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Dmitry Suslov

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DEFENSE DIALOGUE AS A
FACTOR OF THE RUSSIAN
DEFENSE POLICY**

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*Dmitry V. Suslov*¹

**THE US – RUSSIA MISSILE DEFENSE DIALOGUE AS A FACTOR OF THE RUSSIAN
DEFENSE POLICY**

To a big extent the Russian defense policy and, as a consequence, development of the Russian defense industrial complex, is determined by the prospects of the US missile defense policy and fate of the US-Russia negotiations in this area. As a cooperative solution seems improbable in the observable future, Russia plans to develop certain response measures of military nature, including creation of a new heavy ICBM, and to create its own missile defense by 2015. However, this policy does not seem correct from the economic, political and security viewpoints. Russia overestimates the possible military challenges of the hypothetical US missile defense system and invests huge funds into fighting non-existent threats. A US-Russia cooperation in missile defense is possible, and it would fundamentally change their overall relations for the better.

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¹ Dmitry Suslov is Deputy Director for Research of the Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies, School of the World Economy and International Affairs, National Research University – Higher School of Economics.

The US Missile Defense policy

Missile defense has become one of the major irritants of the US-Russia relations and determinants of the Russian defense planning.² In the 2nd half of last decade this issue was among the major reasons behind serious deterioration of the relations between the two countries, which reached their bottom since the end of the Cold war in Autumn 2008.³ At that time the Bush Administration, which unilaterally withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (AMB) in 2001, planned to create a limited strategic missile defense capability in Europe: 10 strategic ground-based interceptors (GBI) in Poland and a radar in Czech Republic. This was supposed to be a so-called third missile deployment area of the planned global US strategic missile defense system. Officially this system, which did not materialize, was supposed to counter a missile threat from Iran. The latter, however, does not have and will not have in the observable future long-term missiles that are to be intercepted by GBIs. Thus, Russia was criticizing this plan vigorously. Its suggestion to use the Russia-run radar in Azerbaijani Gabala and a radar in the Russian town of Armavir instead of the Czech one and that the US should reject the idea to deploy strategic interceptors in Poland were rejected. Thus, in the end of the Bush presidency Russia officially threatened to deploy Iskander missile systems in Kaliningrad region and target them to the US missile defense sites in Central Europe if the Bush administration plans were implemented.

Obama Administration rejected these plans soon after coming to the office – to a huge appraisal in Moscow, which interpreted the case as if its objections were taken into account by Washington – for the 1st time since the end of the Cold war.⁴ However, this enthusiasm did not last long. Already in September 2009 Obama Administration presented a new missile defense policy for Europe called “European Phased Adaptive Approach” (EPAA), which also caused unease in Moscow.⁵ The new policy was described in greater detail in February 2010, when the White house presented the first Ballistic Missile Defense Review.⁶ The major difference with the

² Wolfgang K. H. Panofsky. Nuclear Insecurity. Foreign Affairs, September-October 2007. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/62832/wolfgang-k-h-panofsky/nuclear-insecurity>

³ Dimitri K. Simes. Losing Russia. The Costs of Renewed Confrontation. Foreign Affairs, November-December 2007. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/63008/dimitri-k-simes/losing-russia>

⁴ Michael O’Hanlon. Star Wars Retreats? Rethinking US Missile Defense in Europe. Foreign Affairs, September 2009. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65420/michael-ohanlon/star-wars-retreats>

⁵ Fact Sheet on U.S. Missile Defense Policy. A "Phased, Adaptive Approach" for Missile Defense in Europe. The White House, September 17, 2009. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/fact-sheet-us-missile-defense-policy-a-phased-adaptive-approach-missile-defense-eur>

⁶ Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report. US Department of Defense. February 2010. http://www.defense.gov/bmdr/docs/BMDR%20as%20of%2026JAN10%200630_for%20web.pdf

previous plan was that the new missile defense system was intended to be predominantly tactical, not strategic. Instead of GBIs, Obama Administration decided to base its new concept of European missile defense on the SM-3 (Standard Missile – 3) interceptors, which are much smaller in size and have a slower speed. The existing SM-3 missiles are used within sea-based Aegis anti-missile systems and capable of intercepting short-range ballistic missiles. The official reason of this change was that Iran did not have strategic long-range missiles to be intercepted by GBIs, but had short and middle-range missiles, which are better to be intercepted by small SM-3 missiles.

According to the Ballistic Missile Defense Review, which provided some detailization of the EPAA, the Obama Administration intends to develop European missile defense in 4 stages. The 1st one, which originally was supposed to be implemented by 2012, included deployment in the Eastern Mediterranean of several Aegis ships equipped with SM-3 missiles, and building a land radar in South-Eastern Europe. By beginning of 2012 this stage was partly implemented. The US reached agreement with Turkey about the radar (Ankara was not agreeing straightforward and demanded much) and in February 2012 the radar became operational. Already in March 2011 an Aegis-equipped USS Monterey was deployed in Eastern Mediterranean and Washington reached agreement with Spain to base four Aegis ships in total in Spanish ports. Thus, all together it looks like that the marine component of the EPAA is intended to contain about 4 Aegis ships with SM-3 interceptors.

The 2nd stage of the plan, which is supposed to be implemented by 2015, prescribes for locating land-based SM-3 interceptors (within the Aegis-ashore system which is being developed and tested these days) in South-Eastern Europe. In 2011 the US reached relevant agreement with Romania, which allocated an appropriate military base. The quantity of interceptors to be located on Romanian soil is unknown, and the US officials decline to give even preliminary numbers. However, from some indirect sources one can anticipate that this number will not be more than several dozens. Most probably less.

