commitments. The NATO-Russia Founding Act (1997) rules out any “right of veto over the actions of the other” or any restrictions on the “rights of NATO or Russia to independent decision-making and action.”
Information sharing is probably the most sensitive issue from these three suggestions. The White House so far has not specified what kind of information could be shared, but President Obama’s remarks on the sidelines of the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul raised some very harsh criticism in the US Congress (GSN [2012/b]). President Obama told his Russian counterpart that after the November elections he will have “more flexibility” on missile defense. Many Republican politicians feared that in order to address Russian concerns the White House considered providing Moscow with information on ‘hit to kill’ technology or telemetry (data generated during the flight of a missile). This kind of information could help Moscow build ICBMs which are capable of evading interception. Although the White House denied any such information exchange, it did not specify the type of data the President was talking about (GSN [2012/c]).

Instead, Washington put the idea of a data fusion center back on the table—a proposal also endorsed by the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative’s Missile Defense Working Group (EASI [2012]: p.4.). In the framework of a joint information center, the two sides could exchange information on missile launches and share data collected by both Russian and US radar systems – Moscow has previously offered to share information from its radar systems in Armavir (Southwest Russia) and Gabala (Azerbaijan). Such cooperation could provide Washington and Moscow with full access and real-time notice on any potential threat (Collina [2011/c]).

The establishment of a data fusion center could also contribute to enhancing transparency and exchanging information on BMD exercises. Since October, 2011 the Kremlin has a standing offer from the White House to monitor and analyze ship-based SM-3 tests in order to prove that this technology does not threaten Russian ICBMs (Barzashka – Kadyshev – Neuneck – Oelrich [2012]).

Despite all these proposals, Moscow still insists on getting legally binding guarantees, which seems to be another deal breaker for the US government. The US ambassador to Russia, Michael McFaul argued that “We are going to accept no limitations on that whatsoever

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5 The idea of a data fusion center was first raised by Russia in 2007.
6 As of December 10, 2012 the Gabala Radar Station is no longer used by Russia as a result of disputes with Azerbaijan over the lease terms.
because the security of our people, of our allies, is the No. 1 top priority” (GSN [2012/d]). Therefore, the most Washington could offer was a written political assurance that the system would not be targeted against Russia.

Essentially, the White House is committed to cooperation, but it is also determined to move forward with the deployment of the PAA despite any Russian warnings. It insists that the best guarantee for Russia is to take part in the operation of the system and to face common threats together.

Hurdles in the way of cooperation – the roots of the deadlock

The fact that none of the above-mentioned proposals has brought about a breakthrough in the US-Russian BMD impasse is the result of five main problems which involve both strategic, political and technical issues. In order to find a solution, all of these matters have to be addressed in future proposals.

The first problem is the question of strategic balance. To understand the background of Russian concerns and demands, it is imperative to recognize and acknowledge that preserving the strategic stability is a number one priority for Moscow. The New START Treaty was based on certain parity and mutual reductions did not harm this balance. But building an effective missile defense system which is capable of intercepting Russian ICBMs would upset this balance and would provide Washington with excessive strategic advantages. Therefore, Moscow will not approve any further reductions as long as the balance is restored – moreover, it will consider a strategic offensive build-up. Besides, changing the global strategic balance (and importing the PAA to South Korea and Japan) might upset China as well and stimulate a new nuclear weapons arms race. In order to prevent this spiral of events, Washington must make sure that the PAA is not perceived as a threat by the Kremlin and it will not take countermeasures to ensure its strategic position.

The second issue is the inter-relationship between the strategic offensive and strategic defensive arms. It became clear already in the 1960s that these two systems cannot be divided from each other. As soon as the anti-ballistic missile systems started to improve, both superpowers tried to preserve the credibility of their arsenals by expanding their offensive forces. This reckless arms race was finally limited by the 1972 ABM Treaty. But despite these
historic lessons, Washington still acts as if reducing nuclear weapons and building defense systems could be decoupled from each other. The new START negotiations almost failed because of this wrong attitude. While Russia insisted on including this linkage in the treaty text and demanded certain limitations on building strategic defense systems, the United States wanted to completely exclude references to these defense capabilities. The treaty finally stated in its Preamble that there is an existing inter-relationship which “will come more important as strategic nuclear arms are reduced.” It also prohibited the two sides from converting the ICBM and SLBM launchers to missile defense purposes. Russia, moreover, enclosed a unilateral non-binding interpretation to the treaty, stating that the New START “may be effective and viable only in conditions where there is no qualitative or quantitative build-up in [US missile defense system capabilities] such that it would give rise to a threat to [Russia’s] strategic nuclear force potential” – otherwise Russia is permitted to withdraw from the Treaty (Thielman [2011]: p.5.). These steps clearly show that Moscow is only willing to deal with these issues together and resolving the BMD deadlock is a precondition to implementing further reductions in both strategic and non-strategic offensive forces.

