

MISSILE DEFENCE
AND
EUROPEAN SECURITY

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WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY

KLAUS BECHER
ALEXANDER PIKAYEV
IVO H. DAALDER

FOREWORD BY

FRANÇOIS HEISBOURG

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MISSILE DEFENCE
AND
EUROPEAN SECURITY
WORKING PAPER No. 1
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FOREWORD

FRANÇOIS HEISBOURG *

The first meeting of the European Security Forum on 2 April 2001, was devoted to the issue of missile defences, with the discussion drawing on three papers written respectively from a European, an American and a Russian perspective.

Missile defences are a particularly time-urgent and important topic in terms of the European interest, in view of the advent of the new American administration. Whereas the Clinton administration forwarded its National Missile Defence plan under congressional pressure rather than as a priority of its own choosing, President Bush has put missile defences at the centre of his security and defence platform. Europeans therefore have reason to assume that missile defences, in one form or another, will become an actual, rather than a virtual, facet of the US military posture. No less importantly, the Bush administration has not yet put forward a specific systems architecture in terms of missile defences: in other words, the Europeans are faced with a general intention, not a specific policy. The opponents of missile defences therefore do not have a sitting target at which to aim their own suggestions, so as to help orient American policy in the least damaging direction. This temptation is fuelled not only by Bush administration statements taking the interests of allies and partners into account; but there is also ample evidence that a number of competing missile defence visions co-exist for the moment within the Bush team. No clear choice has yet been made as to scope of missile defences – global, regional or homeland defence? – their scale – defences against limited strikes only or broader strategic ambitions? – their pace (a piece-by-piece or a “big bang” approach?) – their objective (intercepting ICBMs only directed at the US and/or dealing also with shorter-range missiles threatening Europe and East Asia) or their technological emphasis (boost phase taking precedence or not vis-à-vis subsequent phase intercept?).

In this lies a substantial difference vis-à-vis the Clinton Alaska- and ground-based re-entry phase project against limited attacks by “rogue state” intercontinental missiles.

From a European perspective, this had every apparent defect: it would have provided no positive contribution to the security of America’s allies while entailing the risk of upsetting the ABM Treaty and generating tension with Russia and China, while at the same time what was presented as a *fait accompli* was put forward in a half-hearted manner. Under those circumstances, it isn’t surprising that NMD received high levels of flak. Even the United Kingdom took its distances.

* Chairman of the Geneva Centre for Security Studies and Chairman of the European Security Forum.

Since then, the Europeans have moved in a cautious manner now that NMD has been superseded by a less clearly defined missile defence. For America's allies – notably the European members of NATO and the EU – and partners (not least Russia), the challenge is now to define what they believe can be the least damaging possible outcome, and to seek policies leading to such an outcome. And for the Americans, the symmetrical task is to establish the least counterproductive balance between alliance commitments – and more broadly security relations with other partners such as China and Russia – on the one hand, and the pursuit of missile defences on the other.

This *problématique* – to use a typical piece of Brussels Euro-speak – colours the three papers presented to the European Security Forum.

Thus Ivo Daalder, a former NSC staffer, makes specific suggestions as to the manner in which the US should reconcile missile defences and broader strategic objectives. Klaus Becher, the Senior Fellow for European security at the IISS, puts forward proposals flowing from the specific interests of the European allies, while Alexander Pikayev, like a number of other Russian analysts – and indeed decision-makers – seeks to promote cooperative missile defences against the threat of non-strategic ballistic missiles.

It is hoped that these papers, and the debate they have helped generate, will contribute to the generation of policy initiatives in which the negative impact of missile defences will be mitigated, while exploiting whatever good can be secured from them.

In particular, the members of the European Union have every interest in defining their interest and weigh vis à vis the European decision-shaping process in the short term: the window of indecision as to the specific content of the Bush administration's missile defence policy will not remain open much longer. The time to influence policy is now.

It will not have escaped the reader that this Foreword has been set in a damage-limitation mode, rather than in a strongly positive light. This is a deliberate choice, for the Europeans are faced with strategic priorities (notably the emphasis on investment for force projection) which conflict with the budgetary demands of missile defences: and the Europeans don't always share the US vision as to what the appropriate policy mix should be towards the risks linked to missile proliferation. Therefore, it is likely, to use Henry Kissinger's recent analogy, that America's partners are going to look at American missile defences policy as the equivalent of a visit to the dentist: enthusiasm is not a foreseeable part of that prospect.

May 2001
Geneva

MISSILE DEFENCE: EUROPEAN APPROACHES AND INTERESTS

KLAUS BECHER*

European NATO countries have been spectators to the debate about defending the US against ballistic missile attacks. While there have been national differences in Europe's reactions to the national missile defence (NMD) programme, it is obvious that most Europeans don't like it. The French seem somewhat more convinced than others that missile defence is inherently foolish and unworkable. Some British experts seem to insist more than others that any programme that might undermine NATO's nuclear deterrence and strategic unity should be avoided. And perhaps Germans, more than others, worry about perceived dangers to the ABM and other arms control treaties, and generally about relations with Russia. Most Europeans at present believe that US defence against long-range ballistic missiles is a slap in the face for Russia, a dangerous provocation for China and an inadequate response to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and missile technology.

In spite of the widely shared assessment that the US is nevertheless determined, across party lines, to go ahead with missile defence, European allies have continued to offer only lukewarm diplomatic support. At the same time, the issue was not high on the agenda of European leaders, and little effort was made to base public pronouncements on a thorough understanding of the facts concerning technology, costs and goals of actual US missile defence efforts. NMD was allowed to become a bogey in the European debate: Nothing good could come from it.

While this attitude did not cause harm during the indecisive Clinton years, it clearly won't suffice in conversations with the Bush administration. It was Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's 1998 Commission report on the accelerating threat of missile attacks with biological, chemical and nuclear weapons that brought missile defence back on the political agenda. Europeans must learn to deal with US missile defence on its merits. Some basic insights must be taken on board:

- Current US plans are not a carry-over from the cold war; on the contrary, they are a consequence of its end and the resulting strategic pluralism and military uncertainty, amplified by the diffusion of advanced technology. It is not the goal of these plans to

* Senior Fellow for European Security, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London.

render nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete, as President Ronald Reagan had advertised the strategic defence initiative (SDI), and specifications do not include a quest for near-100% protection.