The 3rd stage to be implemented by 2018, includes deployment of more advanced SM-3 interceptors (currently designed and not even produced) in Poland, which would be able to intercept middle- and intermediary range missiles. Obama administration signed a new agreement with Warsaw on missile defense, which edited the previous one, concluded by the Bush administration, in accordance with the new US missile defense concept.

Finally, the 4th stage to be concluded by 2020, is about deploying in the North of Europe (later the US specified that the location will be also Poland) of a new type of land-based SM-3

interceptors, called SM-3 Block II-B, which would be capable of intercepting both middle-range and long-range, that is intercontinental, missiles. Thus, the 4th stage is supposed to add a strategic element to the predominantly tactical missile defense system. Again, these SM-3 Block II-B interceptors are at the design and research stage, and the US is avoiding to describe any preliminary quantitative parameters.

There are five features of the new US missile defense policy worth mentioning. First is that, unlike the Bush administration, which worked bilaterally with Poland and Czech Republic, Obama administration put its policy into “NATO context”. It means that officially it would be a NATO system in Europe with EPAA offering a US contribution into this Alliance system. In reality, of course, if this system materializes in this or that form, it would obviously be 99% American.⁷ European countries have very few to offer in this regard apart from the territory for the US equipment. The reason for multilateralizing this policy is to make it both more acceptable and attractive for European countries (who were concerned about negative effects of missile defense to European and international security, not least because of Russian negative reaction) and to increase chances that it would not be revised immediately after Barack Obama leaves the White house (the US in this case would have to revise not just bilateral agreements but NATO decisions as such).

Second, calling its policy “adaptive”, Obama Administration declines to give any specific or preliminary quantitative parameters of the planned European MD system. It says that the numbers can change and evolve in accordance to the missile threat, which is said to be Iranian missile program. This creates vagueness that causes serious concern in Moscow.⁸ Some Russian officials argue that in several years the number of the US interceptors in Europe can reach several hundreds. The former Russian envoy to NATO and currently Vice Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin (who is also a Special representative of the Russian President for Missile Defense negotiations with NATO) said in February 2012 that the combined US and NATO European missile defense potential is about one thousand interceptors.⁹ Taking into account gradual improvement of their technical parameters, development of missile defense technologies

⁷ Lisbon Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Lisbon. 20 November 2010. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm

⁸ “Putin Plays MD Card, Placates Hardliners,” Oxford Analytica, December 29, 2009; “Russia to Continue Offensive Arms to Balance U.S. - Putin,” RIA Novosti, December 29, 2009; “U.S. Missile Shield Holding Up Nuclear Deal: Putin,” Reuters, December 29, 2009; “U.S. Rejects Russia Shield Concerns,” BBC News, December 29, 2009.

⁹ Rogozin: Amerikanskaya PRO uzhe sejchas raspolagaet tisyachej protivoraket. Rosbalt, 19.01.2012. <http://www.rosbalt.ru/main/2012/01/19/935238.html>

and the US official commitment to develop and deploy by 2020 interceptors with strategic capabilities in Europe, these numbers and predictions about quantitative features of the US and NATO missile defense system make the Russian military and political leadership fear that such a system will undermine the Russian strategic deterrent.

Indeed, deployment of about thousand or several hundreds of strategic interceptors (capable to intercept strategic missiles) in Europe would drastically reduce the Russian ability to surely destroy the US in a retaliatory strike and undermine the conventional strategic deterrence concept. Already today Russia possesses about operationally deployed 650 strategic missiles, and within next several years it will be quite difficult for Moscow even to sustain this number, for the majority of them are old Soviet silo-based missiles beyond the age of their safe operation.

In reality, though, lack of specificity is because the Obama administration does not want to take concrete obligations about deploying in Europe a certain amount of sea or land-based Aegis systems. Especially in conditions of severe budget limitations this gives the Administration a chance to pursue a minimalist approach. Indeed, the key sense of all the system in the Obama Administration unofficial – but real – understanding is not to counter the Iranian missile threat, which is non-existent and certainly not to undermine the Russian strategic deterrent, which is impossible in the observable future, but to strengthen the European security ties to the US and American military presence in Europe. Minimalist implementation of EPAA would be quite enough for this task. At the same time, declaring minimalist numbers from the very beginning could have caused even more vigorous resentment and criticism from the US Republicans, who prefer developing a strategic missile defense system, not a tactical one, and perform Obama Administration's rejection of the Bush plans as betrayal of the US national security interests and failing to make the US more secure. Thus, there is indeed a sense of deception and deliberate vagueness in the Obama Administration plans on missile defense. But whom the White House wants to deceive is not Russia, but the Republicans.

A third important feature of the Obama Administration missile defense approach is its desire to develop a mobile missile defense infrastructure, not a fixed one as the Bush Administration planned.¹⁰ This mobility is to be provided by the sea-based component of the planned system – the Aegis ships. This, the Administration states, would allow to concentrate interceptors at the place where they would be mostly effective in terms of guaranteed destruction of the adversary's missiles and adapt the geography of the missile defense infrastructure to evolution of the

¹⁰ Ronald O'Rourke. CRS Report RL33745, Navy Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) Program: Background and Issues for Congress

geography of the threat. Thus, the US would get maximal effectiveness with no need to disperse large numbers of interceptors everywhere.

