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*The Building of the US Missile Shield in Europe
The triangular relationship: US, EU, Russia*

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The Building of the US Missile Shield in Europe during the Bush Era.

The triangular relationship: US, EU, Russia

Maxime Larivé*

Introduction

It all started at the end of World War two when the United States under President Truman decided to use nuclear power against Japan in order to end the conflict. Since then, the race for nuclear weapons has never ceased. Russia became the second nuclear power in 1949, followed by the United Kingdom (1952), France (1960), China (1964), India (1974) and Pakistan (1998). During Reagan's presidency from 1981 to 1989, President Reagan initiated a nuclear missile shield project programmed to protect the US from any sort of Russian nuclear attack. This program has been called the 'Star Wars' project and is a symbol of the Cold War era. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the project has lost some of its strengths, as it was not considered anymore as a core instrument to ensure US security. However, the events of September 11, 2001 changed the US perceptions of threat. Since then, the Bush administration, along with the 'war on terror,' had revitalized the 'Star Wars' project. Vast amount of money have been spent, and missiles silos have been built in California, Alaska, the UK, and Greenland. But the problem became international as soon as the US decided to finance the building of two pieces of the missile shield puzzle: a missile interceptor site in Poland and a X-band radar in the Czech Republic. Both states are NATO members and joined the European Union in 2004.

Such military constructions sponsored by the US on the European continent, more especially former states under soviet influence and new EU Member States, created interference in the European balance of power. On one side, Russia, which was recovering economically and internationally, had tried under the Presidencies of Vladimir Putin to reinstitute its influence through the use of neo-imperial foreign policy over its 'lost territories.' On the other side, the European Union, which saw its largest wave of enlargement in 2004 composed essentially of Newly Independent States (NIS), was evolving into unknown waters. The EU had been working on the integration process of these NIS, but also on developing a common external policy. In addition, the interactions between the EU and Russia have turned out to be tense and blurry since 2000, when Vladimir Putin ascended to the Russian presidency. The EU has been seeking to enforce democracy and the rule of law in Russia, whereas, Moscow saw its future through the lens of a more authoritarian regime, or a 'managed democracy.' On top of this, Washington was planning the construction of part of its missile shield in Poland and Czech Republic in order to protect its 'allies' and its territory from a potential nuclear attack orchestrated by Tehran.

So we can see emerging tensions in the triangular relationship (US-Russia-EU) around the case of the missile shield. In order to study such a topic, several questions need to be raised: What statement was the US making towards the EU, Russia, and the world? Was the missile shield program really built in order to tackle any nuclear attack launched by Iran or another 'rogue state'? Did this 'crisis' represent an alarm or an opportunity for the EU to master its own military and security destiny? What were the perceptions of individual EU Member States regarding the missile shield program?

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Historical and Political Background

The US desire to possess a missile defense system appeared in the 1950s, right after the possession of nuclear bombs by other states. “An early example of missile defense was the US Safeguard system (1969-1976) built to protect the Minutemen silos housing US intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM). At the same time, the Soviet Union deployed its own system, Galosh, to protect Moscow and its surroundings from incoming ballistic missiles” (Lindstrom 2008, 1). But, the actual missile defense system, so-called ‘Star War’ project, was initiated under President Ronald Reagan 25 years ago, when he launched the creation of an integrated Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS). The goals were to “develop anti-ballistic missile technologies to improve our [American] national security and lessen our reliance on nuclear deterrence” (Missile Defense Agency 2007a, 1). Since the 1980s, the US has spent over \$110 billion in the system of national missile defense.

When President George W. Bush arrived in office in 2000, he made the ballistic missile defense deployment system a national security objective for the future. “The Bush Administration substantially increased the funding for missile defense programs and laid the foundation for withdrawal from the 1972 ABM Treaty” (Hildreth 2007, 5). The argument was that Russia was not a threat anymore to the US, and that the new threats came instead from the proliferation of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Iran, North Korea and Iraq were identified as potential enemies seeking for nuclear power. Soon after, the US started the construction of missile silos and radars in Alaska and California, but also overseas, in Greenland and the United Kingdom. Then, the Bush Administration in 2002 scrapped the 1972 ABM treaty in order to “deploy the re-named Ground Based Midcourse Defense System” (US Congress 2007c, 5).