- The assessment that there is a growing missile and WMD threat, in spite of differences of opinion on certain specific countries, is shared within NATO and also with other allies such as Israel and Japan, as well as Russia.
- The required technology is not a matter of science fiction, and an operational missile defence system is not unaffordable for the US. Even if total costs accumulate beyond \$60 billion over 20 years, this would still be within the cost range of other large US procurement programmes and consume just about 1% of the Pentagon's budget.
- The West European cold-war concern that the US would cease to be a reliable ally if it weren't exposed to assured nuclear destruction, sometimes still quoted to explain fears of "decoupling", is today so far removed from actual definitions of US interests and the functioning of US defence policy that it has become entirely incomprehensible. Acquiring defences against missile attacks reduces the risk of strategic blackmail and thus helps to preserve the ability to act politically and militarily in crisis situations. Protecting this ability to act has always been one of the central goals of the Atlantic Alliance.
- US missile defence efforts are not only about safeguarding US territory. The US is spending 50% more on theatre missile defence (TMD) than on NMD, and is very clear about the military priority of theatre missile defence. Moreover, the Bush administration has rightly stressed that Europeans are also likely to be threatened by missiles and WMD. Aggressors will not fail to note that the US is politically and economically so intertwined with its allies that blackmailing them would affect the US nearly as much as direct threats.

Based on the Bush administration's approach to the ongoing nuclear review process, there appears to be a good chance now that further reductions of US strategic nuclear weapons will become possible in conjunction with a move into strategic defences. Such a build-down would be very much in the interest of most European countries, as it would strengthen international non-proliferation and risk-reduction efforts and could increase the prospects for successful regional arms control and disarmament efforts in various strategically exposed parts of the world, including Europe's periphery.

Looking at Russia and the ABM Treaty, Europeans will continue to consider it decisive that the transition is achieved not unilaterally but in cooperation. The continuous record of US-

Russian cooperative threat reduction measures and additional achievements such as the new joint early warning centre should be recognised as reassuring demonstrations of the fact that common security has indeed replaced bipolar antagonism, in spite of recurring political obstacles and complications.

Most likely, Moscow will in the end cooperate with the West on missile defence. However, Russian leaders and negotiators will try to extract as high a price as they can. The inclusion of Russian technology, research and industrial capacities in future missile defence systems may well be one central and to a certain extent even attractive component. European defence and aerospace companies would be well advised to fight for their share in the eventual deal not just by seeking a transatlantic foothold in the US defence market but also by engaging Russian capacities now, presumably against massive US resistance.

While it is not necessarily obvious that the US and NATO must urgently build extensive missile defences at this point in time, there is no convincing reason why the US should not go ahead in that direction. This is a matter of strategic choice, and certainly legitimate for the purpose of controlling the right mix of instruments for defence in potential future conflicts while exploiting technological advantages intelligently. European countries may want to actively help shape the ongoing process of strategic change of which missile defence is just one element, and support the emergence of increased stability and cooperation.

The main reason why the US believes in the need for missile defence is that its forces are likely to be fighting wars against aggressors who possess such missiles and are prepared to use them. As Europeans pledge to upgrade their own defence capabilities within NATO and also on their own in ESDP to be better able to share the burdens of maintaining international peace and security, it is more likely than not that European forces will be fighting such wars, too. As one of the consequences of Europe's intensified security and defence ambitions, it should begin to be more concerned about protecting its own troops and installations in theatre as well as at home against the full range of ballistic threats to be expected.

NATO as a whole has been operating under the sound assumption for a number of years that by 2010 all of Europe will be within reach of missiles from outside Europe. European politicians, however, have so far not been willing to acknowledge this assessment publicly, presumably also out of fear that this would impose additional demands on limited defence budgets. If this attitude were ever to change, there would probably be substantial synergies to be found in pursuing the intended upgrade of European C3 (command, control and

communications) capabilities in conjunction with a highly integrated systems approach such as integrated extended air defence that has immediate practical application and is multinationally networked by necessity.

The Bush administration's apparent new focus on sea- or air-based boost-phase defence is unlikely to make a big difference from a European viewpoint. The new US eagerness to include forward-based elements and reflect the requirement to protect allies and US troops abroad might be seen by Europeans as an interesting opening to pursue the integrated extended air defence and ballistic missile defence approaches developed jointly in NATO working groups, with French participation, during the 1990s. However, one needs to distinguish between forward-based boost-phase defence and the kind of integrated European TBMD (theatre ballistic missile defence) architecture that might include US sea-based radar and upper-tier interceptor capabilities in the Mediterranean. While these capabilities would help to protect European countries and US troops in Europe by targeting incoming missiles on their re-entry, they would add nothing to US national missile defence against ballistic missile attacks from the Middle East.

For boost-phase intercepts during the burn phase of the missile's engine, interceptors need to be deployed within a few hundred kilometres of the attacking missile's launch site. For threats from the Middle East, this would in practice require land-based forward interceptor sites that are strategically much less attractive than the more flexible sea-based ones. It is unlikely that any future US national missile defence architecture would at the same time provide protection to Europe through boost-phase intercepts. If Europeans want to be protected against missile attacks, they will have to build their own defences, and pay for them.

Politically, missile defence is likely to be seen by European governments mainly as an additional source of potential irritation in the transatlantic relationship at a time of accumulating, partially value-based conflicts over trade and a widespread desire among European politicians to assert Europe's own identity vis-à-vis Washington, New York and Hollywood as a matter of principle. Europeans are unlikely to risk causing further aggravation over missile defence. They should not miss the opportunity, however, as they come out in support of the US on this issue, to win active US support for the EU's own ongoing defence-capabilities efforts. This involves, above all, the establishment of satisfactory conditions for transatlantic defence-industrial interaction.

The institutionalised political, diplomatic and defence-technological cooperation in NATO offers good opportunities to Europeans to make the most of Washington's declared willingness to consult before taking decisions on missile defence. Beyond that, European foreign, security and defence policy should certainly also aspire to influence other actors such as Russia and China, and to provide guidance to European public opinion. The price for failing to play a constructive, determined role might be a popular relapse into the obsolete East-West mindset when European security matters were decided in Washington and Moscow over Europeans' heads. The US-Russian joint statement on strategic stability of 4 June 2000, while listing the strategic commonalities shared by these two powers, makes no mention of the European allies and the need to consult them or others.