The third cause of misunderstandings between the two sides derives from different threat perceptions. Since the 2002 satellite photo release of the Arak and Natanz nuclear facilities, the Iranian threat has become a primary security concern for the United States. Although it is not specified by any NATO documents, US officials have confirmed several times that the PAA is directed against a possible missile attack launched from the Middle East, especially from Iran. Russia, on the other hand, has a considerably better relationship with Tehran; therefore, it is less concerned about a missile threat from the region. Moreover, Moscow has repeatedly expressed its skepticism about the US concerns. The Kremlin is convinced that Washington and Israel are determined to force Iran to give up its nuclear (weapons?) program and ICBM ambitions. And if necessary, they are willing to use force in order to protect their interests. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that Tehran could acquire the weapons themselves. But the US commitment to move on with the deployment of the PAA regardless of the developments in the Iranian nuclear debate significantly weakens the justification of the system in Moscow’s eyes (GSN [2012/e]). These different threat perceptions have led to two main consequences. First, a joint BMDS proposed by Russia, makes little sense, as the two sides do not perceive the same threats and do not agree on the list of possible targets. And second, deploying an effective PAA cannot provide Russia with the same security benefits it
provides NATO member states. Therefore, it is possible that in order to convince Moscow to participate in the operation of the system and to share its own radar information with the alliance, Washington might have to make concessions in other fields of arms control.

The fourth obstacle in the way of cooperation is the **limited maneuvering capability of President Obama**. The President’s hands are tied by US legislation and by the political fault lines of Congress. Most of the Republicans support the idea of the PAA and are not willing to accept any limitation on its deployment or to approve any concessions towards Russia. This was first reflected in the 2010 Senate amendments attached to the ratification resolution of the New START Treaty. One of the four amendments obliged the President to deploy all four phases of the PAA, while another endorsed tactical arms reduction talks with Russia (Collina [2011/d]). The next year the House of Representatives also issued some limitations with regard to arms control talks. The FY 2013 Defense Spending Bill approved by the House in July, 2012 put the implementation of the New START Treaty under the supervision of Congress, linked any further strategic nuclear reductions to Congressional approval (or to a completely new treaty), and also tied classified information exchange on the BMDS to a two-month preliminary Congressional notice (House of Representatives [2012]). These provisions seriously limited the maneuvering capability of the president in nuclear talks and almost made it impossible to make concession on sectoral cooperation and legally binding guarantees. Therefore, if the White House wants to ensure Russian cooperation by sharing classified information, Moscow has to offer something in return which is valuable enough for the Congress.

The fifth problem area between the United States and Russia comes from the **technical dimensions of the PAA**. One of the principal reasons why Russia considers the PAA as a threat is the location of the third phase. The Kremlin argues that the deployment in Poland does not reflect the Middle East as the primary target of the system. On the other hand, the United States tries to use exactly this proximity to prove that the SM-3 missiles cannot intercept the sophisticated Russian ICBMs – they recall that the closer the offensive and defensive arms are located, the harder it is to destroy a target (Clover [2011]). Moreover, even under the last phase, NATO plans to field only 24-24 missiles in Poland and Romania, which is way behind the currently deployed 300 Russian ICBMs. And the SM-3 Block IIA and Block IIB interceptors are not yet operational. The Block IIA interceptors are in a
developmental phase jointly directed with Japan, while the Block IIB missiles do not even exist. Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon have only received a contract in 2011 to develop the concept of the missiles. In the future it might not even reach the necessary speed to intercept a long-range Russian missile (Collina [2011/a]). Therefore, worries about the velocity of the Block IIB interceptors and their anti-ICBM capability are baseless at the moment. Regarding the radars, the White House has also proposed some promising concessions, namely to physically fix the radar units in the direction of Iran, technically preventing them from use against Russian missile launches (GSN [2012/f]). Despite the technical limits and US promises, Russian concerns have not been alleviated over the last three years. All this reinforces the fact that the question of missile defense in Europe is rather a political than a technical issue. Therefore, a future solution probably has to approach the problem from a political perspective instead of a technical one.

**Cooperation is still the best option**

Despite all the misunderstandings and boundaries which the two sides are not willing to cross, there is still room for cooperation. Early declarations from both sides that they are committed to working together imply a positive atmosphere. The first practical steps have already been taken in this direction. In 2009 Washington and Moscow established a US-Russian Arms Control and International Security Working Group in the framework of which they regularly meet and exchange ideas.

This institutionalized system should be used to put the ideas into practice. Even if no one is willing to give up its principal demands, a joint early-warning information center and a response planning center could be a good point of departure. It could set the ground for joint analyses and threat assessments as well as common exercises.