According to the Bush administration, the most imminent threat came from Iran and North Korea. Since the arrival of conservative leader Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the presidency of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the US concerns considerably increased due to the assumptions that Tehran was seeking for military and civilian nuclear power. Even though in November 2007, the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) was able to demonstrate “with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program. Judge with confidence that the halt lasted at least several years. [...] Assess with moderate confidence Tehran had not restarted its nuclear weapons program as of mid-2007” (National Intelligence Estimate 2007). Even with evidence brought by the NIE, the Bush administration believed that Tehran was still working on developing nuclear weapons. The second potential danger came from North Korea. In October 2007, the White House announced that, “America faces a growing ballistic missile threat. In 1972 just nine countries had ballistic missiles. Today, that number has grown to 27 and it includes hostile regimes ties to terrorists” (Coyle and Samson 2008, 3). Washington judges the increased of ICBMs number around the world represent a direct menace to the security of the US and its allies.

In order to answer the Iranian threat, the US had been dealing bilaterally with the governments of the Czech Republic and Poland with the intention of developing and building parts of the missile shield in their territories. “The proposed European deployment, is also called the ‘third site’ because it would be the third deployment after the interceptors in Alaska and California” (Coyle and Samson 2008). The European site would be a Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD) system, which was only a piece of the puzzle. “What the US has proposed for Europe is part of an overall ballistic missile defense system (BMDS) that would, it is claimed eventually defend against all ranges of ballistic missiles during all stages of their flights” (Coyle and Samson 2008). The large picture of the system included satellites, airplanes, terrestrial and naval radars, silos and so on. But so far the offer made by the US to the Czech Republic was a powerful X-band radar placed at 90 km southwest of Prague. It was a Midcourse radar, meaning

that its role is to detect short- and mid-range ballistic missiles.¹ The second agreement had been made with Poland, which would host ten missile defense interceptors. These are ground-based interceptors, almost identical to the ones in California and Alaska. “As with the interceptors based in Alaska and California, these interceptors are designed only for defensive purposes and employ small hit-to-kill vehicles instead of explosives to destroy their targets at collision speeds in excess of 7 km per second and at more than 200 km above the earth’s surface” (Missile Defense Agency 2007b, 3).² According to Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, there was no offensive capability in the US plan.³ The deployment of the silos would begin in 2011 and be done by 2013.

The installation of radars and missile interceptors inscribed itself in the logic that the US is a ‘European power.’ Europe represents a platform in direction of the Middle East, the Black Sea, and Asia (Mongrenier 2007, 3).⁴ The missile system in Europe needed to be built in order to protect the others US radar systems. Philip Coyle explains, “the MDA sees the proposed missile defenses in Europe as a first line of defense to protect existing radar sites in Greenland and the United Kingdom necessary to defend the US, not first and foremost to defend Europe” (2008a, 14). As summarized by Gustav Lindstrom, the construction of the European GMD was necessary for three reasons: first, for the protection from missiles launched by rogue states; second, protection from the possibility that a non-state actors could possess a warhead; and third, for fear of an accidental missile launch (2008, 1).

The last point that needs to be highlighted concerns the US legitimacy over the European GMD. According to the document released by the Missile Defense Agency/Department of Defense (MDA/DoD), the missile shield in Europe as to be understood along these lines:

“In our [DoD and US government] comprehensive strategy to combat weapons of mass destruction, missile defense is just one element of a multi-faceted approach, which includes diplomacy, export controls, threat reduction assistance, nonproliferation regimes, and counter-proliferation programs. At the same time, missile defense is our ultimate insurance policy if these other elements of our strategy fail. History has taught us that, despite our best effort, the free world will be challenged by military surprises as well as failures in diplomacy, intelligence, and deterrence” (Missile Defense Agency 2007b, 1).

This statement is in the pure realist and unilateralist tradition of Washington. The major criticism is that the MDA does not incorporate multilateralism as a mean and tool for national and international security. But its rhetoric swims in the blend of offensive and defensive realism. In the current world system, the use of hard power is not enough. The US needs to increase its

¹ According to the MDA, “this X-band radar will be optimized to point its narrow beam at Iranian ballistic missile threats in flight. This is not a surveillance radar [...], but instead uses information from early warning satellites and other transportable sea- and land-based sensors to pinpoint or ‘cue’ its very thin beam to find and track ballistic missiles after they are launched” (Missile Defense Agency 2007b, 4).

² “The European GBI (ground-based interceptors) will consist of two rocket stages in contrast to the three state GBI deployed today [in Alaska and California]” (Hildreth and Ek 2007, 3).

³ “The interceptors carry no explosive warhead of any type, but rely instead on their kinetic energy to collide with and destroy incoming warheads” (US Congress 2007c, 7).

