The Impact of United States National Missile Defense on US – Russian Relations, Central European Security, and Leverage

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Abstract

Robert Kron: The impact of United States National Missile Defense on US – Russia relations and Central European security and leverage (Under the direction of Graeme Robertson, John Stephens, and Milada Vachudova)

The decision to place U.S. military installations in Central Europe in 2007 was met with rampant hostility, continuing a long held tradition of controversy surrounding U.S. National Missile Defense. The signing of agreements to place a military tracking radar in the Czech Republic and complementary interceptor missiles in Poland, and the subsequent canceling of this program with the change of the U.S. administration have had an important impact on U.S. – Russian relations, as well as the relationship between the U.S. and its partners in Central Europe and NATO.

This paper will examine the evolution of this issue by examining the history of missile defense and the roles of the concerned parties in order to analyze the implications this holds for the future of U.S. – Russian – European relations.
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List of Abbreviations

ABM- Antballistic Missile Treaty
BMDO- Ballistic Missile Defense Organization
CFE- Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty
CFSP- Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSSD- Social Democratic Party of the Czech Republic
DPRK- Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea
ESDP- European Security and Defense Policy
EU- European Union
GMD- Ground-based Midcourse Defense System
GPALS- Global Protection Against Limited Strikes
ICBM- Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
INF- Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces
JDEC- Joint Date Exchange Center
KDU-CSL- Christian Democratic Union- Czechoslovak Peoples Party
MAD- Mutually Assured Destruction
MDA- Missile Defense Agency
NATO- North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NMD- National Missile Defense
ODS- Civic Democratic Party (Czech Republic)
PiS- Law and Justice Party (Poland)
PO- Civic Alliance (Poland)
SALT- Strategic Arms Limitations Talks
SDI- Strategic Defense Initiative
SDIO- Strategic Defense Initiative Organization
SORT- Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty
TMD- Theatre Missile Defense
UK- United Kingdom
US- United States
USSR- the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Soviet Union
WMD- Weapon of Mass Destruction
Introduction

United States foreign policy decisions are seldom unaccompanied by controversy. As a country with a significant geopolitical footprint whose decisions impact the entire international community, this can hardly come as unexpected. The pursuit of U.S. national interest on the world stage often causes friction when it is perceived as threatening to the national interest of other major players in the post-Cold War global order, for example in the touchy relationship between the U.S. and the Russian Federation. It can also carry serious implications for those that look to U.S. leadership, such as the NATO alliance. Since the end of the Cold War few decisions, however, have been as negatively perceived by the Russians, and as divisive among U.S. allies, as the plans to deploy U.S. Antibalistic Missile Defenses in Central Europe.

In February of 2007, the U.S. under the administration of George W. Bush announced plans to station a military tracking Radar in Brdy, Czech Republic (outside of Prague) and ten interceptor missiles in neighboring Redzikowo, Poland, as part of a greater network of Missile Defenses to protect the US and its allies, allegedly intended against the rising threat of incoming ballistic missiles from ‘rogue states’, in this case meaning particularly a newly nuclear Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), and the Islamic Republic of Iran with progressing nuclear ambitions. Far from convinced, Russia vehemently opposed the project, going even so far as to declare the possibility of a ‘new Cold War’ over the issue.¹ In the public rhetoric, Russia has argued that a Central European missile shield would be a strategic threat to Russian interests, if

not outright targeted against Russia itself. In response, Russia has withdrawn from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) and the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaties, and has threatened firm countermeasures should the U.S. proceed with the plans.

The opposition was not muted in Central Europe or domestically in the US either. In both the Czech Republic and Poland, public opinion has been heavily against the plan, which has set off significant political rows, even being one of the primary factors in the fall of the center-right Czech government in March of 2009. Domestic opposition in the U.S., primarily along partisan lines, has undergone heated debate over financing of the project and its necessity, leaving the future open ended under the new Obama administration. Furthermore the technical capabilities of the system are not universally accepted, casting not insignificant doubt over whether it would even be able to serve it’s stated purpose of protecting against incoming ballistic missiles. Victoria Samson went so far as to say that U.S. missile defenses in Central Europe are “a huge U.S. foreign policy blunder that could have long-term and grave consequences”2 while Zbigniew Brzezinski, former National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter, called it “a scheme that doesn’t work, against a threat that doesn’t exist, in countries that don’t want it.”3 In light of the uproar, political consequences, and rampant skepticism of the proposed initiative, the initial plan was officially cancelled by the Obama administration on September 17, 2009.4 While this has officially put the lid on the system pursued by the Bush administration, it has not, however, signaled an end to U.S. plans for missile defenses in Europe, and has led to as many new questions and issues as it has answered.

3 The Economist, “Pie in the Sky”, September 17, 2009
Given the immense costs invested into the project, political and otherwise, one cannot simply dismiss it as ‘a mistake.’ Instead, as missile defense has great implications for U.S. – Russian – European relations, it is an important issue that needs to be addressed and carefully analyzed. In addition, U.S. missile defenses will not simply be forgotten, as any new plan implemented by the Obama administration is likely to simply cause the greater issues at the heart of the missile defense debate to resurface. Answering these questions will require an analysis of the context in which this system was envisioned, as well as the positions and motives of the four main actors in this project: the United States, the Russian Federation, and the Czech Republic and Poland, and what the future holds for missile defense in Europe in the next decade. In the end, we will see what role the debate over missile defense will have in the future architecture of the global security environment, and what implications it will carry for relations between the U.S., Russia, and Europe.
Chapter 1:

U.S. Missile Defense in Context

Part 1: a Brief History of U.S. Missile Defense Initiatives

1.1.a. Missile Defense Initiatives from World War II until the Reagan Administration

While the controversy over National Missile Defense (NMD) has often been conveniently pinned as simply an extension of the unilateral and nationalist policies of the Bush administration, the truth is that U.S. plans for missile defenses are in fact quite a bit older and span several administrations, though they have never been devoid of controversy. In fact, ever since the invention of the ballistic missile by Nazi Germany during the Second World War, missile defense has been discussed, at varying stages of intensity. The destructive display of German V-2 missiles being used to attack targets in London and Antwerp in the middle stages of the war in Europe prompted talk of missile defense systems as early as 1942. It was not, however, until 1962 that actual anti-ballistic missiles were tested by the United States, with the launch of the Nike Zeus interceptor missile used to destroy a mock warhead launched from the Marshall Islands. This led to the development of the Sentinel Missile Defense System under the Johnson administration, though the system was never fully operational.5

It became very evident within a short amount of time, however, that the actual capacity of the system to achieve in terms of defense was far outweighed by the offensive threat, particularly with the emergence of China as a nuclear power, as well as being financially overwhelming. The Soviet Union had also developed a similar system to

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5 Bormann, 45-47
The escalation of hostilities between the U.S. and the USSR in the late 1960’s as a result of various ‘theater wars’ (such as the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Vietnam War, and the Six Day War in the Middle East), led to missile defenses becoming a good forum for negotiation and compromise as a way to cool tensions. The result of these dealings was the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT) of the late 1960’s between the U.S. and the USSR, culminating in the 1972 SALT-I and the Anti-Ballistic Missiles (ABM) Treaties which limited both the U.S. and the Soviet Union to two land-based sites for static missile defense (amended to one in 1974) and disallowed a ‘national’ missile defense system entirely (or a system capable of protecting an entire nation as opposed to one specific site). The ABM treaty created (or at least entrenched) the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) and the pursuit of deterrence (as there was no limit on offensive ICMB’s, only static missile defenses). The concept of deterrence is best described in the following manner:

“The object of military deterrence is to reduce the probability of enemy military attacks, by posing for the enemy a sufficiently likely prospect of that he will suffer a net loss as a result of the attack, or at least a higher net loss or lower net gain than would follow from his not attacking.”

The acceptance of MAD, and the ABM Treaty, followed the logical conclusion that by preventing the creation of Ballistic Missile Defenses, the motives for pursuing offensive capabilities would be lowered with the elimination of a possibility for advantage through

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6 Ibid, 35, full text can be found in Article 1 of the ABM Treaty, 1972
7 Snyder, 12
unilateral static defense, ensuring stability and strategic relations between the superpowers.  

1.1.b. From SDI to the Clinton Administration

It was not until the mid 1980’s that Missile Defense was once again brought forward on the agenda, and arguably was given any serious and lasting impetus. The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) of U.S. President Ronald Reagan (mockingly dubbed ‘Star Wars’) announced in a now infamous speech in 1983 was an attempt to create a comprehensive system to ‘intercept and destroy strategic missiles’ before they could reach U.S. territory, as well as usher in arms control and remove the U.S. from the volatile ‘canon of deterrence’, which was dependent on rational decision making. The desire to move away from deterrence, and reliance on massive retaliation as a means to prevent aggression, is an extremely important precedent for the character and purpose of NMD. Through SDI the U.S. could use missile defense as a coercion tool in arms control negotiations, and move away from ‘quantity’ of weapons stockpiles to ‘quality.’ Though SDI was never built, staying in the research and development arena, it nonetheless proved its symbolic weight when it was instrumental in bringing about the INF Treaty (which eliminated medium-ranged ground based missiles), played a decisive role in the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, and set the precedent about the purpose and values of NMD for future administrations.