European governments would be well advised to make sure they become, or remain, serious and respected actors in the missile defence arena. If Europe wants its voice heard, it must speak up and help to shape developments in pursuit of European interests. There is quite a long list of issues and interests worth pushing from a European viewpoint that are unlikely to be at centre stage if the matter is left to the US, Russia and China alone. On the other hand, Europeans are not really needed, for example, for placing the issue of continued respect for the ABM treaty on the agenda because Russia, as a party to this treaty, will take care of this point in its own right.

In addition to the interest in developing the transatlantic relationship and maintaining cooperation with Russia, specific European fields of interest that need intensified attention and discussion in the context of the transition towards US deployment of operational ballistic missile defences include:

- *Access to missile defence technology and components.* Future efforts to develop European extended air defence against ballistic missiles will require sharing some elements of US missile defences, also including assured direct access to space-based early warning and tracking data. As far as Article IX of the ABM Treaty stands against such shared use of non-nuclear ballistic missile defence (BMD) components, it should be in Europe's interest to support an understanding among ABM Treaty parties to change this situation. US negotiators raised this point with their Russian counterparts in Geneva in January 2000.
- *Abolition of nuclear ABM.* The 1972 ABM Treaty legitimises the possession and use of nuclear weapons for ballistic missile defence and merely limits their deployed numbers. To this day, Moscow is defended with such crude nuclear interceptors against potential missile attacks. Nuclear safety concerns and the devastating consequences of any

accidental or intentional use of this neglected class of nuclear weapons in Russia's stockpile demand a revision of the ABM Treaty to ban and dismantle all nuclear-tipped ABMs.

- *Deep cuts.* On strategic nuclear arsenals, Europeans should remind the US and Russia of their obligation under Article 6 of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to pursue nuclear disarmament. This also includes US adherence to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).
- *Addressing theatre nuclear forces (TNF) arsenals.* Russia still holds about 10,000 nuclear charges for non-strategic nuclear weapons at approximately 40 storage sites that give reason for concern about safety and proliferation. Europeans have a strong interest in pushing for more transparency, confidence-building measures and cooperative risk reduction in this field, not just bilaterally between the US and Russia, but also with involvement of NATO and the EU.
- *Controls on (anti-satellite) ASAT.* As missile defence technology overlaps substantially with the capacity to attack satellites in orbit, both the proliferation of such technology and its potentially destabilising application for targeting space platforms need to be addressed. A world-wide ban on testing interceptors in an ASAT mode could help to avoid an arms race in space and prevent a situation where pre-emption against missile defence sites may become necessary to protect essential space-based C4I assets (command, control, communications, computers and intelligence).
- *Banning interceptors in space.* While boost-phase and mid-course missile defence from space may look like a technologically attractive option in the long term for the US, its pursuit would open the gates to a broad militarisation of space that could only result in much-increased vulnerability for all nations. The post-ABM regime should include a ban on developing, testing and deploying space-based intercept devices, as a step towards banning all other weapons in full or partial orbit.

Such accompanying measures of common security geared at strengthening international confidence in the willingness of the US not to exploit its economic and technological advantage in destabilising ways would not only broaden the common ground with Russia and might attract China to a dialogue on arms control but would also demonstrate the coherence of NATO's conceptual approach to security and cooperation and thus help to keep Europe's own defence identity firmly anchored in the transatlantic alliance.

RUSSIA AND ANTI-MISSILE DEFENCES

ALEXANDER PIKAYEV*

The International Context

Anti-missile debates have been regularly coming to the surface during more than three decades, starting at least from the US great anti-ballistic missile (ABM) debates of the late 1960s. More recently, the discussions about strategic anti-missile deployments have coincided with fundamental changes in European and global security, triggered by developments of the first decade after the end of the Cold War. The circumstances were characterised by further consolidation of the US position as a leading global nation, whose position was enhanced even inside the Western alliance. European integration crossed some important qualitative lines, constituting maybe the basis for more rapid economic development of the European Union in coming decades, and its gradual transformation from a mainly geo-economic into a geo-political entity. This might lead to a reassessment of transatlantic relations, including future roles of NATO and its further enlargement, as well as its interaction with emerging security institutions in Europe.

On the other side of Eurasia, the rapid growth of China is increasingly questioning the credibility of the US-led alliances in the Western Pacific. Together with volatility across the Taiwan straight and likely Korean reunification, this could force Japan to reconsider its recent military self-restraint and promote its re-militarisation, if not nuclearisation. The southern part of the Eurasian continent – from the Mediterranean to Myanmar – is increasingly becoming an area of traditional geopolitical competition between growing local and outside powers. It witnesses the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery; fragmentation and radicalisation of the Islamic world.

Russia and other post-Soviet states emerged in the middle of these profound changes. In the 1990s, they survived unprecedented economic, political and military decline, which left them without any serious chance to re-establish the significance they enjoyed a decade ago. Moreover, at least some newly independent states have not finished their downturn, and face the real probability of further degradation. A further weakening of that part of the world might turn it into arena of geopolitical competition between neighbours with unpredictable consequences in terms of uncontrollable spread of remnants of the Soviet nuclear legacy, conventional arms, migration and crime. As a result, neighbouring entities could be forced to

* Carnegie Centre Moscow.

conduct hardly bearable burdens of peace-making amidst endless Eurasian steppes and forests.

Anti-Missile Defence and the International Order

Anti-missile defences might accelerate or even promote undesirable geopolitical trends. Well before actual deployments, the anti-missile debates have already complicated transatlantic relations in recent delicate times of redefining balances between the two sides of the ocean. Commitment to large-scale missile defences might reflect shifts occurring in the United States towards unilateralism – with an explosive combination of isolationist trends and a preoccupation with relations with the Americas, on the one hand, and unilateralist spasmodic interventionism overseas, on the other. This would destabilise the international arena, since the US involvement, when needed, would not be forthcoming, but might unexpectedly take place in other areas. If anti-missile defences were deployed, it could create a wrong perception of invulnerability from potential retaliation and thus take the pressure off decisions to intervene.