However, Russia views mobility of the planned MD system as another manifestation of its possible anti-Russian purposes and as a chance that it can be quickly transformed into a system openly targeted at the Russian strategic missiles and undermining the Russian strategic deterrent. Mobility of this system, as many Russian military and diplomatic officials fear, allow the US to quickly relocate the Aegis ships from Eastern Mediterranean to the regions where they indeed would pose risks for the Russian strategic missiles, to the northern seas (Baltic, Barents and North seas in particular), if it takes such decision. Indeed, nothing would prevent such relocation from the technical viewpoint.

There are also two additional factors that increase the Russian concern that such a relocation might happen. First, the US refuse to provide Moscow with firm guarantees that no US missile defense ships would ever appear in the northern seas. Instead, the US claim that there are no such plans (of the current Administration). For Russia this is unconvincing, for what it is concerned about is not official intentions but technical capabilities. Second, there was already a recent precedent of the US going beyond the official framework of the EPAA in terms of location of the sea based missile defense infrastructure in Europe. Despite the EPAA talks about Southern Mediterranean, in summer 2011 the USS Monterey visited the Black sea, Georgia and Ukraine in particular.¹¹ There wasn't a word about that in the Obama Administration missile defense program documents. Moreover, Washington rejected the relevant Russian objections and stated that it will not allow Moscow to put limitations on its missile defense policy. For Russia this episode was a clear manifestation that the US official missile defense plans should not be trusted. Moreover, Moscow interpreted it in a way that if a US missile defense ship appeared in the Black sea – despite the contents of the EPAA – nothing would prevent the US ships to appear in the northern seas in the future if Washington takes such a decision. This episode complicated the US-Russia missile defense negotiations seriously.¹²

The forth characteristic feature of the US approach is its desire to establish missile defense cooperation with Russia. Unlike the Bush Administration, which just kept on stating that its missile defense plans pose no threat to Russia, Obama Administration started with an offer to Russia to cooperate in this field from the very beginning. The rhetoric in the year 2010, when the idea of Russia-NATO and US-Russia cooperation on missile defense was widely discussed, was

¹¹ USS Monterey's Black Sea Arrival raises Russia's Hackles. Christian Science Monitor, 14.06.2011.

¹² Russia Decries U.S. Antimissile Ship's Presence in Black Sea. Global Security Newswire, 14.06.2011.

about “the US and NATO inviting Russia to join their efforts to build a missile defense system in Europe”.¹³ However, in reality the US did not mean any serious cooperation in this field, and obviously did not offer any joint work on creating a missile defense system in Europe. A colorful rhetoric on “inviting Russia to join” was designed to conceal a modest substance: by the summer 2010 it became clear that what the US actually meant by Russia “joining” their and NATO missile defense efforts was establishing a dialogue and gaining Russia’s tacit approval of the US and NATO independent efforts to build an independent (from Russia” missile defense system. So it was about dialogue and some exchange of plans and information, rather than about joint adoption of missile defense plans and vision and creation of a joint system. The Obama Administration was rhetorically more Russia-friendly in the field of missile defense, whereas in terms of substance there was few difference with the Bush Administration approach.

The Obama Administration’ rhetoric on establishing a missile defense cooperation with Russia was aimed at reducing its opposition to the project, which could undermine the overall “reset” of the US-Russia relations. Washington was not interested in a new and quick deterioration of the US-Russia relations. On the contrary, it viewed and depicted the “reset” as one of the major achievement of the Obama Administration foreign policy. At the same time, it was compelled by the domestic politics, Republicans and the overall consensus among the American foreign policy and national security establishment to go forward with the missile defense policy. Thus, it tried to make the Russian opposition the smaller the better by soft rhetoric and colorful propaganda.

The fifth feature of the current US missile defense policy is that the Obama Administration, like the Bush Administration before, vigorously rejects any hypothetical limitations on the development of its missile defense policy. Since the US withdrew from the ABM Treaty in 2001 a consensus emerged in the US political elite, including its democratic branch, that a comeback to limitations and a sort of international regime in this field is simply impossible. At least in the observable future. Hypothetical limitations are viewed in the US as betrayal of the US national security interests and deliberate refusal to defend the country against a missile threat, which is considered growing.

¹³ “NATO Invites Russia To Join Anti-Iranian Missile Shield In Historic Move For Alliance,” Associated Press, November 20, 2010

US-Russia Missile Defense Dialogue

The US-Russia missile defense dialogue officially started since the Russia-NATO summit in Lisbon, which took place in November 2010. The sides decided to try to establish cooperation in this sphere by May 2012. At that time a new NATO summit is planned in Chicago, which is supposed to adopt the MD infrastructure in Europe. It was also planned to conduct a new Russia-NATO summit in Chicago in parallel with the NATO summit to formalize the US-Russia and Russia-NATO agreement on missile defense and launch cooperation. However, from the very beginning it was clear that the probability of agreement was very low. It could be achieved only if the parties give up the Cold War logic of balances and if they are guided by considerations of security and pragmatic implementation of their foreign-policy interests.

From the very start the positions of the sides were profoundly different. The US were insisting on building two separate and independent missile defense systems in Europe (a US/NATO and a Russian one)¹⁴ and establishing some cooperation between them in the form of exchange of information.¹⁵ Naturally, as the Russian potential in building a missile defense system is low, that would mean just Moscow's consent on the US unilateral policy. Russia, on its part, offered to construct a joint missile defense system acting under a joint Russia-NATO command and designed by the sides jointly from the very beginning. That would mean a rejection of the EPAA and starting from zero.