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9 Miller and Van Evera

10 Cimbala, 7

11 Bormann, 49
The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union changed the focus of missile defenses from the now defunct threat of a massive missile strike from the Soviet Union (being the only country with the ability to deliver such an attack) to a more concentrated focus on limited and specific threats. With the signing of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) the U.S. and the Soviet Union agreed to drastically reduce their strategic nuclear forces (by 40% down to 6000 warheads each), though SDI and the concept of a missile defense system did not disappear but if anything was taken more seriously. The purpose of missile defense was re-envisioned, by then President George H.W. Bush as a system to protect not only the U.S., but also its allies, and introduced the concept of ‘force groupings’ to protect against specific accidental, limited, and unauthorized strike threats in the Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS) program (in other words, a limited as opposed to comprehensive missile defense). This was taken to mean particularly accidental or deliberate strikes from ‘rogue states’ such as Iran, Iraq, Libya, and North Korea. In fact, experiences with Iraqi Scud Missiles during the Gulf War served to further the perceived necessity of a working system despite the declining Soviet threat that had up to this point been the defining justification for the plan.

The incoming Clinton administration, free of both the Cold War and the Gulf War, did lower budget allotments for missile defense, but did not cancel plans for the program. If anything, they were enhanced. President Clinton renamed the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization (SDIO) to the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (BMDO), and put missile defense squarely at the front of U.S. defense strategy. Adopting the GPALS model, Clinton separated missile defense into three parts, one

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12 Ibid
13 Cimbala, 13
focusing on a limited ground based national missile defense, a mobile theatre defense system to protect U.S. allies from medium range strikes, and a space-based warning system.\textsuperscript{14} The requirements of the Clinton plan would require a renegotiation of the AMB Treaty, however, by requiring a NMD land based system in Alaska (outside of the permitted one site, which was placed in North Dakota to protect missile silos) and unable to find support from Russia, the Clinton plan was left for the next administration to either realize or abandon.

\textit{1.1.c. The Administration of George W. Bush and NMD}

Although plans for NMD reach back to the beginnings of the Cold War, it cannot be argued that they did not reach their zenith until the election of George W. Bush to the Presidency in 2000. Almost immediately into his Presidency, Bush made it clear that he intends to aggressively pursue NMD, citing the rise of small rogue nations developing nuclear and chemical weapons to be the greatest threat to the U.S. (as opposed to Russia or China). His intent was the development of a system that could defend against all incoming ballistic missiles, from anywhere in the world.\textsuperscript{15} As the President made clear in several speeches, the intended system would comprise land, air, and sea elements designed to protect ‘the United States, it’s allies, and it’s forces overseas from ballistic missile attacks from rogue nations.’\textsuperscript{16} The Budget for missile defense was increased by 50\%, going from $5.3 billion to $7.8 billion (Bush requested $8.3 billion initially, but was not entirely obliged by Congress) and the BMDO was further renamed the Missile

\begin{flushleft}\textsuperscript{14} Hildreth, 3 \end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}\textsuperscript{15} Discussed by Vladimir Rukavishnikov in “The U.S. – Russian Dispute Over Missile Defense”, Connections Quarterly Journal, Volume VII, Number 4, Fall 2008 \end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}\textsuperscript{16} Hildreth, 4 \end{flushleft}
Defense Agency (MDA) with a great deal of freedom to maneuver. In addition, Bush did not hesitate to make it known that his intent was to withdraw from the ABM Treaty (as opposed to seek its amendment, as under the Clinton administration) in order to pursue this policy, stating that the U.S. needed a “new framework that allows us to build missile defenses to counter the different threats of today’s world.” The United States did officially withdraw from the ABM Treaty on June 13, 2002. In the same year, however, the Administration committed to up arms reduction talks, culminating in the signing of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), or the Moscow Treaty, which would limit both sides to between 1,700 to 2,200 operationally deployed warheads by 2012. Components of the U.S. missile defense shield were initially deployed (and partially operational) in 2004. As it stands, NMD is currently being rethought by the Obama administration with the goal to expand in order to better protect U.S. Allies.

Part 2: NMD: Realities and Debates

1.2.a. Current Status of NMD, and the Bush and Obama Proposals

The current NMD, called the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system (GMD) is a network of high-powered X-band radars designed to monitor and track ICBM’s which allow (in theory) for a battery of interceptor missiles to destroy the incoming warheads at the three stages of flight. The system comprises a ‘layered’ defense which allows for

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17 For a comprehensive overview of the structure, history, and mandate of the MDA, please refer to: “Study on the Mission, Roles, and Structure of the Missile Defense Agency (MDA)”, by General Larry D. Welch (USAF Ret.) and David L. Briggs, from the Institute of Defense Analyses, August 2008

18 George W. Bush, Missile Defense Speech, National Defense University, May 1, 2001

19 Bormann, 55, and Rukavishnikov, 83

20 Petr B. Romashkin and Pavel S. Zolotarev, and Cimbala, 43
multiple chances to defend against an incoming missile, hence the necessity for more than a single site. According to the official numbers of the MDA, the system currently comprises 30 ground-based interceptor missiles based in California, supported by three X-Band Radars in Beale Air Force Base in California, Fylingdales, United Kingdom, and Thule, Greenland. By 2010 the Interceptors are to be placed in Fort Greely, Alaska.  

In 2002 the Bush administration approached both Warsaw and Prague to discuss placing elements of the system on their soil, initially to a warm reception. Formal negotiations did not begin in earnest until 2007. The Central European sites were to follow the same pattern as similar installations in California or Alaska, comprising of a high powered X-Band tracking radar in Brdy, Czech Republic (relocating a current radar used in the Pacific) at an American military installation (another source of controversy), and be accompanied by placing ten interceptor missiles in Poland. The interceptors were to be placed by 2011, with the Czech radar (the more important of the two sites) to be completed by 2013. The system was to be complementary to already existing sites in the United Kingdom and Greenland and was desired to be compatible and interoperable with NATO Theatre Missile Defense (TMD) (though this has been called into question).  

After a review on the subject ordered during his first month in office, President Obama announced a desire to shift away from the static Ground based interceptor (GBI) system proposed by the previous administration to pursue what he calls a “stronger, smarter, swifter” system of sea-based intermediate range Aegis missiles, that could cover


\[\text{23 Ibid.}\]
a greater area and be enhanced to include mobile land based SM-3 missiles in Europe by 2018.^[24]

(Please Consult Figures 1-5 in Appendix I for diagrams showing the disposition of U.S. Missile Defenses)

1.2.b. The purpose of U.S. Missile Defense Components in Central Europe

The proposed radar site in Brdy, Czech Republic and its sister facility in Poland have been the primary sources of tension over missile defense, in the U.S., in Russia, and in Europe. The Bush government, despite the opposition, continued to claim that a Central European component is crucial to the whole NMD system, and represents the solution to a weak link. It would be hard to imagine a system that would cost the United States $4 billion^[25] and has already had immense political costs could simply be a benevolent attempt to protect U.S. allies from potential rogue states. So what purpose would the Central European sites have served?

As stated in the Congressional Research Service report on “Long-Range Ballistic Missile Defense in Europe”, the official function for the site was “a long-range missile defense system in Europe to defend U.S. forward deployed forces in Europe, friends and allies, and the United States against long-range ballistic missile threats.”^[26] Furthermore, in the report, one finds:

“The initial capability is not sufficient to protect the United States from extant and anticipated rogue nation threat. We must therefore close gaps in the system and improve its capability to keep pace... Additionally to ensure full coverage to the United States against threats from the Middle East, we will upgrade an Early Warning Rader in Thule, Greenland. This radar, in conjunction with the radar at Fylingdales, U.K., provides the ability to track threats to the U.S. and Europe from the Middle East. Because we must protect


these radars or risk losing the “eyes” of our system, we are planning to field ground-based interceptors and an associated ground-based midcourse radar in Europe. This achieves four goals: protecting the foreign based radars; improving protection of the United States by providing additional early intercept opportunities; extending this protection to our allies and friends; and demonstrating international support of ballistic missile defense.”

The outlined goals in this statement demonstrate the two crucial aspects of a system in Central Europe. The first being the protection of pre-existing assets in the United Kingdom and Greenland, who in turn are important in the overall framework of protecting the U.S. homeland. This can hardly be surprising, as in a quid pro quo mentality, offering to build a protection system in Central Europe to protect (exclusively) ones allies simply from a sense of generosity is entirely unrealistic in the modern geopolitical security context.