The unilateralism could target international legal regimes, particularly those dealing with non-proliferation and arms control. The ABM Treaty is a good example. Unsuccessful tests of missile interceptors during the Clinton administration demonstrated that the United States, very likely, possesses no available technology for anti-missile deployments on a scale justifying withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. The Treaty does not prohibit anti-missiles; it only restricts tests and deployments of strategic anti-ballistic missile defence systems. Within a decade development and testing of new systems could probably be made inside the Treaty restrictions, or under the umbrella of non-strategic missile defences. Nevertheless, attacks on the ABM Treaty – well before its military substitute is ready – create concerns that the real aim of the debate is not giving up an obsolete agreement which complicates responding to urgent national security challenges, but to withdraw from the regime, that is hated for ideological reasons of near-religious character.

Together with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) rejection and problems with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) compliance, attacks on the ABM Treaty might reflect a broader desire to follow unilateralist actions internationally without taking into account existing international regimes and norms. This establishes precedents for other nations, which in their turn might decide to withdraw from regimes that limit their freedom of action. As a result, the world would become a much more dangerous place, where relations between the

states would be determined not by international law, but by national interests and great powers games.

The weakening of the US alliances in the Western Pacific is sometimes mentioned as one of the primary reasons for the US anti-missiles deployments. Indeed, if protected, the United States would more willingly participate in defending their regional allies. However, there is uncertainty on how the leading East Asian nation would react to the US deployments. In recent years, China has possessed two or three dozen missiles capable hitting targets in North America. These numbers might be successfully intercepted by even an initially modest US anti-missile system with the necessary architecture. As a result, Beijing would be deprived of its minimum deterrence option, which it obtained in the early 1980s.

The Chinese could avoid that development if they slowly build-up their strategic nuclear forces to a level where they could saturate the American defences. That build-up might be quite significant. In order to maintain assured penetration even through limited defences with a hundred interceptors, China would need up to 200 strategic warheads deliverable to North American targets. In other words, Beijing may have to increase its minimum strategic forces ten-fold.

The Chinese nuclear build-up might trigger a nuclear chain reaction in Asia. India clearly links its nuclear ambitions with China, and would be tempted to follow Beijing's suit. Pakistan could hardly stay away from that arms race either. A Pakistani build-up might increase pressure on Iran, which has a difficult relationship with Islamabad. In the Western Pacific, facing a nuclear arms race between continental Asian powers, both Taiwan and Japan could feel themselves increasingly insecure and could be sorely tempted to change their non-nuclear status. Under certain circumstances, South Korea could even pre-empt them.

Russia's Dilemmas

For Russia, an increasingly unilateralist United States, erosion of existing international law, a nuclear build-up and proliferation in Asia represent considerable mid-term challenges. In that security environment, Moscow could hardly permit itself to maintain its recent modest rate of nuclear modernisation programme: in 1998-2000, only 26 new Topol M SS-27 ICBMs were delivered to their bases. Russia would have to keep sizeable deterrent force levels in order to feel secure in more nuclearised world.

Some existing arms control regimes significantly restrain Moscow's ability to maintain higher force levels. In particular, the START II prohibits ICBMs with multiple independent re-entry vehicles (MIRVs). Producing large numbers of single warhead missiles would be much more expensive than producing MIRVed ICBMs. This may stimulate Moscow to abandon those restrictions by both cooperative and unilateral measures. As another example, the INF Treaty prevents Russia from establishing an equal footing in an arms race with China, if the latter decided to initiate a build-up of its medium-range nuclear forces. China, as well as other emerging nuclear powers, are not parties to that Treaty, and – unlike Russia and the United States – are not limited by its restrictions. This complicates Russia's task to maintain balances in those classes of nuclear weapons, and gives a motivation to withdraw from that agreement. The US unilateral withdrawal from the ABM Treaty would provide a comfortable pretext for Moscow's reciprocal withdrawals from those and, probably, some other regimes.

Therefore, Russia – together with many other members of the international community – has every reason to be concerned by developments driving the US anti-missile commitments. At the same time, the Kremlin is not interested in confrontation and a nuclear arms race, and still needs to gain access to Western investment, markets and technology. That dualism led to disagreements inside Russia's establishment on how to react to the US anti-missile plans. The disagreements could be found in two important doctrinal documents adopted in 2000 – the National Security Concept and the Military Doctrine, signed by President Putin, respectively, on January 6 and April 21. While the National Security Concept stated that Russia would adopt arms control agreements in response to the changing international environment, the Military Doctrine, on the contrary, declared that Russia would fulfil existing arms control agreements. Abrogation of the ABM Treaty was especially mentioned in this context as a national security risk.

The hardliners think that Russia's resistance to changing the ABM Treaty could deliver a message to the United States that they cannot expect Moscow to compliantly follow Washington's zigzags, as it did under the Yeltsin administration. They argue that the tactic to agree to US demands in the area of the ABM/START could only force Russia to accept almost all Washington's requirements during the negotiations, while Moscow would find itself trapped with uncomfortable restrictions. That school also likely perceives that the US unilateral withdrawal from the ABM Treaty would facilitate Russia's withdrawal from other agreements that limit its freedom of manoeuvre.

Supporters of a more conciliatory approach believe that, if Washington suggests an attractive deal in the strategic arms reduction area – negotiated or unilateral– Moscow should agree to discuss new approaches to the ABM Treaty. Russia is interested in deep US strategic nuclear cuts below the level of 2,000 warheads. That would permit the Kremlin to maintain approximate numerical parity with the United States. Besides its psychological importance, that might be important diplomatically for gaining better deals in other areas. Moscow also wants to establish industrial cooperation with the US and EU defence industries, and obtain contracts for its cash-starved enterprises.

Advocates of a more cooperative line promote the idea of joint anti-missile defence (AMD) against non-strategic ballistic missiles (NSBMs). A provision for cooperating in tactical missile defences was included in the Russia-NATO Founding Act, signed in Paris in May 1997. Reportedly in late 1998, the Russian defence minister was on his way to Brussels with a proposal for cooperative Russian-NATO activities in the anti-missile area, but due to disagreements over Anglo-American air raids against Baghdad in December 1998, and the Kosovo operation which took place in March-June 1999, the plan was not tabled. It was during his visit to Italy in June 2000 that President Putin proposed for the first time joint anti-missile defence, but he did not specify details.