⁴ According to the MDA, “ballistic missile defense is one of the most complex and challenging missions in the Department of Defense. A ballistic missile’s altitude, speed, and range leave a defender little time to react. To meet this challenge, the Missile Defense Agency is developing a layered, integrated system capable of destroying a ballistic missile in each of three distinct phases of flight – boost, midcourse, and terminal” (Missile Defense Agency 2007a, 1). Thus, “the system requires accurate missile identification and tracking with advanced sensors; advanced interceptor missiles or directed energy weapons (e.g., lasers); and reliable Command and Control, Battle Management, and Communications (C2BMC) to integrate the system and direct the engagement” (Missile Defense Agency 2007a, 1). As proved by Philip Coyle, the GMD is the most complex of the systems and the most costly (2008a, 3).

cooperation not only with Poland and the Czech Republic, but also with the EU as a whole. As argued by Secretary of State Ms. Clinton, the US should instead use 'smart power' which is a combination of the use of hard and soft power. By dealing unilaterally and bilaterally, the US might increase its security in the short term, but not in the long run. As per Christopher Layne, the US cannot go alone anymore, but should implement an offshore balancing grand strategy instead of behaving as a hegemon. He argues that America is seeking to maintain its hegemony through an expansionist policy overstretching its power (Layne 2006). This statement can be completed by the MDA, which considers that "trans-Atlantic security is indivisible." If Europe is not secure, the US is not. The US must develop such program in Europe to protect Europe and itself "before a threat fully emerge" (Missile Defense Agency 2007b, 1). In addition, as demonstrated by Layne, the US desire to enforce its security overseas from rogue states, such as Iran or North Korea, is creating tensions with its European allies and might even ignite a new Cold War with Russia. On this specific matter, the question that appears is: is it worth it for the US to behave as a hegemon, believe in a system that is not working, and weaken its relations with its allies in order to comfort its 'peace of illusions'?

The impact of the Iranian menace on the European balance of power

The Iranian threat

According to President W. Bush, the US included Iran as a state figuring in the list of the 'axis of evil' along with Iraq and North Korea. Such categorization makes of Iran an international threat, and more precisely a military menace to American and world security.

On November 2nd, 2006, Iran launched several short-range rockets and short- and medium-range ballistic missiles during the "Great Prophet II" exercise (Missile Defense Agency 2007b, 2). The concerns emerged after the successful launch of the Shahab-3 missile, which has a range of 1300 km. In order to manufacture the Shahab-3 missile, the Iranian missile development program had received assistance from Russia, China and North Korea. The Shahab-3 missile is based on the North Korean technology of the No Dong missile. Iranian authority declared that the Shahab-3 could have a range of up to 2000 km, which could ultimately threaten parts of central Europe, Turkey, Israel, and all the Persian Gulf (Missile Defense Agency 2007b, 2). By 2015, according to US intelligence services, Iran could possess ICBMs capable of reaching the US.

Even though, the NIE stated, in its report published in 2007, that "in Fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program," but the Iran is keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons at some point" (Hildreth and Ek 2008, 2), the Bush Administration maintained its position and considered Iran as threat and believed that Tehran was seeking nuclear power and capabilities.

The European balance of power

The creation of the GMD in two NIS added up to the list of tensions between the US and Russia, and the West and Russia such as: the recent events on the project of NATO enlargement – concerning the possible inclusion of Georgia and Ukraine as permanent members –; the Western critics over the region of South Caucasus and Moldavia; the question around the independence of Kosovo; the US military actions in the Middle East; the western criticisms over the lack of democratization in the Russian political system; and so forth. In the meantime since the arrival of Vladimir Putin at the Russian presidency, Russia had been regaining its lost power and admitting the failure of the past. President Putin had been following a foreign policy based on realist principal: increase of Russian military power, use of military threat in order to enforce its security, influence, use of energy as a weapon, and unilateral behavior. President Putin tried to put himself as a leader challenging the supremacy of the West, and especially the supremacy of the Euro-Atlantic community. Such foreign policy and behavior have been possible thanks to

Russian hydrocarbons resources as energy – mainly gas – has been used as a weapon by Moscow in order to fortify its authority, legitimacy, and autonomy at the regional level.

With the announcement of the agreement between Czech Republic and Poland with the US on the construction of the GMD, Russia had been reestablishing a climate of instability in Europe and internationally. Moscow reacted along two lines: first, in June 2007, Putin threatened to point nuclear missiles at major European cities if the US plans to position missile defense bases in Poland and Czech Republic. “It is obvious” Putin said, “if part of strategic nuclear potential of the US is located in Europe and will be threatening us, we will have to respond” (Applebaum 2007). And second, Russia threatened to suspend its adherence to the CFE (Conventional Force in Europe) Treaty, but also talked of leaving several treaties such as the INF (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force) and START I (which expired in 2009). Ultimately the GMD could have considerable consequences on the future of international law and military treaties. Furthermore, one of the most alarming issues concerned the Outer Space Treaty (article III-IV) calling for a peaceful use of space. Because of the GMD, we could see a race in the militarization of space, which already started back in 2007 when the Chinese tore down one of their satellites.