The second major aspect, though woefully ignored in the debate on missile defense is the idea of “demonstrating international support” for ballistic missile defenses. With the U.S. being recently accused of harsh unilateralism, driven only by self-interest, and therefore unpredictable or unreliable, developing an international community for missile defense accomplishes two goals. On the one hand, it reinforces the U.S. aim to return to multilateralism, and demonstrates U.S. commitment to its allies and to threats that don’t directly target U.S. territory. On the other hand it is a modern rebuilding of Hadrian’s Wall, demonstrating a desired shift from overwhelming force, large stockpiles of weapons, and aggressive deterrence policy towards a controlled, strategic, and static defense. The diplomatic damage caused by the Iraq war, in many cases causing a serious rupture between the U.S. and its allies, makes seeking international approval very important. This assurance is needed considering the system has a primary function of defending U.S. assets, not allied territory though they could be targeted. As former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said: “The United States has no interest in

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27 Fiscal Year 2008 MDA Budget Request, via Congressional Research Service
deploying defenses that would separate us from our friends and allies.”\(^{28}\) This is an important promise.

1.2.c. Arguments against NMD and the Central European System

Criticism for NMD, particularly the Central European components, was based from two angles. The first is the technical shortcomings of the system itself, the second being the political costs of the project and criticism of the perceived underlying motives for NMD. One of the harshest critics of NMD, Philip Coyle\(^{29}\), sums up his critique well by saying “the system has no demonstrated capability to defend the United States, let alone Europe, under realistic operational conditions” and “the proposed U.S. missile defense system in Europe creates much havoc and provides no security in return.”\(^{30}\)

As an expert on ballistic defense, Coyle has serious misgivings about the technical capabilities of the system in the first place, doubting its ability to perform the tasks promoted by the MDA, making the distinction between capabilities and intent. Coyle’s technical critique hinges on the fact that only seven out of thirteen intercept tests were successful, and even then only because they were conducted with ‘advance information about the mock attack, information no real enemy would willingly provide.” He critiques the tests stating:

\(^{28}\) Donald Rumsfeld, Munich Conference on European Security Policy, February 3, 2001, via Rukavishnikov

\(^{29}\) Coyle is currently a senior advisor to the Center for Defense Information and former assistant secretary of defense and director of Operational Test and Evaluation in the Department of Defense

“one cannot say that the tests are operationally realistic, as any country that could make a long-range, multistage ballistic missile that could reach the United States or Europe could also add simple but effective decoys to the missile… To use a popular analogy, shooting down an enemy missile is like trying to hit a hole-in-one in golf when the hole is moving 17,000 mph. And if the enemy uses decoys and countermeasures, missile defense is like trying to hit a hole-in-one when the hole is moving at 17,000 mph and the green is covered with black circles the same size as the hole.”  

He refers to the four criteria on NMD deployment of the Clinton White House:

1. Whether threat is materializing;
2. The status of the technology, based on initial series of rigorous flight tests, and the proposed system’s operational effectiveness;
3. Whether the system is affordable; and
4. The implications that going forward with NMD deployment would hold for the overall strategic environment and arms control objectives.

He finds all four criteria to be lacking in the proposed NMD system. This, political considerations aside, should be enough to discredit NMD according to Coyle.  

The misgivings over the political costs and underlying motives were shared by many, and form the basis of most critiques of NMD. These can be summed up as: the damage (current and future) to U.S. – Russia – Europe relations; the adverse effects on non-proliferation and arms control attempts; and the flimsy nature of the stated threat from rogue states, particularly Iran and North Korea. While the former will be further explored later, the lack of consensus on an actual ‘threat’ is an important critique. Here again there is a twofold problem of capabilities and intent. The Bush administration claimed that Iran and North Korea “constitute major strategic threats” that are “unpredictable and dangerous, and cannot be constrained by traditional forms of military

\[31\] Ibid.

\[32\] Ibid.
deterrence, diplomacy, or arms control.”

North Korea has tested a nuclear device, and has a ballistic missile program, though no capability as of yet to reach the United States (though U.S. allies Japan and South Korea are within the threat zone). Iran has a growing nuclear testing program, but will not be able to weaponize nor create an ICBM until at least 2015, and only then with foreign assistance (such as from Russia or China).

It can be therefore said that no immediate threat exists, and this is enough for many to discredit missile defense, but even a future threat is not seen as a sufficient justification. Many scholars believe the danger of rogue states to be less an actual military threat and more an issue of ideology. According to Vladimir Rukavishnikov, the “U.S. national security establishment to a large degree remains captive to a Cold War mentality.” The Cold War mentality was dependent upon the concepts of deterrence and MAD, but also hinged on the idea of an ‘enemy’, or a target to deter. In this sense, it can be argued that the threat is both imagined and enflamed for the purpose of recreating ‘order’ in a global system shifting towards multipolarity with an increased importance for non-state actors, and a diminishing threat from states. Professor Vayrynen of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs states, in regard to North Korea and Iran, that: “Their political relevance is derived from both their own stubborn policies and the American political interpretation of their evil intentions.” These states, being out of the immediate control of U.S. foreign policy, makes them part of a morally based ‘Axis of Evil’, the modern re-invisioning of Reagan’s ‘Evil Empire.’ Coyle and others do not ascribe to this


34 Ibid.


36 Raimo Vayrynen in “Controversies Over Missile Defense In Europe”, Finish Institute of International Affairs, 2009
morally polar vision of the world; he states: “Why Iran would strike Europe with missiles is hard to fathom. And, bearing in mind the massive retaliation that would follow, why Iran would want to attack the United States is a question that goes unanswered.” He then adds: “In effect, the justification for the proposed missile defense systems for Europe depends on Iran behaving in a manner that is detrimental to its own survival.”

Assuming the logic of realism and infallibility of deterrence, one can find reason in this argument. Ultimately the argument, even assuming the acceptance of North Korean and Iranian threat to be concrete, it can be argued that placing missile defense systems in the Czech Republic and Poland serve only the make these countries into targets (with the enemy seeking to destroy these systems in traditional military strategy), where they were not threatened before.

1.2.d. The Arguments for extending NMD components to Europe

The case against missile defenses in general, and the Central European proposal in specific, seem rational and strongly based in solid theory. Nonetheless, many of the counterarguments discredit NMD without acknowledging that there are any benefits at all, which is an untrue assessment. The U.S. is surely aware of the technical difficulties associated with NMD, as well as the varying interpretations of threats from rogue states, yet continues to push for a missile defense system, even under the Obama Administration. As stated by U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, “those who say we are scrapping

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37 Coyle and Samson

38 The concepts of Nuclear Deterrence as they relate to Missile Defense are well described by Robert Powell in “Nuclear Deterrence Theory, Nuclear Proliferation, and National Missile Defense”, *International Security* Vol. 27, No 4 (Spring 2003) pp. -118
the Missile Defense Shield are either misinformed or misinterpreting reality.” There are a few reasons and the following are some of the more convincing.

Stating that missile defenses are a Cold War relic, that the U.S. is further destabilizing a world through its unilateral and divisive policies, and that rogue states do not pose a threat is equally a matter of perspective. Modern missile defenses, such as those that were proposed in Central Europe are not a hold over from the Cold War, in fact it can be argued they are a response to the resulting ‘strategic pluralism’ and ‘military uncertainty’ that emerged from the Cold War’s end, according to Klaus Blecher. He also points out that:

1. The assessment that there is a growing WMD threat is a shared opinion among NATO, Russia, Israel, Japan and others, even if the ‘from whom’ part is contended;

2. The system, while costly, is not out of the realm of possibility even if it cost $60 Billion over 20 years, it would still consume approximately 1% of the Pentagon’s budget

3. Decoupling, the idea that the U.S. without facing nuclear threat would cease to be a reliable ally, is a poor understanding of U.S. security policy and national interests, and acquiring ballistic missile defenses (for the U.S. and for Europe) reduces the risk of strategic blackmail;

4. 50% more is spent on TMD for Europe than on NMD, and Europe is just as likely to be threatened by missiles from rogue states, as the U.S. and Europe are so

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politically and economically intertwined that blackmail using attacks on allies would have nearly the same effect as a direct attack on the U.S. itself.

Thus under this argument, NMD would allow for two things that are supported by both the Europeans and the Russians: increased power leverage over rogue states, particularly in matters of non-proliferation, and further reductions of strategic nuclear offensive weapons, as strategic defenses reduce the need for such a large arsenal (risk reduction).