Finally, in February 2001 during the visit of Lord Robertson, Secretary-General of NATO, to Moscow, Russia delivered a more detailed proposal on European AMD against NSBMs. The fact that it was handed to NATO reflected the Kremlin's desire to alleviate possible US concerns that the proposal was purely aimed at widening cracks in transatlantic relations. The proposal was understandably limited to the non-strategic level, because the ABM/START limbo was yet to be resolved through the US-Russian bilateral dialogue. Indirectly, the abbreviation AMD against NSBMs – but not NSMD (non-strategic missile defence) hinted that Moscow was ready to give up NSBMs and proceed forward with AMD only.

The proposal contained a phased approach. Initially, the interested parties should define common missile threats. Then they would need to discuss how better to meet existing and emerging challenges, including an evaluation of non-military instruments for neutralising them. Only if it was decided that military tools were essential, the sides could start discussing potential architecture of the AMD and its armaments. For developing potential European AMD, Russia offered its research, development and testing facilities, as well as existing surface-to-air missiles such as the S-300 and S-400. As an option, mobile anti-missile

launchers were mentioned in particular. Such weapons are needed for protecting rapid reaction troops to be deployed in regions of nuclear and missile proliferation.

Given the lack of perceived threat of direct missile and nuclear attack, the Western European nations were probably not the best audience for promoting anti-missile defence cooperation. However, that proposal could help to address some unsettled issues in Russian-Western relations, which lay outside the anti-missile framework. They include a lack of substance, positive agenda and institutions. The AMD dialogue might open doors to broader benefits. Western European industries could be interested in gaining access to Russian defence technology. And discussing mutual threat perceptions would help to add substance for those institutions where the AMD discussions will take place.

MISSILE DEFENCES :
THE CASE FOR A LIMITED INSURANCE DEFENCE

Ivo H. Daalder^{*}

President George Bush's inauguration last January settled the issue of whether the United States will proceed with developing and deploying a missile defence system. It will. The only questions that remain are what kind of system will be deployed, when and with what consequences for international stability and security. Those, indeed, are large and important questions with, as yet, uncertain answers.

The decision to proceed with missile defences results from three factors. First, there is virtual agreement in Washington that the threat posed by the proliferation of missiles and weapons of mass destruction is growing. More countries are believed to be acquiring these technologies, including some countries whose foreign policy behaviour is seen to be both unpredictable and inimical to American interests. Second, four decades of research, including spending some \$60 billion on ballistic missile defence research over the past 20 years alone, has begun to pay off in new technologies that promise to provide some protection against small-scale missile attacks. Sensor technologies have advanced to enable adequate discrimination and exceptional tracking and guidance capabilities, so that it is now possible for the proverbial bullet to hit a bullet. Third, with the end of the cold war, long-standing strategic objections to missile defence (including the strict limits on defence incorporated in the ABM Treaty) are no longer applicable. New threats within this new strategic environment call for new responses. Thus, missile defences are necessary to counter the ability of countries that are once again known as "rogue states" to blackmail or coerce the United States and its allies in ways contrary to their interests. Defences, in this view, are seen as the best way to extend and protect America's global reach in a world of proliferating weapon systems.

Each of these reasons has merit. More countries may acquire weapons of mass destruction and the missiles to deliver them over great ranges – if not now, then possibly in the future. Vast sums of research money are paying off in fielding better technologies. And defences can add a degree of uncertainty in the minds of actual or potential adversaries that complete vulnerability erases. There is, therefore, good reason to pursue missile defences – and even to deploy systems if and when they become available.

^{*} Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C.

At the same time, it is easy to overstate the threat, the technological advances and the strategic impact of deploying defences. Political change in countries such as North Korea, Iran and Iraq may fundamentally alter the character or foreign policy goals of the regime. Developing even near-perfect defences capable of defeating a dedicated and technologically determined foe may never be possible. And it is unlikely that any president will rely on the uncertainties of defences (including the knowledge that they may fail with catastrophic consequences) for pursuing policies she or he would otherwise shun.

That leaves a limited, but still important rationale for deploying missile defences: basic insurance in case things go wrong. If a missile were ever to be launched against one's territory, it is better to possess imperfect defences than none at all. And while such defences may not alter the strategic calculations of the defender, they are bound to affect the calculus of the attacker. Therefore, the United States should work with its allies in Europe and, if possible, with Russia to devise a strategy for deploying defences against small-scale missile attacks from third countries. Such a strategy will require that Europeans (and Russia) accept the contributions active defence can make to their security, and the United States to accept that deployment can proceed only if it is embedded within both a broader effort to curb and reverse weapons and missile proliferation and a vigorous attempt to reach agreement with Russia on modifying and updating the existing arms control regime to accommodate such a limited defence.

An Evolving Threat

In some important respects, the ballistic missile threat confronting the United States and Europe today is less than it was at the end of the cold war. Russia deploys thousands of missiles less than the Soviet Union did, and countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Egypt and South Africa abandoned space launch and missile programme in the early 1990s (Cirincione, 2000). Moreover, the oft-repeated belief that ballistic missile proliferation is increasing – even accelerating – is not substantiated by the available evidence. Thus, while CIA Director George Tenet referred in his testimony in February of this year (see Tenet, 2001) to “the continuing and growing threat posed to us by ICBMs”, he presented no real evidence to substantiate that conclusion (see Tenet, 2001). There, as elsewhere, the focus was on just three countries: North Korea, Iran and Iraq.

What has changed is less the evolving threat than the standard by which the US intelligence community assesses that threat. Whereas in the early and mid-1990s, National Intelligence

Estimates (NIEs) of future long-range missile threats maintained that the probability of countries developing such capabilities within the next 15 years was low, the latest NIE (released in 1999) argued that North Korea, Iran and Iraq could deploy such systems much earlier (see National Intelligence Council, 1999 and National Intelligence Council, 1995). This change followed publication of the Rumsfeld Commission Report in July 1998, which concluded that the intelligence community might have underestimated the ballistic missile threat to the United States. Indeed, the Commission argued that countries such as North Korea, Iran and Iraq could plausibly deploy ICBM-range missiles “with little or no warning”. (Rumsfeld Commission, 1998) As if to prove the Commission right, six weeks after the publication of its report, North Korea tested a three-staged Taepo Dong-I missile, which it could theoretically convert into an ICBM. Suitably chastened, the intelligence community decided in 1999 to substitute its best assessment of what was *likely* to happen with a worst-case judgement of what *could* theoretically come to pass. In addition, the 1999 NIE substantially reduced the range of the assessed long-range missile threat by shifting from a focus on threats to the 48 continental states to the threat posed to all of US territory (including the outer islands of Alaska and Hawaii) and shortening the timeline from a focus on when a missile would first be deployed to a concern with when it would first be tested (see Cirincione, 2000).