Working together in any kind of framework would provide shared benefits for both sides. Building mutual trust could allow Washington and Moscow to give up the nuclear thinking they inherited from the Cold War and invest their assets and finances to countering the real security threats of the 21st century. As the Senate amendment of the New START Treaty stated, the next issue on the US nuclear agenda is the reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons. Russia, on the other hand, would only consider these reductions if the BMD impasse was resolved. In addition to further reductions, the United States could also gain
access to Central Russian radar systems which would be imperative to tracking the Middle Eastern region as any Iranian missile targeted against the United States should fly over the territory of Central Russia. These radars could track the targets earlier than the Turkish-based X-band radars, expanding the timeframe for the alliance to destroy the missiles. On the whole, this would considerably raise the effectiveness of the PAA.

Looking from the Russian side, cooperating with the United States could also improve the Russian anti-BMD system by expanding the radar coverage of neighboring regions and providing more accurate early-warning information. Accepting the political guarantees and working together in the PAA could also restore strategic stability and improve the reliability of the command and control system of the country (Wilkening [2012/a]).

Besides all these security benefits, resolving the BMD issue could also provide political gains. Cooperation in the field of missile defense might trigger cooperation in other foreign policy areas such as the Iranian nuclear issue and the Syrian crisis.

In contrast, if the current deadlock remains, both sides would lose. Mutual mistrust would undermine any further reductions, Moscow could withdraw from the New START Treaty, giving impetus to a new US-Russian strategic arms race. Moreover, this would justify the acceleration of possible Chinese and Indian military build-ups, as well. Iran at the same time would still remain a threat (Sethi [2012]). Without a US-Russian cooperation, a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear debate is not likely and it could encourage some regional states to take their own countermeasures, too. Russia, in addition, could also endanger the future of NATO supply routes towards Afghanistan and if Moscow felt seriously threatened, it could even play the energy card against the European states.

**Conclusion**

On the whole, it is clear that there are steady boundaries on both sides which will not be crossed anytime soon. The United States will not accept the idea of a sectoral system, while Russia does not seem to move on without the written guarantees it demands. This impasse on

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7 Although the supply routes are mainly important for the Alliance only until the 2014 withdrawal from Afghanistan, Russia will still play some role in NATO’s transport afterwards. Therefore, alienating Russia could definitely have negative effects on the maneuvering capability of the Alliance in the Middle East.
the other hand, does not mean that the two sides are not willing to cooperate at all. Most of the problems and misunderstandings derive from five main trouble areas.

The first one is the importance of strategic stability which is the central argument behind most of the Russian concerns and demands. The second issue is the inter-relationship between the strategic offensive and strategic defensive arms which makes it obvious that no future reductions will happen until the BMD impasse is resolved. The third problem comes from the diverging threat perceptions. As Washington and Moscow do not share the same security concerns, a joint BMD system cannot be established. But it is also true that a separate system naturally cannot provide both sides with the same security benefits. The fourth field covers the internal aspects of US decision making. No matter how flexible the President’s policies are, the Congress has a significant authority to limit the implementation of his proposals. The last trouble area involves the technical dimensions of the PAA. Looking at the concerns attached to this system, it is clear that the PAA is primarily a political question. At the moment, many of the arguments are baseless because of technical limits, but this is still not enough to encourage an agreement and promote cooperation. Therefore, no breakthrough will be realized until political concerns are addressed.

Taking the initial steps, on the other hand, would be worth the effort. Cooperation could guarantee mutual benefits in both the strategic and political fields. The United States could improve the effectiveness of the whole system and it could move on with nuclear reductions.

The Russian side could also enhance its own defense capabilities but at the same time it could preserve the strategic stability without a huge military build-up. Not to mention the fact that these strategic developments could positively affect numerous political issues, as well. Ballistic missile defense, on the other hand, can also be a serious game breaker (Trenin [2010]). If the two sides cannot agree on the terms of cooperation, it might alienate the two sides again and bring back the Cold War logic, where vertical proliferation necessarily stimulated horizontal proliferation.

In conclusion, if an agreement is reached on the question of ballistic missile defense, it can be a definite game changer. It can open up several other areas for cooperation and two decades after the Cold War it can help both countries to move away from the doctrine of mutual
assured destruction towards a new mutual assured security system where the United States and the Russian Federation are working together to guarantee the security of the Euro-Atlantic region.

**Literature**


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Anna Péczeli (born in 1987) is a third-year Ph.D student at Corvinus University of Budapest, International Relations Doctoral School. Her research topic is the Obama administration’s nuclear policy. She worked for 2 years as an analyst and editor at the Middle East department of “Kitekintő” online foreign policy journal. Currently she is an adjunct fellow at the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs (HIIA), a member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and a member of the International Student/Young Pugwash (ISYP) group.