A further argument highlights that even the technological doubts about the project are not necessarily enough to discredit NMD, and that even though technologically imperfect it can create what Ivo Daalder calls ‘limited insurance defense.’\textsuperscript{41} In this scenario he argues: “This leaves a limited, but still important rationale for deploying missile defenses: 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 defenses than none at all.”\textsuperscript{42} Calculations about threats from North Korea and Iran are, and necessarily must be, conducted to determine what \textit{could} happen in a worst-case scenario. Having a missile defense system, even if it is unsure it will work, might be just enough to deter the calculus of an attacker, without altering a defenders strategy. If there is even a chance that an attacker could be stopped by missile defenses, leaving them open to retaliation without the achievement of any goal, they are far less likely to make an attempt (and in the case of North Korea or Iran, not likely to be financially able to pursue massive stockpiles like Russia). They are also less likely to pursue building offensive weapons, making missile defense a catalyst for further non-proliferation and arms control. In addition, as deterrence is based on rational actors making rational choices, it is not a perfect or infallible strategy. With rogue regimes, but especially with non-state mobile threats (such as terrorism),

\textsuperscript{41} Ivo H. Daalder, “Missile Defenses: the Case for Limited Insurance Defense”, Ibid.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
there is always the chance of irrational behavior irrespective of consequences. This may not be a likely scenario, but it cannot be discounted.
Chapter 2:

U.S. Missile Defense and Russia

Part 1: the Russian Response to U.S. Missile Defenses

2.1.a. Russian responses to NMD in Central Europe

Plans to station elements of NMD in the Czech Republic and Poland have been met with overwhelming hostility. According to Coyle, “the proposed missiles exacerbate U.S.-Russian relations to the point of creating a volatile situation that did not previously exist.” Russia, publicly proclaiming to be convinced of the threat this system poses to its national security, even went so far as to threaten military response if the proposed plan were to go ahead. While the U.S. continually reiterated that the purpose of the system would be to protect Europe and the United States from incoming ballistic missiles from Iran and other rogue states, Russia interpreted the projected to be in fact targeted against it, and was consistently strongly opposed the project.43 The Russian view on missile defense is that it would result in strategic instability between the U.S. and Russia.

The issue can be considered the result of the inability of Russia and the U.S. to reach agreement on amending the ABM Treaty and the subsequent unilateral U.S. withdrawal from the treaty in 2002. Opposition to the abrogation of the ABM Treaty was relatively muted, however, at the time. While then President Vladimir Putin criticized the

43 BBC Europe Diary: Missile Defense, May 31, 2007,
move, he reiterated the fact that the U.S. is not considered a threat to Russia.\textsuperscript{44} They did, however, begin to upgrade offensive strategic missile capabilities in addition to resuming strategic bomber patrol flights in the Arctic and Pacific.\textsuperscript{45}

The tone after the 2007 announcement to place interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar tracking base in the Czech Republic was by contrast remarkably hostile and icy, aimed particularly to intimidate the European host countries (to mixed effect, as will be later discussed). As a response, Putin threatened to deploy tactical nuclear missiles aimed at Europe in the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad, right on the European Union’s border. He also stated that the missile shield would change the world’s strategic stability and would escalate into a new arms race over the European continent.\textsuperscript{46} At the G8 summit in June 2007, where confrontation over the issue was expected, Russia unexpectedly offered a compromise, whereby the U.S. would be able to use an existing Russian Gabala early warning radar installation in Azerbaijan (currently leased with an option to renew). The U.S. refused this offer on the grounds that it would be required to give up plans for the European missile components, stating that the Gabala site would make a good complementary system, but not a worthy replacement. Another good reason to justify this is that the site is out of date, and not designed for tracking and intercepting missiles. Condoleeza Rice, then Secretary of State commented that: “One does not choose sites for missile defense out of the blue. It’s geography and geometry as to how you intercept a

\textsuperscript{44} Statement of Vladimir Putin, including talk of upgrading Russian forces, from Korunov “Washington Withdraws from the ABM Treaty” \textit{International Affairs} (Moscow), 48:4, 2002, via Rukavishnikov

\textsuperscript{45} Vayrynen

missile.\textsuperscript{47} Though there is merit to this argument, it is argued the Gabala site would be better stationed to intercept Iranian missiles, therefore its refusal further calling into doubt the truth behind claims that the Central European component of the missile shield is not aimed at Russia. One cannot be surprised that the U.S. would be wary of using a joint site with Russia, as this would seriously limit strategic use for the site (and necessitate potentially sensitive information sharing).

The signing of treaties between the United States and the Czech Republic and Poland in June and August of 2008 (respectively) saw another warning that Russian Iskander missiles would be placed in Belarus. Gen Vladimir Zaritsky, the chief of artillery and rocket forces for Russia's ground troops stated that "Any action meets a counter-action, and this is the case with elements of the US missile defense in Poland and the Czech Republic\textsuperscript{48} while Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov corroborated that "If objects [missile defence elements] appear near our border which, according to our assessment, are aimed at the neutralization of our potential, any military planner has to take measures so that this threat be eliminated."\textsuperscript{49} Furthermore, Russia has threatened to withdraw from obligations under the INF and CFE Treaties. As it stands, the future of NMD and any potential Russian response is contingent on the steps undertaken by the Obama administration as to the future of missile defenses.

\textit{2.1.b Understanding the Russian Response to NMD}

\textsuperscript{47} Matthew Lee, “Rice: Russia’s Softening on Missile Defense Won’t Alter US Plans” Associated Press, June 8, 2007, via Coyle and Samson

\textsuperscript{48} Adrian Blomfield, \textit{Russia Piles Pressure on EU over Missile Shield}, The Daily Telegraph, 15.11.2007

\textsuperscript{49} “Russia Hopes for US readiness to professionally discuss Missile Shield”, #29 JRL 2007-127, RIA Novosti via Johnson’s Russia List
Understanding Russian hostility towards a U.S. radar site and interceptors in Central Europe requires examining a multilayered and complicated set of issues, strategic, symbolic and historical/cultural. From a military standpoint, however, is there any reason for Russia to legitimately fear U.S. NMD?

The simple answer to this question is that the U.S. NMD site in Central Europe was not aimed specifically at Russia. However, one cannot say it would not have been useful against Russia if necessary. From a military standpoint, certain aspects of the shield could be considered cause enough for distrust of the plans (especially given U.S. opposition to joint missile defense and general inflexibility). Romashkin and Zolotarev point out these sources of mistrust:

1. Given that Russia is currently the only state capable of destroying the United States with its nuclear potential, it is not unimaginable that a layered NMD system would be used against Russia if necessary;
2. U.S. reluctance for joint ventures in European TMD;
3. The lack of guarantee on future expansion of the system, that is to say, there is no saying that the Central European system will be limited to one radar and ten interceptor missiles in the long term, as part of a broader and more capable European TMD system;
4. The radar in the Czech Republic would be powerful enough to be able to monitor missile and space activities in European parts of Russia, expanding intelligence capabilities to target Russian territory and assets, including the Northern Fleet;
5. The ability to mount offensive warheads on the Polish interceptor missiles with relative ease if so chosen.\footnote{Petr B. Romashkin and Pavel S. Zolotarev}
These factors in and of themselves did not make the site an immediate threat to Russia, but in the long term the installations could be expanded in the absence of a mechanism for joint control. More than likely, any desired use against the Russians from NMD would concern factors linked to the deterioration of the Russian nuclear arsenal and command and control mechanisms. Equipment failures, operator errors, stolen warheads, or any other accidental, unauthorized, and erroneous attack would be the main concern.\textsuperscript{51}

Ultimately, Russia had little to fear from the program, as at least initially there would be little to no capability to defend against a concerted or determined Russian attack on either Europe or the United States. Basic math dictates that against Russia’s arsenal of thousands of missiles, ten interceptor missiles would be as useful as none.

The true reasons behind Russian hostility to the plan are essentially existential, as well as a result of the political establishment of Russia, that is both poorly understood by the West and blatantly misrepresented by most media. In a sense then, one must examine the political climate that is confronting the missile shield.

\textit{Russian Domestic Political Context:}

The climate in Moscow through which Russian policy is formulated is best described by Mikhail Tsypkin when he says:

“The Russian political system rests uneasily on powerful financial industrial clans whose relations can be best described by Winston Churchill’s reference to a bulldog fight under the rug. The president’s job is to manage this competition lest it get out of control and the country, lacking much of the apparatus of a genuine democracy- real political parties, a strong parliament, thriving civil society and responsible media- descend into semi-chaos, which might swallow him and his court. This is a complicated job: to keep the system operating smoothly, lucrative government appointments need to be apportioned among various clans, and public opinion needs to be manipulated to avoid surprises during elections.”\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{51} From the 1998 Rumsfeld Report, via Bormann

\textsuperscript{52} Mikhail Tsypkin, “Russian politics, policy-making and American missile defense”, \textit{International Affairs}, 85: 4 (2009) 781-799
This precarious grip on the Moscow ruling elite, as cultivated by Putin and his inner circle, is incredibly important, and rests on the following publicity package used by Putin’s Kremlin:

1. Putin is the true father of the nation.
2. At home, he has reined in corrupt oligarchs, and is using Russia’s newly found wealth to improve standards of living.
3. Abroad, he has reasserted Russia as a great power; unlike Gorbachev and Yeltsin, Putin will not allow Russia to be pushed around.53

Constant competition within the upper echelons of Russia’s ruling elite therefore necessitates constant wariness of the public image they portray, disallowing various power factions of the Putinist elite using the media to grab power and disrupt the balance. As such, the Kremlin elite is prone to panic in the face of unfavorable foreign policy events, and public criticism. Something as important as missile defense, particularly involving the United States and former Soviet satellite states, make for excellent ‘political theater’ and require the President to maintain his carefully crafted image of strength and control. As Tsypkin states: “It is not surprising that Putin preferred to exploit the issue of missile defense himself rather than let others use it against him.”54