Lost in all the machinations, politically and otherwise, of assessing the long-range missile threat to the United States was the political context in which such threats might appear. Yet, politics provide a crucial input for threat assessments – ultimately, what matters are intentions as well as capabilities. Thus, while the United States is within the reach of French or British long-range missiles – and may soon also be reachable by missiles fired from Israel or India – no one is particularly concerned or focused on the possibilities. Politics, in other words, are important. And politics at the turn of the century may be changing the character or capabilities of “rogue regimes”. North Korea has entered a *détente* of sorts with the South – and it has coupled this with a freeze on missile tests and a far-reaching offer both to abandon the export of missile technology as well as to end its indigenous medium- and long-range missile programme (for details on this offer, see Gordon, 2001). Iran is in the midst of possibly far-reaching political change – with reformist politicians who dominate the parliament and presidency competing for the power to set the country’s future political course with the orthodox and revolutionary forces that still hold most of the reins of power. And Iraq, though

emerging from years of self-inflicted isolation, remains effectively contained by a combination of economic sanctions and a large American military presence in the region.

None of this is to suggest that these countries are about to join Israel or India – let alone our allies – as states that might be capable of threatening the United States, its forces, or friends but clearly have no intention of doing so. But it does suggest that hyping the threat, and basing all analysis on worst-case assumptions about what could happen rather than what is most likely to happen, has its costs – not least to encourage these very same countries to believe that an improvement in political relations with Washington is not possible. That, in itself, can make their decisions to acquire long-range missiles that can threaten the United States with attack more, rather than less, likely.

This does not mean that the United States should not take the proliferation threat seriously. While politics can change things for the better, it can also change them for the worse – and quickly. It does mean, however, that the more appropriate response to the missile proliferation is a more variegated strategy that combines a proactive non-proliferation strategy with efforts that address the consequences of proliferation. Thus, the best response to missile proliferation involves a combination of efforts designed to prevent countries from acquiring missiles (through export controls, arms control agreements, and security alliances), roll back missile programmes that already exist (through diplomatic suasion, by offering economic or other incentives and/or imposing sanctions), and to manage the consequences of missile proliferation (including by deploying defensive systems and possibly through pre-emption). If the Bush administration demonstrates as much commitment to the first two strategies as it does to the third, Europe and Russia are much more likely to support missile defence deployments.

It is within this broader non-proliferation effort that investment in a limited insurance defence makes sense. We live in an uncertain world, in which it would be folly to exclude the possibility that our best non-proliferation efforts might fail. It is possible – perhaps even likely – that the United States and its allies will have to confront a long-range missile threat to their territories within the next decade. And given the long lead times for research, developing, testing and deploying the highly complex and technologically sophisticated defences that may be needed to counter these threats, deciding now to proceed along this path is the right way to go.

Improving Technologies

Although much of the US debate about missile defences is conducted on the presumption that there is something to deploy in the very near future, the fact of the matter is that even if President Bush were to decide today that he wanted to move forward with deployment, any real defensive capability will not be available until the time he leaves office – assuming, of course, that he will be re-elected in 2004. This is true even for those technologies that are in the most advanced state of development – the mid-course defence system that the Clinton administration contemplated deploying initially in Alaska. A multi-layered system of the kind Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has talked about – presumably including boost-phase and mid-course defences based on land, at sea, and in the air and space – will take a decade and more to see the light of day (see Lindsay and O’Hanlon, 2001, pp. 82-115).

Therefore, the day that the United States can deploy a perfect, or even a near-perfect, defence against a small-scale ballistic missile attack is still far off. The mid-course defence favoured by the previous administration still has to undergo nearly its entire testing programme to ensure that the hit-to-kill technology on which it is based will in fact work. Indeed, the failure of two out of the three initial tests of the interceptor rocket and kill vehicle indicates that this may still take some time. Moreover, there are plausible countermeasures to defeat this defence, and these are likely to be available to any country that possesses the technological know-how to build a long-range missile capable of delivering a nuclear or other warhead somewhere in the vicinity of where it is aiming. Boost-phase technologies that attack missiles as they ascend into space are less susceptible to countermeasures, but with the exception of the airborne laser and research conducted on space-based interceptors (the “brilliant pebbles”) a decade ago, no such systems are currently on the drawing board. It will likely take a good half a dozen years for the basic research and development on such a defence to be completed.

At the same time, a dedicated effort to develop missile defences is bound to succeed sooner or later. In the years ahead, technology will be available to intercept missiles and warheads in flight – not every time nor always perfectly, but with a sufficient probability of success to make proceeding with deployment worthwhile. This point is important, though often forgotten. Because the consequences of a nuclear warhead actually exploding on one’s territory are so catastrophic, much of the missile defence debate presumes that the only defences worth deploying are those that have a very high probability of success – on the order of 90% or more. And because it is not too difficult to think of reasons why even very able

defences might fail more than 10% of the time, opponents of missile defences have long had the better of the argument.

But the world has changed – and so are the terms of debate about the utility of deploying missile defences. If there is even a small chance that a country will launch a missile topped with a nuclear, chemical or biological warhead, then is not some defence, however imperfect, better than none? Just because it was clearly impossible to defend the United States against a Soviet Union capable of launching thousands of warheads against US territory, does not mean that the United States should not attempt to defend itself against far smaller and more circumscribed missile threats. Particularly if the goal of deploying missile defences is to provide some form of insurance, then clearly something is better than nothing. Nor do defences need to be perfect on the first day they become operational – it is possible to improve and upgrade these systems over time, as additional research and testing is done.

Of course, one should only deploy a defence that works. But the definition of what “works” is no longer as clear-cut as it once was presumed to be. Even imperfect defences that give the defender no more than one in two or even a one in three chance to intercept an incoming missile may well be preferable to having no defence at all. The question is not whether defences can work perfectly, but whether they can work sufficiently well – and at an acceptable cost – to make a difference. By that standard, there can be little doubt that the technology has advanced sufficiently for a workable missile defence system to be deployed by the end of this decade.