Indeed, Moscow claimed that in before creating any system and starting some practical missile defense cooperation the sides should agree on the missile threat jointly and jointly design a system prepared to counter these very threats. Only after that they would start building some deployment activities.¹⁶ Obviously, that joint design would produce a system very different from what the EPAA contained. This would allow Russia to make sure the European MD system would not threaten its ICBMs. Ultimately, Russia proposed at the Lisbon summit to create a joint "sectoral" missile defense system in which both Moscow and Washington would enjoy the "red button" right (their authorization would be required to fire interceptors) and in which Russia and NATO would bear responsibility for missile defense of specific sectors, not necessarily coinciding with their territories. In particular, Moscow proposed to defend the Baltic Sea Region.

¹⁴ Europe and Eurasia: The Obama Administration's Efforts To Implement the European Phased Adaptive Approach. Testimony before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces by U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Frank A. Rose. December 2, 2010.

¹⁵ Ivo Daalder. The Case For a NATO Missile Defense. New York Times, November 15, 2010

¹⁶ Transcript of TV Interview Vladimir Putin to CNN's Larry King. RIA-Oreanda News. December 2, 2010.

The idea was that Russia being responsible for defending this region would make implementation of the 3rd and 4th stages of the EPAA unnecessary.

Obviously, this proposal was unrealistic from the very beginning. It was unacceptable for the US to reject the EPAA and start from zero and design a MD system in accordance to the Russian demands and its vision of the missile threats. It was even less possible – even from the technical viewpoint – to base the system on the “red button” rule and wait for Moscow’s or Washington’s authorization for launch of the interceptors in a situation when seconds matter, not even minutes. Finally, it was clear that Russia’s will to prevent a US MD infrastructure appearing in Poland and perhaps in the Northern seas that was behind Moscow’s proposal to give it responsibility for missile defense of the Baltic Sea Region, not a virtual desire to construct a joint system. It was highly doubtful that Russia would outsource responsibility for its self-defense to NATO. After all, it would have been contrary to the very philosophy of Russian defense policy, based on independent self-defense. Obviously, it was unrealistic to expect that NATO and the US would do the same. Thus, this set of Russian proposals were rather aimed at slowing down the pace of the US independent missile defense policy implementation than to really build a joint missile defense system from zero.

Thus, during the course of MD negotiations in late 2009 and early 2010 this Russia offer was rejected by the US and NATO. Then the Russian side altered its position. By spring 2010 it ceased pushing for a joint sectoral MD system and agreed with the very idea of an independent US and NATO MD system appearing in Europe. At the same time, it started demanding guarantees that this hypothetical system would not undermine the Russian strategic deterrent and is not against Russia. Moscow insisted these to be in a legally binding form, in order to increase the chances that the next US administrations would follow the Obama administration promises as well. In particular, Russia insisted on spelling out in detail specific qualitative, quantitative and geographic parameters of the hypothetical MD system in Europe crossing which would make it a threat for the Russian ICBMs. Frankly, it would resemble the old ABM Treaty without calling it such and referring to Europe only. Obviously, agreeing on these parameters would ban implementation of the 3rd and 4th stages of the EPAA, as well as deploying some hypothetical MD infrastructure in the Northern Europe in the future. Adopting and ratifying such an agreement, as Moscow claimed, would create the necessary foundation for possible missile defense cooperation with NATO and the US. Whereas without it such a cooperation would not be possible.

Again, this position is unacceptable for the US, which for political (domestic) reasons can not accept the limitation Russia demands. Thus, Washington keeps on insisting on the launch of practical missile defense cooperation the sooner the better and without the preliminary preconditions and demands. The US propose to conduct this cooperation within the framework of two joint centers: on exchange of missile defense data and information, and on joint planning and coordination. However, the US emphasize that this cooperation must not limit the freedom of action of the either side in any way. According to Washington, this cooperation and the level of transparency it is ready to offer to Russia would be the best guarantee of the inability of the planned MD system to pose threats to the Russian ICBMs and that Washington has neither will nor capacity to intercept them. For Russia it was not acceptable at it was demanding on an agreement on the guarantees as a precondition for possible cooperation.

Hence, in later 2011 the US decided to make a step forward and agreed in November 2011 to provide Russia with “guarantees” in writing (in a form of a political declaration) and state in the relevant document that it neither intends nor has a technical capacity to undermine the Russian strategic deterrent. However, despite by autumn 2010 Russia also acknowledged that it was ready to accept political guarantees from the US and that it was flexible on the issue of their legally binding status, this movement on the US side did not produce a compromise. Russia claimed it was not enough. Indeed, Washington agreed just to state in a declaration that its planned MD system can not and is not designed to undermine the Russian ICBMs, without any further details and criteria that Russia was insisting on. Thus, Moscow found such an option unconvincing and demanded further details.

Moreover, by the end of 2011 Russia made it clear that what it demands is not promises about the Obama administration policies, plans and intention, but guarantees that the US hypothetical MD infrastructure in Europe will not reach a certain quantitative, qualitative and geographic level indispensable of either Obama administration or any other administration in the White House. It became very clear that the Russian concerns are about possible hypothetic and the future capabilities and not the plans, which are subjects for a quick change. For instance, Moscow demanded for a clear ban on any US MD infrastructures appearing in the Northern seas despite the fact that the US has no plans to locate any relevant infrastructure there.