Strategic Limitations of Russian armed forces:

An important facet of Russia’s image of power rests on its large nuclear arsenal, which is also used to compensate for the weakness of Russian conventional forces. In this way missile defense presents a dual problem for the Russian elite. On the one hand any strategic advantage the U.S. can develop in the field of anti-ballistic technology,

53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
limits the potency and threat of the main wing of Russia’s defense structure.55 In
addition, it brings into media focus this very problem. As Tsypkin says: “Any agreement
approving American missile defense in Europe, however favorable to Russia, would be
likely to trigger a discussion among the Russian elites of the state of Russian strategic
forces: an unwelcome development for the Kremlin, given it’s many problems in
maintaining and developing these forces, as well as ignorance of the many elite members
when it comes to arms control and strategic weapons and their tendency to
demagogy.”56 Negative attention to the state of the Russian army, or the state of its
nuclear arsenal, especially vis-à-vis the United States would be unwelcome publicity for
the Putinist elite. This same phenomenon can be seen after the Russian invasion of
Georgia in August 2008, where Russian media portrayal of the potent display of strength
was contradicted by the reality of a myriad of problems for Russian ground forces in what
should have been an easy operation (examples include tanks breaking down before
reaching Georgia, Russian communications failing, and loss of Strategic bombers to
Georgian surface to air guns). He goes on to add: “The prospects for defense spending
are dim, unemployment is on the rise, and there is talk about the need for western
credits.”57 Missile defenses only serve to highlight Russia’s vulnerability, despite her
growing self-confidence.

Historical:

U.S. missile defenses are misunderstood for certain historical reasons, and
resented for other ones. Russia, having been nearly completely destroyed during the
Second World War, finds it hard to understand U.S. attachment to territorial defense and

55 Rukavishnikov

56 Tsypkin

57 Ibid.
protection of physical assets, the main aims of a missile defense program. Moscow does not have any intentions, nor for that matter the capability, to create a system that would protect the entire Russian homeland, using only a limited system to protect Moscow.

On the other hand encroachments of U.S. military technology closer to the Russian homeland remind of two sensitive areas for the Russian elite. The first event being the collapse of the Soviet superpower, something that continues to be a sensitive issue. The second being the expansion of NATO to Central and Eastern Europe in 1999, which was done both despite Russian objections (and inability to stop it) and against broken promises that NATO would not expand if Russia would allow the reunification of Germany.

*Future Ambitions and Self Image:*

There were fears that the deployment of a U.S. missile shield in Central Europe will have a direct impact on the future of Russian strategic interests. With the expansion of NATO and the EU to former Russian satellite states there has been a loss of influence over these areas. There is fear this might expand to places such as Georgia and the Ukraine, and further limit Russia’s freedom of action in areas it considers in its ‘sphere of influence’ and vital to its strategic interests.

Despite simply fear of lack of freedom of action, there is a specific element to the opposition to missile defenses in former Soviet satellites. Russia wants to have a place in Europe. There is significant historic, cultural, and economic links that makes Russia feel it is a part of the European political landscape and should remain a major actor. NMD in Central Europe challenges this desire. According to Tsypkin: “Russia seeks a place in Europe and views the growing role of its former satellites and Soviet Republics in European Institutions, whether NATO or the EU, as a threat to its aspirations, because these nations are suspicious of Russia’s intentions (Russian conduct and great power
rhetoric fuel such attitudes, but this escapes Moscow’s attention). American military installations in these countries are inevitably seen as one more step towards excluding Russia from Europe.”

This could be combined with current Russian desire to be considered (and consider themselves) a great power. A great power is also a major actor, and must be consulted on areas of global policy. This is to say, the Russians fear descending into mediocrity or irrelevance. This is not simply a result of Putin, but simply a general desire of Russia to return to its former power. Russia's great power status is often used in comparison to the United States as a counterbalance. In this sense, as Tsypkin says: “It often seems that a desire to be America’s equal, even in a highly negative relationship, drives Russia’s perceptions: they would rather be noticed as enemies than ignored as friends.” Additionally Russia is fully aware that given the domestic situation a response to missile defense will be necessary, primarily for internal reasons. However, remembering well the catastrophic consequences of engaging in an arms race in the late 1980’s (against SDI), Russia does not desire to enter another arms race with the United States, which would tie up precious petro-rubles and could lead to a new financial collapse.

Mistrust of American intentions and Skepticism:

Finally Russia has a tendency towards assuming the U.S. is hostile to Russia. In this sense, any attempt at arms control or U.S. military strategy is assumed to be a plot against Russian interests. One must also keep in mind that Putin and many of the ruling elite have come through the ranks of the Soviet intelligence services, which has skewed their perceptions in a very particular way. Tsypkin writes: “this is a characteristic of

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.
many alumni of the Soviet/Russian intelligence agencies, that ‘the underside’ of politics and economics is the only true story to tell. In other words, what is publicly available is usually a deceptive cover… Therefore, the harder the Americans try to convince the Russians that they mean no harm, the more the Kremlin becomes suspicious of US intentions.\textsuperscript{60} This is in addition to the character of Putin himself, who according to experts: “regards himself as an expert in foreign affairs, and has little use for advice of professionals from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and academia.”\textsuperscript{61} This plays into the hands of the more conservative and jumpy Ministry of Defense.

Having examined these facets of the Russian foreign policy machine, it can be easily seen why U.S. missile defense would spark great controversy with Russia. The debate over the issue was never a direct response to a serious level of alarm or threat on the part of Russia, but rather it sparked an existential crisis in the Russian elite. U.S. missile defense is a far greater threat for what it evokes and represents, than for what it actually does. In summary, Tsypkin gives the perfect description: “Thus, Russian politics and policy-making are characterized by a combination of overly pessimistic threat assessment, insufficient reliance on experts, predisposition to see the US as an enemy, and hubris.”\textsuperscript{62}

\textbf{2.1.c. The effects of NMD on future U.S. – Russian cooperation}

The year 2008 was a difficult one in U.S. and Russian relations, with the controversy over missile defense, the War in Georgia, and the financial crisis putting serious strain on the relationship. However, having examined the reasons behind the U.S.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
desire to deploy missile defenses in Europe and the reasons behind Russian opposition to the plan, the question remains to be asked, where does this leave U.S. – Russian relations and future cooperation, particularly in the field of missile defense, non-proliferation, and arms control? Will the controversy send the U.S. and Russia into a new ‘Cold War’ as some hysteric pundits claim, or are there opportunities for progress as a result of this diplomatic row?

According to many analysts, the missile defense shield, had it gone through, would have been incredibly detrimental to relations between the two powers. Issues cited refer to the breakdown of diplomacy between the U.S. and Russia (claimed to be a proven tactic in resolving issues of proliferation) will lead to undesirable consequences such as the weaponization of space, and the breakdown of pressure on Iran and North Korea to abandon all nuclear ambitions. Coyle states that the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in 2002, and the subsequent Russian withdrawal from the CFE Treaty in 2007 will have adverse trickle down effects on the future of arms control (as more countries would be less likely to sign on to documents devoid of the U.S. and/or Russia). Additional skeptics include Rukavishnikov, who claims “we believe that missile defense systems, while redefining deterrence, are nevertheless part of a discredited security paradigm, and will lead to greater global instability, and not to the abolition of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems through diplomacy.”

These negative assessments are not ungrounded in educated speculation. The collapse of many Cold War era anti-ballistic treaties (such as the ABM, INF, and CFE) can be seen to signal deterioration in global security. If both the United States and Russia

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63 Coyle and Samson

64 Rukavishnikov
choose to pursue a policy grounded in mistrust and continue in a ‘Cold War mentality’,
this may very well be the truth.

On the contrary, however, one can argue the opportunities that are now open as a
result of the debate on missile defenses are quite extensive. This comes as a result of the
fact that the U.S. and Russia share more interests than they have divergent. These issues
include particularly preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)
and ballistic missiles, and the prevention of a nuclear armed Iran and North Korea.