If that is the case, what kind of system should the United States aim to deploy? Given the limited aim of defences, the most appropriate system to develop would be a two-tiered system that relied mainly on boost-phase defences deployed on land and possibly at sea and might also include a small, mid-course defence based in the United States (and should Europe want to deploy this second tier, perhaps in Europe as well) (see Lindsay and O’Hanlon, 2001, Chapter 6). The advantage of boost-phase defences is that these systems provide global protection against specific missile threats. Thus, a boost-phase defence capable of intercepting a missile fired from, say, Iran could do so no matter whether it was aimed at Moscow, Munich or Miami. Equally important, land- or sea-based boost-phase systems pose no threat to the nuclear missile forces of Russia or China, since these can be launched from positions far removed from where the defences would be deployed.

Finally, boost-phase defences offer the advantage – the need actually – of promoting cooperation between the United States and other countries, including possibly Russia, on developing and deploying defensive systems. Since sea-based systems will be unable to defend against missiles that are launched from Iran or Iraq on a northward trajectory, a boost-phase defence must be deployed north of these countries – in Russia, the Caucasus and/or Turkey. Thus, aside from a space-based system, an effective boost-phase defence will require the United States to cooperate with other countries to ensure adequate coverage.

A second, mid-course tier could be added to provide added protection. By the logic of compound probabilities, having two shots at an incoming missile – even with defences that are known to be far from perfect – significantly enhances the likelihood of a successful intercept. Also, since the two tiers are based on different technologies, the attacker faces a more complicated task of trying to defeat the defence by deploying different countermeasures. Finally, a mid-course defence of this kind could possibly be deployed more rapidly than a boost-phase defence that still requires much research, especially if the interceptors and associated radar were to be deployed in North Dakota rather than Alaska, as originally planned. And if Europeans were interested in deploying a similar system, a single interceptor and radar site in central Europe (e.g. the Czech Republic) would provide Europe with some protection against missile threats from the Middle East and Northeast Asia.

A Changing Strategic Environment

The end of the cold war has significantly changed the strategic calculus of missile defences. At a time when the US-Soviet nuclear rivalry still dominated the strategic environment, there was general (though by no means complete) agreement that efforts to defend national territory against ballistic missile attacks were both futile and destabilising. In the current environment, one that is no longer marked by the previous nuclear competition, the offence-defence equation has shifted. There is widespread agreement that we no longer need the large, diverse, and sophisticated nuclear arsenals capable of delivering thousands of warheads with precision against an array of military and strategic targets that were deemed necessary to deter the Soviet Union many years ago. As a result, the requirements of US-Russian mutual deterrence have either disappeared altogether or, at the very least, eased significantly. So long as Moscow and Washington retain the ability to deliver hundreds of nuclear weapons under any and all circumstances, the fundamental stability of their nuclear relationship in the current environment will remain unaffected.

This changing strategic reality has implications for the deployment of missile defences. It is no longer obvious that limited defences, deployed to address new strategic threats, would have the destabilising consequences that many feared would be the case during the cold war. Today, the perceived missile threat does not stem from Russia, but from countries such as North Korea, Iran and Iraq that may prove able to acquire long-range missiles capable of threatening US or European territory. Limited defences, with interceptors numbered in the low one hundreds at most, should have no impact on Russia's perceived ability to deter a US attack or otherwise affect Washington's calculation. But such a defence could, or so advocates argue, have a major impact on the small missile inventories that a Pyongyang or Teheran may be able to amass in the next decade or so.

Some would argue that defences may also be necessary to address the actual or potential threat posed by China. Over the next decade or two, Beijing may well expand its long-range missile arsenal by a factor of five or ten – whether or not the United States deploys a missile defence system. Some have argued that such an expansion would offer positive proof of China's expansionist pretensions (e.g. towards Taiwan), thus necessitating a similar expansion in US defensive capacity (see Hadley, 2000, p. 106) But there are two problems with this perspective. First, so long as the United States has the capacity to destroy China as a functioning society, why should an expansion in Beijing's capacity to do the United States harm be of more concern than it is today (unless, of course, one assumes that China's 18 liquid-fuelled ICBMs do not constitute a viable force)? Second, to build a defence able to thwart a dedicated Chinese missile attack once China has expanded its arsenal to 100-200 long-range missiles would require a system vastly larger in scope and capability than anyone is now contemplating. And that, in turn, would invariably bring Russia into the equation, thus raising all the questions about strategic stability that the advocates of missile defences now claim are beyond us.

It follows that the purpose – the sole strategic purpose – of missile defences can only be to deal with the threat of small-scale missile attack. That being the case, the question is whether, in a world where countries like North Korea, Iran and Iraq have acquired long-range missiles capable of attacking the United States and European countries, the deployment of ballistic missile defences will have a fundamental strategic impact? Advocates of defences, including the Bush administration, answer with an emphatic “yes”. According to this view, the main reason why these countries seek to acquire long-range missiles capable of threatening the United States is to deter American intervention in their region. From that perspective,

defences are a means to neutralise that deterrent, thus enabling America's global reach. As one advocate put it (see Kaplan, 2001), "missile defence is about preserving America's ability to wield power abroad. It's not about defence. It's about offence."

This argument has intuitive appeal. Would the United States have tried to reverse the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait if Baghdad was known to possess long-range missiles armed with nuclear, chemical or biological warheads capable of reaching US territory? Perhaps not. Would Washington have been able to pull together the Gulf War coalition if Iraq could similarly threaten far-away coalition members, including in Europe? Most unlikely. Long-range missiles in the hands of Saddam Hussein might have made a major difference.

But if Saddam had this capability and the United States had deployed defences able to provide some protection to US and allied territory, would that have fundamentally altered US and allied calculations? I have my doubts. If there was a 50 or 25 or even a 10% chance that a missile launched at their territory would penetrate the defences, presidents and prime ministers would likely weigh that probability as heavily as if the chance was 100%. Of course, even with these risk calculations, leaders might still decide to go to war if the stakes were judged sufficiently high. Even without defences, US and some allied leaders can rely on their ability to inflict unacceptable damage (by conventional or other means) to deter an attack on their territory. After all, although he had demonstrated the capability and will before, Saddam did *not* use chemical or biological weapons against US or allied forces, having apparently been deterred by the knowledge of what the United States could do in response (see Bundy, 1991).