This makes the further negotiations virtually useless. The Obama administration could discuss its plans only, and not in a way of changing them. But just in convincing Russia that they are not dangerous for the Russian ICBMs. Whereas Russia was uninterested to discuss the plans and found the convictions groundless, and demanded to limit capabilities, which was absolutely

impossible for the Obama administration. Thus, by the end of November the US-Russia and Russia-NATO missile defense negotiations faced a deadlock. The turning point was the bilateral meeting of Presidents Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama in Honolulu in the middle of November on the margins of the APEC summit. It was clear that neither side was ready to make a concession, and thus there were no chances to reach an agreement on MD before election periods started in both countries, which blocked any hopes to reach an agreement on missile defense till beginning of 2013.

Thus, after the US-Russia summit in Honolulu the paradigm of the missile defense negotiations shifted. First, both sides recognized a “dead season” for the negotiations to last at least November 2012, when the US presidential elections take place. Second, both recognize that the chances for the next US-Russia summit in Chicago are low, as it is indeed impossible to find an agreement on missile defense by that time. Russia shifted focus from finding a cooperative solution with the US to building its own responses and counterweights to the hypothetical US missile defense system in Europe.

Russian Response to the Missile Defense Challenge

The Russian response to the US missile defense development involves a set of military measures which can make a profound impact on the Russian military policy and defense economy. In particular, they can slow down the pace or even destroy the Russian military reform and result in a comeback to a Soviet defense planning, with counterbalancing the US in the strategic sphere becoming the major imperative of defense planning and defense economy. Russia might return to investing disproportionate sums of money into expanding and advancing its strategic deterrent, into overcoming the hypothetical US missile defense system and even into creating a Russian missile defense system in thus keeping parity with the US. A situation of the 1980-s might, when the USSR spent enormous money in overcoming the Reagan SDI or “Star Wars” project, which never materialized, might repeat. At that time this spending played a noticeable role in economic bankruptcy and eventual collapse of the Soviet Union.

The Russian response to the US missile defense policy is threefold. First, a detailed list of countermeasures was announced by President Medvedev in his special address on November 23rd a week after the Honolulu summit. Second, Russia substantially increased the part of its Armaments Program till 2020, devoted to sustaining strategic balance and deterrence of the US. In particular, more funds were allocated to development and production of new strategic ICBMs

with the purpose of surely overcoming of the US defense system. Third, Russia put a goal of creating by the year 2015 its own missile defense system with an obvious anti-US and anti-NATO direction. All these measures taken together risk serious deterioration of the US-Russia and Russia-NATO relations, strengthening strategic deterrence philosophy in their relations and, if coupled with negative political environment, risk another arms race. That would produce a determining effect on the Russian defense economy and eventually a devastating effect on the Russian economy in general. Even if a new arms race doesn't happen, implementation of all these plans would mean allocation of huge resources to unnecessary targets.

Speaking on November 23rd, 2011, Dmitry Medvedev declared the following military measures to be implemented step by step (Russia copies the US "phased adaptive" logic) if the US does not alter its missile defense policy and if certain military installations appear in Europe that Russia regards as a risk for its ICBMs and no missile defense agreement is achieved by that time¹⁷:

- Immediate activation of an early warning radar station in Kaliningrad region, which detects missile launches at the European theater (obviously, it is of an anti-NATO nature and is another example of Russia's military planning being directed at preparing for Western-originated threats);
- Priority covering of the strategic nuclear objects by the new Russian Air and Space Defense system, which is being created nowadays (officially it was established in the end of November 2011);
- Equipping ICBMs with the "prospective missile defense overcoming complexes and with new highly effective combat blocks";
- Elaboration of measures that can ensure destruction of the missile defense command and information systems, if necessary (most probably, this is about cyber attacks and targeted conventional strikes against command MD command centers);
- Deployment in Southern and Western Russian regions of modern strike systems, that provide for destruction of the European missile defense system, including deployment of the Iskander missile systems in the Kaliningrad region;

¹⁷ Zajavlenie Prezidenta v svyazi s situaciej, kotoraja slozhilas vokrug sistemi PRO stran NATO v Evrope. November 23, 2011.

<http://www.president.kremlin.ru/transcripts?date=23+%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%8F%D0%B1%D1%80%D1%8F+2011>

- Russia's rejection of the further steps in the disarmament and arms control field;
- Russia unilaterally withdrawing from the New START.

If implemented 100%, these measures would return the Russian defense policy to the Soviet model and make a new arms race almost inevitable. The good news, though, is that probability of implementation of some of them, especially the last three measures, is very low. Both because it is unlikely that the US missile defense system in Europe will get a strategic dimension and some elements will appear in the region that Russia would really regard as a risk for its strategic deterrent, and because a new arms race is simply unfeasible for Russia from the economic point of view. Moscow is even more interested than the US in preservation of the New START as a guarantee that the gap between their strategic arsenals, which exists already now, will not grow to the US favor. Whereas the first three measures Medvedev stated would have been implemented in any case just from the point of view of conventional defense planning and prudence, indispensable of the results of the US-Russia missile defense negotiations. In any case, this declaration determines development of the Russian defense policy and planning quite substantially, for it provides description of some of its key components. Besides, declaration of measures indispensable of whether they will be implemented or not shows how much is Russian defense and military policy focused on deterring the US and building counter-balances.