Any future cooperation will require a new atmosphere of trust. Luckily, both the
U.S. and Russia are under new administrations since the beginning of the row over
missile defense, and are therefore in a position to negotiate and pursue joint interests.
The backtrack by the Obama administration on the Central European elements of the
missile shield are, if nothing else, a concession to Russia with hopes of reigniting a
positive relationship. A good first step of this would be to take seriously Putin’s
suggestion at the G8 summit in 2008 to develop an integrated data exchange network, in
Moscow and Brussels, from national early warning systems so that information on missile
launches can be jointly analyzed and joint recommendations could be made, enhancing
trust between Russia and NATO over missile defenses.65 This has a precedent in the
Joint Data Exchange Center (JDEC) in Moscow, already ten years old.66 The results of
the NATO summit in Bucharest of 2008, and subsequent U.S. – Russia summit in Sochi
have shown that hope for finding a solution and compromise in the area of missile

65 Romashkin and Zolotarev

66 Bormann, 72
defense, particularly joint missile defense between Russia and NATO is not impossible, or even highly unlikely.\textsuperscript{67}

The move away from Cold War era treaties, such as the ABM, actually offers a fresh opportunity to negotiate modern arms control treaties. The ABM justified the possession of nuclear arsenals for the purpose of MAD and nuclear deterrence, disallowed serious ballistic defenses and therefore promoted the active use of weapons stockpiles and offensive minded security strategies. This kind of thinking is truly a relic of the Cold War, and should be reexamined, with a more wide-reaching disarmament goal and the discouragement of nuclear deterrence as it has been known to today. SORT is a great start to a new series of agreements between the U.S. and Russia, advocating greater transparency, exchange of information, potential cooperation in missile defense, and the reduction of nuclear warheads.\textsuperscript{68} However, SORT limits only the amount of warheads, and not how and where they are used, this leaves room for new treaties that address this issue. The expiration of the START II Treaty in 2009 allows for serious negotiation of further weapons reduction, and a new CFE Treaty to be envisioned. Acceptance of missile defenses could lead to greater disarmament cooperation, and stricter arms control as offensive weapons would be less necessary when coupled with strategic defense systems. Karen Ruth Adams notes that “in defense-dominant international systems wars are much less frequent than when offense dominates.”\textsuperscript{69} Arms reductions reduces the potential of accidental strikes, considering neither Russia or the U.S. as rational actors are

\textsuperscript{67} Andrey S. Makarychev, “NATO and Russia After the Bucharest Summit: Is a New Security Agenda Feasible?”, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No.19, 2008

\textsuperscript{68} Vayrynen

likely to initiate nuclear war any time soon, while solid missile defenses allow one the security to actively engage in arms reduction without lowering their strategic security.

Ultimately the future of U.S. – Russia cooperation hinges on what path the two new administrations choose: cooperation or competition. While concessions on missile defense have seen positive feedback from Moscow, how much this will lead to an actual improvement in relations in the long term is still in question. For one, the underlying power struggle in Moscow between more moderate President Dimitry Medvedev and more assertive Prime Minister Vladimir Putin means Russian foreign policy can quickly change, especially if Putin is reelected to the Presidency in 2012, an increasingly likely prospect.70 In addition, Russia is well aware that this does not mean the end of missile defenses, and the same issues could still arise in the future over new developments to NMD. Concrete agreements within the next two years on Iran, non-proliferation, missile defense, and further cooperation would be welcome. Competition, a new arms race, and a return to MAD based nuclear deterrence, would have negative consequences for the entire global system.

70 The Economist, “The Vladimir and Dmitry Show”, September 17, 2009
Chapter 3:

U.S. Missile Defense and Central Europe

Part 1: the Czech Republic and Poland

Despite the fact that the Czech Republic and Poland played crucial roles in the missile shield plans, very little attention is actually paid to the role of these two countries regarding the proposed plan. The plan generated a great deal of controversy in the domestic politics of these two states, and reached across two governments of opposing nature in both states. The controversy began in 2007, with official negotiations on the plan beginning between Washington and Prague and Warsaw, though the plans for the system reach back to its origins in 2002.

3.1.a. Background on the role of Poland in NMD negotiations

The Government of Poland was approached early on as a possible site for the location of U.S. interceptor missiles and the plan was more or less accepted under the populist-nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) government of Jaroslaw Kaczynski. Given the acknowledged risk of hosting U.S. equipment, the Polish government has requested the deployment of American Patriot missiles as a means of extra defense against short and medium ranged missiles.\(^71\) Though opposition parties had different misgivings about the transparency and command and control aspects of the project, there was general consensus. The change of government in 2007 replaced the PiS led government with a

more center leaning Civic Alliance (PO) who was much tougher on demands for the system. Negotiations did not reach positive conclusions in much of early 2008, with a failure to agree on terms, and greater demand for U.S. security guarantees and improvements to military capabilities, as well as stalling due to domestic popular opposition. This opposition was based on fears over retention of sovereignty, the threat of Russian countermeasures, and also a feeling of insufficient gratitude for the Polish roles in the U.S. led invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. Vayrynen states: “In general, the Polish - U.S. talks on the deployment of interceptors were characterized by arm-twisting between allies who share some common goals but, at least over the short term, have different interests.”

The negotiations were tense, to the point that alternate sites were proposed, such as Lithuania. The mood changed, however, with the Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008. Seeing Russian aggression, and reminding Poland of the negative implications to their security, emboldened Poland and a bilateral deal was reached very quickly. The treaty, called the ‘Declaration on Strategic Cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of Poland’ was signed August 20, 2008, committed the U.S. to ‘boosting Poland’s security and improving U.S. facilities located on it’s territory’, stressed the ‘importance of political and military cooperation,’ and stated the countries intend to ‘conclude a Ballistic Missile Defense Framework Agreement’. Six days later, the ‘Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the United States of America Concerning the Deployment of Ground-Based Ballistic Missile Defense Interceptors In the Territory of

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72 Coyle and Samson

73 Vayrynen

74 “Russia Angry Over U.S. Missile Shield” Al-Jazeera, August 15th, 2008

75 Vayrynen
the Republic of Poland’ was signed between Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice and Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski.76

3.1.b. Background on the role of the Czech Republic in NMD negotiations

Talk of placing a U.S. missile defense radar installation in the Czech Republic began in 2002 when the Social Democrat (CSSD) led Czech Government “offered the United States the opportunity to deploy the missile defense system on Czech soil.”77 The fall of the CSSD government in 2006 ushered in a center-right coalition government headed by the Civic Democrats (ODS) with support from the Christian Democrats (KDU-CSL) and the Greens. The new government announced its intention to continue support for NMD and the offer of hosting the installation. The situation, however, deteriorated when the now opposition leader CSSD backpedaled on their support, and the junior coalition Greens were opposed to the project.78 Negotiations nonetheless were launched in January of 2007, setting off one of the greatest political rows since the founding of the Czech Republic in 1993. Public opposition to the proposed radar site has seen the largest organized demonstrations against the government since the 1989 Velvet Revolution, with 60-70% of the population against the project according to opinion polls.79

76 “Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the United States of America Concerning the Deployment of Ground-Based Ballistic Missile Defense Interceptors In the Territory of the Republic of Poland”, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

77 Czech Republic Seeks Joining Missile Defense Shield Project, BBC Monitoring European, September 17, 2002, via the Congressional Research Service

78 Congressional Research Service

The political debate over the missile shield had essentially become an extension of the heated partisan debate over country leadership between the ODS and the CSSD, who used popular opposition to the system as a means by which to enhance its political platform. The government, even though divided on the issue, pushed forward with negotiations, with visits to Prague by President Bush before the G8 summit in June 2007 and General Trey Obering (then head of the MDA) in October of 2007. Agreement was reached between the two countries by April of 2008, and in July the ‘Agreement Between the United States and the Czech Republic on Establishing a United States Ballistic Missile Defense Radar Site in the Czech Republic’ was signed by Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg and Secretary Rice. The Treaty still faces the challenge of ratification in Parliament, with an uphill battle. Senate approval was granted in November of 2008, but ratification in the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) has been suspended as a result of the fall of the government in 2009 losing a CSSD led vote of no confidence. One of the main issues was the government pursuit of installing U.S. missile defense components on Czech soil without a referendum, and the contended issue of sovereignty of the site. A vote on the issue was to be conducted after the elections are held in late 2009 and a new government is in place. However, both the U.S. decision to cancel the program and domestic political turbulence (which has led to a postponement of the elections into 2010) has rendered a revisiting of the issue unlikely unless a new concrete U.S. proposal is presented to the Czech government.

3.1.c. Pawns or Strategic Players? Motives for participating in NMD

A startling aspect of the negotiations on missile defense in Central Europe has been the large divergence between popular opinion and government policy. This is most

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80 Vayrynen
evident in the Czech Republic, where staunch support for the program led ultimately to
the collapse of the government, and a huge uproar among the populace. In this situation
one must examine the underlying motives for hosting the U.S. radar base, as it is hard to
believe that any rational government would commit political suicide without sufficient
reason to risk doing so.