The mere deployment of defences is therefore unlikely to have a major, let alone a fundamental, impact on the strategic calculus of the United States and its allies. Risks will continue to be weighed against the interests affected – and those interests will themselves tend to dominate. Thus, whether or not the United States would have acted similarly as it did in 1990-91 if Baghdad had been able to threaten US territory directly is a decision that was likely to have remained unaffected by whether defences had been deployed. The chance of a defence's failure would have to weigh heavily in any president's mind, as it would in the public's. But if the interests were judged to be sufficiently great, then intervention could be a reasonable judgement even if the defences were far from perfect, or absent altogether.

However, while US or allied strategic calculations may be little affected by the deployment of defences, the same would not of course be the case for the countries against which such

defences would be deployed. A North Korea that possessed a handful of missiles, and perhaps as few as two or three nuclear warheads, would have to be deeply concerned that its one, two or three-shot chance might be successfully deflected by a limited defence. That, coupled with the near-certainty of devastating retaliation, might well dissuade a leader in Pyongyang from using or even seriously threatening to use a nuclear-armed missile against the United States. And in that sense, the deployment of a limited insurance defence could have important strategic benefit.

The Way Forward

The United States should proceed with the deployment of a limited insurance defence – a “LID” – designed explicitly to defend its territory and that of its allies against a possible small-scale missile attack from countries such as North Korea, Iran and Iraq. Such a defence would likely consist of boost-phase interceptors based at sea and on land. These systems would preferably be developed in cooperation with any country concerned about a possible missile threat, including NATO members and, if agreeable, Russia. In addition, the United States might also consider deployment of a mid-course defence, based in North Dakota, and consisting of a small number (25-50) of interceptors. This defence could be built rapidly, should the need arise, and its initial deployment (notably the construction of a new battle management radar in North Dakota) could proceed within the restrictions imposed by the ABM Treaty. This two-layered defence would provide adequate protection against a small-scale missile attack without creating the perception in Beijing or Moscow that its deployment was aimed at undermining their nuclear deterrent forces.

But the United States must do more to reassure Europeans and others about the reasons for moving forward in this direction (these ideas are further elaborated in Daalder et al. (2000), Daalder and Goldgeier (forthcoming 2001), Daalder and Gordon (2000) and Daalder et al. (2001)). First, Washington should make clear that it views the pursuit of missile defences as an inextricable part of a broader non-proliferation effort. That effort is geared to preventing countries from acquiring missiles, rolling back missile programmes that already exist and managing the consequences of any proliferation that does occur. To put substance behind this effort, it is important that the Bush administration reverse course on a number of policy stances that point in the opposite direction by encouraging early Senate approval of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, redoubling efforts to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and immediately engaging North Korea in negotiations on terminating

its missile programme. Europe cannot be asked to support missile defences if the United States is not ready to support the many multilateral efforts designed to stem proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles.

Second, Washington should reassure its allies, Russia and other countries that it is fully committed to continuing the international regulation of defensive deployments. In practice, this means a recognition by the Bush administration that it must work with Russia towards an agreement on updating and modifying the ABM Treaty. While the sentiment expressed by many senior Bush administration officials – that the AMB Treaty is a “relic” and belongs to a different era – may have some merit, the onus is on the Bush administration to devise ways in which its key principles can be upheld while deployment of limited defences proceeds. In particular, although the specifics of such an agreement have to be left to further negotiations, it is critical that any revision in the treaty – or even a replacement – upholds and strengthens three fundamental principles that were accepted by Washington and Moscow in 1972:

- *A ban on strategically significant missile defences.* The ABM Treaty did not bar the deployment of ballistic missile defences – only the deployment of a nation-wide defence. In fact, the treaty specifically allowed for up to 100 interceptor missiles to be deployed at two different sites (reduced to one site in 1974). Any modified treaty must continue to bar the deployment of defences capable of posing a threat to the Russian or American nuclear deterrent.
- *Guard against the rapid breakout of limits on defensive systems.* The ban on strategically significant defences is useful only if it is difficult for either side to break out from limits imposed on the deployment of defences. That is why the 1972 treaty barred deployment of all but fixed, land-based interceptors and placed severe limits on the type, location and orientation of radar installations. An updated treaty might be able to relax some of these limits (for example, allowing for the deployment of mobile boost-phase interceptor missiles on land and at sea), while confirming others (notably a ban on space-based weapons and tracking sensors).
- *Prevent the circumvention of treaty restrictions.* At the time of the ABM Treaty’s negotiation in the early 1970s, and ever since, the United States and Russia have been concerned about the possible adaptation of non-ABM systems, such as surface-to-air missiles, anti-tactical missile systems and anti-satellite weapons, to ABM systems. Indeed, as late as 1997, Moscow and Washington agreed on how to differentiate

between so-called theater missile defences (which are not constrained by the treaty) and ABM interceptors (which are). An updated treaty must take account of this principle, notably by restricting battle management/command, control, and communication systems and by placing strict limits on the type and location of sensors.

It will not prove easy to forge a cooperative path on missile defences between Russia and the United States. But it is important for both sides to try. The question of whether missile defences will be deployed may have been settled. But given the possibility that their deployment can have highly destabilising consequences for US, European and international security, it is important to consider carefully how that is to be done.

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The Forum brings together a select group of personalities from the Brussels institutions (EU, NATO and diplomatic missions), national governments, parliaments, business, media and independent experts. The informal and confidential character of the Forum enables participants to exchange ideas freely.

The aim of the initiative is to think ahead about the strategic security agenda for Europe, treating both its European and transatlantic implications. The topics to be addressed are selected from an open list that includes crisis management, defence capabilities, security concepts, defence industries and institutional developments (including enlargement) of the EU and NATO.

The Forum has about 60 members, who are invited to all meetings and receive current information on the activities of the Forum. This group meets every other month in a closed session to discuss a pre-arranged topic under Chatham House rules. The Forum meetings are presided over by François Heisbourg, Chairman of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. As a general rule, three short issue papers are commissioned from independent experts for each session presenting EU, US and Russian viewpoints on the topic.

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