A substantial supplement to the Russian response measures was provided by commander of the Russian Strategic Missile Forces Sergei Karakaev.¹⁸ Speaking on December 15th, 2011, he named a set additional steps Russia was going to take in order to develop a capability of surely overcoming of the hypothetical US missile defense system in Europe, thus sustaining the strategic parity with the US and preserving the strategic deterrence. The most important among them is Moscow's decision to produce a new 100-tonn heavy silo-based liquid-fuel missile of the "Satan" type.¹⁹ These missiles were prohibited under START-I, but the New START lifted this ban, and Russia decided to use this opportunity to restore an arsenal of Soviet and Cold War era heavy missiles. According to the commander, development and production of these missiles is one of the priorities of the Russian Armaments Program till 2020, which is already adopted by the Government. The reason to produce this missile, Karakaev said, is caused by the missile defense factor, in particular, a necessity to penetrate through it with a 100% guarantee. More

¹⁸ *Rossiya dostala dva raketnih kozirya v otvet na ugrozu EvroPRO*. RIA Novosti, 16/12/2011. http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20111216/518424606.html

¹⁹ *Rossiya sozdast 100-tonnuju zhidkostnuju MBR dlya preodolenija PRO SSHA*. RIA Novosti, 16/12/2011. http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20111216/518204781.html

modern solid-fuel ICBMs such as “Yars”, “Topol-M” and “Bulava” are claimed by the Russian military leadership to be less appropriate for this task, as they are slower and allow to carry less nuclear warheads.

However, such a decision is irrational from both economic, military and political points of view. Economically this is an unjustified and inefficient allocation of financial resources: money is directed to fight a threat that does not exist and will unlikely appear in the observable future in a scale that would require such as countermeasure. Militarily this is an inefficient decision. Silo-based ICBMs are the least survivable and are likely targets for the 1st “disarming” nuclear strike. From the military rational viewpoint the major priority should be mobile ICBMs, not fixed ones. Politically this is a blow on the US-Russia relations, which by its very existence revives the Cold War atmosphere. By developing a new heavy ICBM Russia was emphasizing that it is still viewing the US as the “potential adversary” and that deterring and containing the US is still among the highest priorities of Russian defense policy.

It is also peculiar how the Russian military leadership view this prospective missile defense system of the United States. According to Sergei Karakaev, this system might include Washington’s deployment of a “space echelon of missile defense strike systems”. Frankly speaking, this would mean a return to the old Reagan idea of the Strategic Defense Initiative, widely known as “Star Wars”. It is this particular apprehension by Russia of the hypothetical missile defense system that demands production of a new heavy ICBM. The potential of the relatively small solid-propellant ICBMs, Karakaev said, might be not enough for overcoming such a grand and sophisticated missile defense system, and liquid-fuel missiles with the start mass of about 100 tons might be required and are generally considered as a more appropriate way to penetrate through such a comprehensive strategic missile defense.

The third element of the Russian response measures to the US missile defense policy is its determination to develop its own missile defense system.²⁰ Today Russia has a limited MD capability, which protects Moscow. However, in 2011 Russia officially declared that it was going to create a nation-wide missile defense system, to a big extent as a countermeasure to the US policies in this field. Such a project would surely be (and already is) one of the most priority dimensions of the Russian defense policy. Russia is planning to base its own missile defense on the S-500 mobile missile complexes, which are planned to be produced by 2015. Since that time

²⁰ Arbatov Aleksei. Strategicheskie asimetrii I sistemi PRO. Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie, 20.01.2012.

these complexes are to be integrated into the Russian Air and Space Defense system, which was created in December 2011.

Unlike the US, Russia does not conceal that its potential missile defense system would have a vivid anti-US direction. Moscow is indeed making no secret that it is viewing the US and NATO, not Iran, North Korea or other third countries, as the source of the missile threat. First, it is very peculiar that Russia does not recognize the Western missile threat assessment as regards Iran and North Korea. Thus, there are indeed no recognized missile threats for Russia except for the US. Unless Russia declares that it does view some missile threats from the third countries (or at least regions), its missile defense plans would be assessed through the anti-Western confrontational prism.

Second, some influential Russian military experts, who were personally involved in developing S-500 and missile defense ideas for many years, do not conceal the anti-US nature of these plans. In summer 2011 one of the designers of the S-500 complex Igor Ashurbeili (a former director of the “Almaz-Antei” plant, one of the key components of the Russian strategic defense industry, and today a co-Chair of the Air and Space Defense System Expert Council) acknowledged that the major “threatened directions” (directions where Russia faces the major missile threat) are the West and Far East, and thus the probable locations for the S-500 deployment are Kaliningrad and Far East regions. Obviously, there is only one country, defending against whose missiles is viable on these directions: United States.

All this might have rather negative effects for the US-Russia relations and, ultimately, for Russia’s own security. First, it strengthens the strategic deterrence logic in their bilateral relations. Such a vivid demonstration that Russia is still focusing on the US in its defense strategy and planning, that it is building a defense against the US and is still trying to counter-balance all the Washington steps in the strategic sphere, excludes the chances of building a sustainable strategic partnership. Secondly, these steps further diminish opportunities for the Obama administration to find a compromise on missile defense with Russia or at least offer it something else in terms of transparency measures. Especially if Republicans start pedaling the “Russian anti-US missile defense system” issue, coupled with the Russian desire to double production of ICBMs and create a new anti-US heavy missile. Ultimately, this might result in a new arms race.²¹

²¹ Andrew Kuchins. Putin’s Return and Washington’s Reset with Russia. Foreign Affairs, September 2011. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/68310/andrew-kuchins/putins-return-and-washingtons-reset-with-russia>

Towards a US-Russian Nuclear Alliance

However, despite all this uncertainty and justified questions and concerns that the US unilateralist policy triggers in Russia, there are still many reasons to think that in the observable future there would not appear a missile defense system in Europe capable of undermining the Russian strategic deterrent. Moreover, feasibility of the Obama Administration's plans is low: chances of the 3rd and 4th stages of the EPAA implementation are not high indeed. Most probably, the current Administration would end with deploying some minimal sea and land-based infrastructure in Europe in accordance with the 1st and 2nd states, after which the plans will be revised again. The reasons to think so are of technical, financial, political and timing nature.