The most obvious, and weakest motive would be the ‘sticks and carrots’ approach
of the United States. The carrot would be U.S. investments in the Czech Republic (and
modernization of armed forces in Poland) as well as protection under current U.S. sea
based anti-ballistic missiles for Czech territory. The stick was the combination of a
demand of obedience as NATO members, and the subtle reminder of an unspoken debt
for U.S. support after the fall of Communist regimes in modernization, economic
reconstruction, and security through NATO membership. While not insignificant, a
simple sticks and carrots approach without underlying strategic motive would not be
enough. Instead, three factors were the most important motives:

*Strategic Leverage*

The Czech Republic is a small country. Though part of both NATO and the EU,
with a strong mid sized economy and enjoying a generally good reputation
internationally, there is still little in the way of strategic leverage. This is particularly
evident vis-à-vis the United States, the European Union, and Russia. Hosting a U.S.
missile shield would give the Czech Republic certain advantages. A joint declaration by
the Departments of State and Defense revealed the missile shield would “enhance the
collective security of the NATO Alliance, strengthen transatlantic unity, reaffirm
America’s commitments to European security, and avoid the decoupling of European and

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81 Rukavishnikov
American security interests.”\(^{82}\) This was precisely the goal of the Czech Republic, particularly under the center-right ODS government. Along with other newer EU member states, the Czechs have been reluctant about the advancement of EU military capabilities under the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), and particularly afraid of the negative effects European defense initiatives will have on the unity and strength of NATO and the decoupling of U.S. security presence in Europe. Hosting a U.S. military installation will give greater weight to Czech opposition to more European defense and reducing American presence (potentially culminating in the irrelevance of NATO, or even a rivalry between NATO and ESDP), which can be considered a long-term goal of EU leader France. In addition, while supporting the economic and social benefits of EU membership, further attempts at integration have been met with hesitation. Fredrik Bynander rightly points out that “EU-style multilateralism may be attractive as a model for economic growth and social development, but it is hardly a reassuring foundation for national security.”\(^{83}\)

The Czech Republic in particular has been hesitant on the Lisbon Treaty. The CSSD supports further integration, while the ODS does not, with public opinion mixed on the issue. The missile defense issue has been used by ODS as a bargaining tool with the opposition over Lisbon. The reason is likely skepticism in regards to the motives of older West European member states with regards to the further ‘deepening’ of integration, seen as predominantly a way by which to protect West Europe’s economic and political interests at the expense of the sovereignty of the newer member states. In this sense, the U.S. has always represented an important actor in protecting East European interests in

\(^{82}\) Vayrynen

\(^{83}\) Fredrik Bynander, “Poland and the Czech Republic: New Members Torn Between the EU and NATO in “Changing Transatlantic Security Relations: Do the US, the EU, and Russia form a new strategic triangle?” Edited by Jan Hallenberg and Hakan Karlsson, *Contemporary Security Studies*, Routledge, 2006 pp 63-83
the face of Western Europe, particularly in light of uncomfortably friendly relationships between Germany and Russia, and France and Russia. With the U.S. missile shield in place, and the accompanying commitment to Central Europe, the Czechs (and Poles) could accept Lisbon, knowing the relevance and commitment to NATO would not be endangered, western bilateral deals with Russia could be mitigated, and the new member states would hold a new form of leverage to protect their interests vis-à-vis the European Union.

Enhancing the NATO Security Guarantee

There is a very old and well known Cold War dilemma regarding NATO, questioning whether Article V collective security was sufficient (and more than a simple paper guarantee) and whether Washington would truly go to war (particularly using nuclear weapons) with the Soviet Union in the case of an attack on a NATO member state. This is the problematic of any alliance that comprises a leader and host of dependant nations, a situation that has barely changed in modern times in regards to NATO, despite a change in the global order and the emergence of EU. Vayrynen makes the following observation via Glenn Snyder:

“If the alliance leader pursues offensive or otherwise expansive policies, such as enlarging membership of the alliance or deliberately aiming to weaken the position of an adversary, these could spawn counteractions. Such actions may not expose the smaller alliance members as long as the collective deterrence provided by the alliance leader is perceived to be credible and the fear of abandonment does not spread among the allies. However, if the leader pursues unilateral and offensive policies that leave the allies exposed, threats issued by the adversary, in particular if they are propped up by adequate offensive capabilities, have to be taken seriously. The expansion of the alliance may diminish its relative value to the old members as the resources of the leader become overstretched. The only credible response that the leader can make in such a situation is to recommit itself to the protection of its allies through appropriate political and military actions, particularly if threats against their security arise.”

84 The Economist, “Pie in the Sky”, September 17, 2009

85 Vayrynen

All of the theoretical scenarios proposed by Snyder have been realized. The NATO alliance has expanded. Unilateral action by the leader (the War in Iraq) has aggravated enemies and allies, exposing them to threat, as well as stretching the leaders resources. This can be seen by increasingly hostile Russian rhetoric (as well as an invasion of a potential future member of NATO, Georgia) and actual terrorist attacks on allied soil (in Madrid and London). While this in no way provides a conclusive list, the scenario is sufficiently demonstrated. The desire to place the missile shield demonstrated the attempt of the ‘alliance leader’ to tangibly recommit itself to the protection of its allies.

For the Czech Republic and Poland this is not only seen as a welcome guarantee for the commitment of the U.S. to the NATO allies, but also as enhancing their direct personal security. Placing American assets and personnel on the ground makes it far more likely that the U.S. would act to intervene in a crisis and stay interested in the continuing security of the Czech Republic and Poland, both providing an additional assurance to their security. An attack on these countries would no longer simply comprise aggression towards an ally, but also a direct attack on the citizens and property of the U.S., and if nothing else domestic pressure would require responsive action (as well as preventative policy).

New Assertiveness in the face of Russia

As has been shown, Russian hostility and threats towards the Czech Republic or Poland have not served to dissuade these countries, but rather has further emboldened them. Close to half a century as Soviet satellite states (without even counting various historical aggressions such as the Soviet invasions of both Poland and Czechoslovakia) with little room to conduct independent foreign and security policy has left a streak of defiance vis-à-vis Russia. Russian threats over the missile defense system have therefore

\[87 \text{ Vayrynen}\]
unsurprisingly resulted in Central European hostility to an attempt at meddling in internal affairs.

Being members of NATO and the EU, there is no room for Russia to attempt to dictate Czech and Polish policy, nor issue threats over security matters. Joining NATO represented a step towards post Cold War security for the Czech Republic. Joining the EU insured the future economic prosperity of the countries. The debate of missile defense has provided a unique opportunity. Using these twin guarantees allow these small states to show a bold face and demonstrate the will and ability to act independently in the face of a former hegemon. This symbolic ‘victory’ is important for the national psyche of the Czech Republic and Poland, and a good example for other post Soviet satellites or Soviet Republics. As Milan Vodicka, a senior writer for popular Czech newspaper Mlada Fronta Dnes, points out: “Moscow’s rigid position has hardened the resolve of Prague and Warsaw, which fear that the Kremlin is attempting to dictate the limits of Czech and Polish sovereignty and foreign policy. We have seen this before.”

In this way the U.S. missile shield came to be seen by many as the symbolic liberation once and for all from the past in the Warsaw Pact and Eastern Bloc. Bartosz Weglarczyk, an editor of Polish daily Gazeta Wyborcza states: “People wanted a permanent U.S. military installation in this part of Europe because it would mean the real end of the Iron Curtain.” This is important for a region that often feels it is treated as a second class citizen in NATO and the EU as a result of their history.

3.1.d. The Effects of Canceling NMD on Poland and the Czech Republic


89 Adam Easton, “Polish hopes shot down by US move”, September 17, 2009 from BBC News
The decision to cancel the Central European missile defense component has been handled in a very clumsy and poor manner by the Obama administration, and left political leaders in both the Czech Republic and Poland in a very awkward position. The announcement to end the plan, which many in Poland came to see as an added layer of protection from potential Russian aggression, came on September 17, which also happens to be the anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939, which determined the fate of that country for the next fifty years.\textsuperscript{90} It was announced to Czech PM Jan Fischer in a phone call that woke him in the middle of the night, before the announcement was made public the next day. This was a decision undertaken unilaterally without consultation of Prague or Warsaw, and announced with little warning. All in all, this has done little to show either commitment or sympathy for Central Europe from the new American administration.

All in all, the Czech Republic and Poland have lost more as a result of the canceling of the missile defense plan than they risked in its signing in 2008. Central European leaders feel a sense of abandonment, even betrayal, and fear that this heralds American disinterest in the region. Former Czech PM Mirek Topolanek, who has negotiated the deal with the U.S., reacted by saying: “It puts us in a position that we in Central Europe have known for the last 100 years: we’re not anchored by a strong security partner, a strong ally… I see this as a threat,” while former Polish President and dissident leader Lech Walesa claims Poland “should reconsider our approach to the US.”\textsuperscript{91} This was stated in the wake of an open letter sent to President Obama signed by many Central European leaders, including former Czech President and Dissident Leader Vaclav Havel, warning that the U.S.’s credibility could be undermined in the region.

\textsuperscript{90} The Economist, “Happy Holidays”, September 24, 2009

\textsuperscript{91} BBC News, “Mixed US Missile Shield Reaction”, September 17, 2009
should the missile plan be abandoned without consulting Prague and Warsaw. The letter hinted strongly at the half century of oppression the region underwent as a result of American ‘appeasing’ of Russia, and warning of naïveté in Obama’s desire to ‘reset relations’ with Russia. It also urged the U.S. to recommit to European security in the face of ‘creeping intimidation’ and ‘influence-peddling’ from Moscow by showing greater commitment to the regional role of NATO, and to missile defense. This warning was not heeded in the end, and the decision to cancel the plan has been viewed as a way to appease Russia at the expense of Central Europe bringing back uncomfortable memories.