First, there are clear technological limitations on the way of creating an effective MD system, especially capable to intercept the advanced Russian ICBMs. Publicly available publications by U.S. experts and the testing of various missile defense assets have shown that the existing technological developments are not enough to build in the foreseeable future a missile defense system capable of operating in a combat environment and accomplishing tasks set by the political leadership. Despite R&D going on in this sphere since the middle of the 20th century, this still looks today much as a science fiction. The majority of the planned modifications of the SM-3 missiles to be deployed in Europe by 2020 still does not exist, and the recent unsuccessful tests in the US prove that their elaboration is going on rather slow.²² GBIs is a more advanced type of interceptor in terms of destroying ICBMs, but so far the US rejected an idea of deploying them in Europe and increasing of their number in the US. Washington will not come to this idea at least as long as the Obama Administration is in the office. Today the US possesses an arsenal of just 43 GBIs, which is obviously nothing in terms of undermining of the Russian strategic deterrent.

Therefore, even if the system is made capable of intercepting ICBMs after 2020, as stated in the doctrinal documents, it will hardly pose a great danger to Russia's strategic nuclear forces, even if they are reduced. Intercepting ICMBs is already described in U.S. official statements as an "additional" option, while the main task of the missile defense system would be intercepting intermediate-range missiles, which Russia no longer has in keeping with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

²² SSHA proveli neudachnie ispitaniya raketi-perehvatchika sistemi PRO. Korrespondent.net, September 2, 2011. <http://korrespondent.net/world/1257244-ssha-proveli-neudachnye-ispytaniya-rakety-perehvatchika-sistemy-pro>

Second, harsh financial limitations and the necessity to cut the defense budget that the US faces and will continue to face in the decades to come, minimize the chances that it will be able to invest enough money in missile defense programs to advance the technology substantially and construct so many interceptors that would indeed pose risks to the Russian ICBMs. Already today the US defense budget faces reductions in one trillion US dollars within the next 10 years, and these reductions have already started. The Pentagon budget for the 2012 financial year is 662 billion USD, which is 43 billion less than in 2011²³, whereas for 2013 it is planned for 525 billion USD²⁴. The US Armed Forces personnel is planned to be cut by 100 000 men in uniform, and many defense equipment projects are already frozen or rejected²⁵. All this does not really match with a qualitative increase of the missile defense activities, which are rather costly. Most probably, it will not happen either.

Third, the timeframe is rather strict. The most contentious 3rd and 4th stages of the EPAA are planned for the time when the Obama Administration will surely not be in the office (2018 and 2020 accordingly), even if the current US President is reelected in November 2012. This is not by chance. It shows the current Administration's unwillingness to implement them whatsoever. Whereas the next administration can revise these plans as easily, as the Obama administration has revised the Bush administration's approach. Most probably, it is this revision that will happen quickly in the beginning of 2017, when a new administration takes the office. Chances are very high that it will be a Republican administration.

Forth, it has been already mentioned above that the deliberate uncertainty that the Obama Administration creates as regards the quantitative and geographic parameters of the planned MD system in Europe is a way to escape domestic obligations and deceive the Republicans, not to prepare to undermine the Russian strategic deterrent. It is also true that the US unilateralist approach in the missile defense sphere is determined by the domestic factors either. The Obama administration is simply unable to accept limitations on its freedom of hands in this sphere – not because it wants to keep the option of undermining the Russian ICBMs, but because otherwise it would be accused of undermining the US national security.

The major reason behind the deadlock in the US-Russia missile defense negotiations and elaboration by Moscow of the response measures, which both produce a very negative impact on the US-Russia relations, is the dominance of the deterrence philosophy in the Russian (and to a

²³ Obama utverdil budzhet Pentagona na 2012 god v objeme \$ 662mlrd. // RIA Novosti, January 1st, 2012.

²⁴ Pentagon zatyagivaet pojasa // Kommersant, 27.01.2012.

²⁵ SSHA sokratyat chislennost vooruzhennih sil na 100 tisyach chelovek // RIA Novosti, 27.01.2012

less extent in the US) foreign policy and defense policy thinking. A lack of trust is also a crucial obstacle. Indeed, Moscow simply does not believe neither the Obama administration's arguments that its planned MD system is incapable of intercepting the Russian ICBMs nor its plans as such, and thus demands limitations on capabilities and verification mechanisms. However, the deterrence philosophy still seems the core problem, while lack of trust is a product of the Cold War mentality domination. Indeed, it is hardly possible to trust a player whom you regard as the "potential adversary" and deterring and counter-balancing whom you perceive as the most important elements of your defense and national security strategy. Until this philosophy is overcome, the US-Russia relations will continue to be hostages to the vicious circles, when each attempts to establish partnership fails after a couple of years, whereas every new step by either of the sides in strategic sphere will be perceived by the other one as a potential threat. Overcoming this deterrence philosophy seems the only way for the sides to reach a mutually acceptable and cooperative agreement on missile defense and avoid another serious deterioration of relations.