Unless the U.S. can quickly find a new way to reassure Central Europe of its commitment to the region, and promise to honor investment and defense clauses that were to accompany the missile defense plan, there is likely to be a further degradation of relations, at a time when the region’s perception of America (traditionally a bastion of pro-Americanism since the end of the Cold War) has been quickly waning. According to a survey conducted by the German Marshall Fund, it is now Western Europe, not the ex-communist East, that is more pro-American and pro-NATO. The poll suggests that Central and Eastern Europeans were far less enthusiastic about Obama’s handling of foreign affairs than their Western counterparts (60% to 83%), were less likely to see American in a positive light (53% to 63%), were far less convinced that Transatlantic relations have improved in the past year (25% to 43%), and far less willing to abandon Western policies (such as NATO enlargement or missile defenses) to placate Russia and

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93 Gareth Jones, “East European’s seek Obamas support on Russia”, July 16, 2009, Reuters

94 The Economist, “End of an Affair?”, September 10, 2009
ensure energy supplies (28% to 41%). 95 This waning trust in the region, coupled with the canceling of missile defenses and increasing gestures towards Russia, will greatly inhibit future American ambitions for the region, as well as potentially destabilize, or even discredit, the NATO alliance as American leadership is put under further scrutiny.

The big winner in the situation, besides Russia, could arguably and ironically be the European Union. As pro-Americanism wanes, and confidence and trust in the U.S. guarantee of leadership and credibility of NATO, the ex-Warsaw Pact countries may seek to further cooperate in enhancing the EU’s CFSP/ESDP security structures to compensate, something they have so far been reluctant to do. This would of course require further deepening of integration, strengthening the European institutions.

95 “Transatlantic Trends: Key Findings 2009”, German Marshall Fund
Conclusions

The controversy created by U.S. plans to develop NMD and place components in Central Europe has been significant, even in a year of trying global events such as the Russian war with Georgia, the global financial crisis and resulting recession, and the controversy over the Olympic Games in China. The political costs of this decision have already been realized, though the system itself has been cancelled. The new American President now faces a tremendous challenge.

The decision of President Obama regarding the future of NMD, particularly any European component, will carry huge consequences and abandoning the Central European missile shield of the Bush administration carries with it many new tasks. President Obama has promised change, a ‘reset to relations’ with Russia, and a world free of nuclear weapons. While clearly there needs to be more diplomatic dialogue and greater desire to reach a compromise with Russia, he must be careful not to do this at the expense of his allies and NATO.

Backing out of the missile shield could have great implications for the U.S. and its credibility in the face of both Russia and its allies. Russian opposition to the missile shield, and aggressive threats, were very much a test of her own global power and influence. While Russia threatened to target Europe with Iskander tactical nuclear missiles (later rescinded after the canceling of the plan), this threat was in many ways hollow. On the one hand, missiles in Kaliningrad and warheads that are threatening to Europe have always been there. As part of its North Fleet, Russia has always had the capability to make rapid strikes against Europe, making the threat technically irrelevant. In addition, as Tsypkin states: “Iskander missiles seem to have simply become the magic
bullet of public diplomacy for the Kremlin… For instance, the main countermeasure to missile defense threatened by the Kremlin- to deploy Iskander operational tactical missiles in Kaliningrad province in order to target the proposed interceptor site in Poland- makes no military sense.”96 Even Coyle, a staunch opponent of the missile defense plan acknowledges: “Russia seems to be going through a new period of nationalistic assertiveness, one expression of which is the display of military accomplishments… Some might say these displays are more to impress Russian voters than to impress America…”97 In the end, it is also far harder to imagine Russia consciously using these weapons against NATO member states, particularly to target U.S. military installations, given the response it would have to face from not only the U.S., but likely the entire NATO alliance. It would be far easier to imagine a rogue missile from Iran than any scenario involving a Russian premeditated attack.

Abandoning the missile defense program in an attempt to ‘reset relations’ carries the risk of irreparable damage to the credibility of the U.S. as an ally to NATO, and yet will arguably change nothing between the U.S. and Russia. Vodicka aptly states:

“Even if the Obama administration wants to backtrack on missile defense, doing so won’t return relations with Russia to the status quo ante. That is because Russia has transformed the issue of a missile defense system in the Czech Republic and Poland into evidence of its growing influence. Russia has turned this into a question of its power beyond its borders.”98

The implications for Poland and the Czech Republic are far larger. Both countries have stood against both domestic popular dissent and Russian aggression devoting a great deal of political capital in a show of good faith to the United States. The countries have lost a great deal of credibility in the face of their allies and opponents, while Russia will interpret the move as “proof of its influence over Central Europe, and recognition of its

96 Tsypkin
97 Coyle and Samson
98 Vodicka, “Russia Shouldn’t Have a Veto on Missile Defense”
veto power of European Security Policy.”99 Finally, abandoning the project calls into doubt the commitment of Washington to its allies, particularly the new or aspiring NATO member states. This has the potential to do a great deal of damage to the credibility of the organization (again in Russia’s favor). The feeling of abandonment on the part of Poland and the Czech Republic, two countries very well acquainted with betrayal at the hands of large powers and former allies, will greatly complicate further U.S. interests in the region.

The Russian response to the canceling of the missile shield has been mixed. On the one hand President Medvedev has praised the decision as ‘positive,’ a ‘responsible move’ and added, “We (Russia) value the US President’s responsible approach towards implementing our agreements. I am ready to continue the dialogue.”100 Medvedev has even rescinded Russian threats to station Iskander Missiles to threaten Europe, and has opened up the possibility of participating in new sanctions against Iran.101 Prime Minister Putin, however, has made it clear he expected more concessions while General Nikolai Makarov, Russia’s Chief of the General Staff, has noted that the “anti-missile shield has only been modified not scrapped” leaving the door open for future confrontation over missile defense in Europe. According to western officials: “If America’s missile defenses evolve into the networked, flexible, and globally deployable system that Mr. Obama is seeking, Russia may yet loathe it more than the hated ‘George Bush Interceptors.” 102 Russia is not likely to change its position on missile defenses in the future.

Abandoning the missile shield has served to enhance the assertiveness and self-confidence of Russia, who will if anything feel growing confidence in pursuing

99 Ibid.

100 BBC News, “Obama shelves Europea missile plan”, September 17, 2009


102 The Economist, “Shooting Down a Plan”, September 24, 2009
independent policy and feel more comfortable to enter into arguments with the United States. As has been shown, there is a certain tendency for Moscow to measure itself up to the U.S., while also pursuing an antagonistic line. Despite the current positive overtones and a less bellicose rhetoric, one cannot be left to believe there has been any change to Russia’s strategic long-term interests and this could negatively effect future cooperation in fields such as non-proliferation and arms control, and will definitely make any American or NATO interests in the Caucasus far more difficult to pursue. As stated by Jakub Grygiel: “it should be clear that U.S. interests are not well served by retrenchment. The belief that a less visible and less tangible U.S. engagement in Central Europe will be matched by goodwill from Moscow, whether in the Middle East, Afghanistan, or Central Europe, is dangerously naïve.”

The costs of abandoning the missile shield in Central Europe entirely outweigh the benefits. As compensation President Obama has outlined a replacement plan involving a new network of missile defenses based on sea based interceptor missiles, which have performed better in tests and could provide greater coverage in theory, however they also suffer from substantial drawbacks to work properly and would ultimately be likely to need complementary ground based interceptors such as those originally proposed to be truly effective. It would also ultimately require more Aegis ships than the U.S. currently owns. This has therefore not solved the issue, simply deferred it. The new plan, if it were to come into fruition, will not only be potentially more aggravating to Russia, but also would cost twice as much as the Bush plan to implement and run making it potentially even more problematic in the long-term. As a result the administration must tactfully engage Russia in the strategic vision it holds for missile defenses, including a more inclusive approach to new installations, while being

careful not to be too sensitive to inevitable future Russian opposition and rhetoric. At the same time, the new missile defense plan must be inclusive of its original Central European partners, if in a different way, to demonstrate continued U.S. desire to be involved as a partner in the region and justify concretely the rationale for the U.S. decision to withdraw from its original commitments. While sensitive and careful diplomacy could repair the short-term damage in relations, failure to normalize and institutionalize relations risks allowing Central Europe to involuntarily drift back into the sphere of Russia influence, breaking up important cohesion in both NATO and the EU in the long-term.

The damage having already been done, additional backtracking will only serve to further embolden Russia and complicate U.S. – Russia relations, while undermining the important NATO alliance, and showing a lack of resolve on the part of the U.S. in the face of its enemies (such as Iran) and its partners (such as the Ukraine and Georgia). The die having been cast, one must simply hope that Washington can afford the repercussions.
Appendix I:

Figure 1. Current and Proposed U.S. Missile Defenses in 2007

* BBC Q&A: Missile Defense (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6720153.stm)

Figure 2. Proposed Ground Based Interceptors in Central Europe
Figure 3.
Ground-based US missile defence locations

*BBC Q&A: US Missile Defense (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6720153.stm)

*BBC News, (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8260230.stm)
Figure 4. Intercontinental Missile Ranges

* BBC News, (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8262050.stm)

Figure 5. Comparison of Ground Based to Sea Based Interceptors
* The Economist: (http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14515370)
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