To overcome deterrence philosophy, the Russian and U.S. political elites must have a clear understanding that the availability of military potentials as such and of the physical capability to destroy each other does not automatically program their relations towards deterrence. The latter only emerges when the availability of military hardware assumes the nature of threat, which is basically a feeling, and has a political and psychological nature. Besides, a military hardware becomes a threat when the state that possesses it, begins to threaten with it. Objectively, neither Russia nor the U.S. threatens each other today. Being a political and psychological, rather than a material and technical problem, deterrence can be overcome not by the cuts in nuclear arsenals, which is becoming increasingly difficult, but by building new friendly and allied relations between Russia and the United States. To this end, each of them first should convince itself that Russian or U.S. nukes are no longer a threat, improve the climate of their relations, overcome mutual suspicion and the tradition to view the other party's moves through the prism of competition and "zero sum game," and, lastly, develop a tradition of mutual confidence.

One of the most effective ways for Russia and the U.S. to overcome strategic deterrence without a drastic reduction of their nuclear arsenals will be to build quasi-allied relations in the nuclear field with the focus on the most conflict-prone regions of the world, problematic in terms of nuclear proliferation. Such an alliance would be an expression of the most positive contribution that cooperation between Russia and the United States can make to international stability and security in accordance with their main common feature, as compared to those of the other players: their nuclear superpower status. A nuclear alliance of Russia and the United States

might become a new support structure for a system of strategic stability in the world (instead of their mutual nuclear deterrence), one of the main tools to combat the spread of nuclear weapons and, finally, an important factor for stabilization in conflict regions around the world.

Weakening of the strategic deterrence philosophy and strengthening it with intensive nuclear cooperation in the third regions and countries, would allow Russia and the US not just to overcome their current contradictions on missile defense, but to make this area one of the prominent areas of the US-Russia cooperation, which will transform their relations in a fundamental way. Elimination of the deterrence philosophy will allow the sides to build relations of an alliance-type, with missile defense playing the key part.

To this end, both parties must realize, first of all, the virtual and artificial nature of the current controversy on this issue. The United States should develop the awareness that there is no real threat so far to building such a system, and that devising a plan to preempt an emergence of a hypothetical missile threat in the future should be adopted in cooperation with Russia, not unilaterally.²⁶ Russia, on its part, should realize that the Obama administration's proclaimed goal of creating a multi-layered missile defense system is unlikely to ever be achieved even in its European angle – at least because the U.S. will be forced to slash military spending due to the accumulated budget deficit. And even if the missile defense system continues to be created, it is unlikely to pose a threat to Russia's strategic deterrence potential.

For missile defense issue to cease being an irritant in Russian-U.S. relations once and for all, the two countries should develop cooperation in this field, with a view to creating a joint missile defense system in the future. This cooperation will radically change the logic of Russian-U.S. relations in the strategic sphere, minimize adverse effects of the situation of mutual assured destruction on them, and bring these relations very close to an alliance in content. However, such cooperation requires that both countries change their approaches.

As for the problem of the very fact of emergence of tactical missile defense elements near Russia's borders (or speculations about their emergence), it can be easily resolved through Russia's active and full-fledged participation in these discussions and through cooperation, including exchange of data and information and joint planning. Russia should win the most transparent regime of cooperation possible, and the chances for this are highest with the Obama administration in office, naturally, if it wins the November 2012 elections. (Before them it is

²⁶ However, the chances that this recommendation will be followed are low in view of U.S. domestic political constraints (the desire of most Republicans to attain utopian "absolute security," which, they think, can be achieved with the help of a missile defense, and the Iranian factor blow up as a convenient "threat"), and the factor of Israel.

unlikely to get any movement on missile defense from either side). The question is how to ensure an acceptable for Russia format in the mechanism of decision-making. In this context it looks inappropriate for Russia to bar from the discussion of the future missile defense system in Europe and, in particular, to link participation in them with conditions that are clearly unacceptable for the U.S. and NATO. The very decision by the US and NATO to establish such a system without the participation of Russia will spark its suspicions and worsen the climate of Russian-American relations.

A future architecture of the US/NATO missile defense system has not been defined yet, and most probably it will be repeatedly modified (if the deployment of a missile defense in Europe is to take place at all). This gives Russia a chance to be plugged into the discussion already now. In this case, it would make sense to put questions not only about the transparency of the system for Russia, but about Russia's full-fledged presence in its future command and control structures, about getting equal rights of decision-making regarding this system, about drawing up joint plans for the development of a joint missile defense, and so on. This would institutionalize U.S.-Russia relations as those of alliance.

It makes sense to put before the U.S. again the question of recognizing the 1997 New York Protocol to START-2 (which has never taken effect) on the differentiation of strategic and tactical missile defenses, or to press for signing with the United States and/or NATO of a new agreement limiting the development of missile defense systems in Europe, albeit in the form of a declaration. This could ease tensions over the Obama administration's deployment of a tactical missile defense system and open up a window of opportunity for closer cooperation between Russia and the United States and Russia and NATO in establishing a non-strategic missile defense system.

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Dmitry V. Suslov

Higher School of Economics (Moscow, Russia), Senior Lecturer, Deputy Director for Research of the Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies.

E-mail: dsuslov@hse.ru

Phone: +7 (495) 772-95-90*2187

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