To conclude, even before the construction of the GMD, the regional balance of power was progressively shifting in Europe. If the current balance of power happened to be disrupted, one could argue that the level of insecurity and instability between peaceful states could increase significantly. The question that arose: was the GMD a source of security or instability?

Why Poland and Czech Republic?

One of the last questions is why did the US decide to collaborate with Poland and the Czech Republic? Why not, Turkey, Ukraine or Bulgaria? There exists many explanations, but the most common one can be divided in three categories. First, in Poland, there was a sense that the US had been historically a reliable ally, and that such system would deepen the existing relationship with the US. The second scenario was that “some Czechs and Poles believe that the missile defense sites would become a prestigious symbol of the two countries’ enhanced role in defending Europe” (Hildreth and Ek 2007, 6). And, last scenario was that Poles and Czechs saw it as the ultimate security/guarantee against an eventual Russian attack.

Unfortunately, by making such decisions, Poland and the Czech Republic were distancing themselves with the ‘old’ Europe, which saw it as a non-compliance with the general European road of integration. In the case of Poland, it was safe to admit that a division on the issue existed domestically between the political class and public opinion. On one side, Poland needed to satisfy nationalist polish party and movements in order to maintain a certain political cohesion, which pushed itself closer to the US. And on the other side, according to Eurobarometer, Poles were very attached to the European ideal. Poland was facing a real dilemma. In addition, as stated by Paul Geremek, former foreign minister of Poland, two motivations needed to be addressed in order to justify Polish policies towards the EU and the US. First, the process of Polish integration within the EU took time. In 1989, after the fall of the Berlin wall, Poles believed that they would immediately be welcomed by the EU, when in reality, it was not until 2004 that Poland became an EU Member State. And even during the process of integration in 2004, the excitement was asymmetrical: on one side, the EU was indifferent to polish integration; while on the other Poland was ‘hysterical.’ The second aspect concerned the US. In 1999, the US integrated Poland inside NATO. Such move from the US changed everything, because it strengthened the existing links of the Cold War with the US. As of today, the EU has been paying the price of this political move made by Washington (Schlosser 2008). Paul Geremek added that Poland was a large buyer of security. The EU did not have yet a clear defense and security policy, which gave an advantage to the US. Since 2000, with the arrival of Putin at the presidency, Poland and the Czech Republic have felt threatened by the neo-imperialist ambitions of Moscow, and were desperately looking for security and protection.

The need for the missile shield?

Philip Coyle explained that during the Reagan administration, Paul Nitze, former special adviser to the President, laid down a series of criteria in order to start the construction of the missile shield program, which read, “1. The system should be effective; 2. Be able to survive against direct attack; and 3. Be cost effective at the margin – that is, be less to increase your defense than it is for your opponent to increase their offense against it” (Coyle 2008a, 6). Later on, President Clinton developed his own criteria before deciding on such a program, which were: “1. Whether the threat is materializing; 2. The status of the technology based on an initial series of rigorous flight tests; 3. Whether the system is affordable; 4. The implications that going forward with National Missile Defense (NMD) [or GMD] deployment would hold for the overall strategic environment and our arms control objectives” (Coyle 2008a, 4). Then, the Bush administration marked itself in the rupture with his predecessors for two reasons: first, the Bush administration did not establish a list of criteria; second, the US system did not meet any of these previous criteria. Since 2001, “the Missile Defense Agency has had 26 successful missile intercepts. Fifteen of the last 16 flight tests have been successful” (US Congress 2007c, 13).

However, a report published by the Union of Concerned Scientists argued and highlighted the inefficiency of the system proposed by Washington and protected by the MDA. They said that “a reasoned look at the technology shows that it is not ready for deployment. The system is still in the early stage of research and development. Test conditions remain far from realistic” (Union of Concerned Scientists 2008). On a more practical standpoint, Philip Coyle explained that “if Iran were reckless enough to attack Europe or the United States, they wouldn’t launch just one missile, and if they launched several missiles or used decoys and countermeasures, current US missile defenses would not be effective” (2008a, 10). Countermeasures and decoys remain the Achilles heel of the missile defense systems deployed in Alaska, California, and the one offered to Europe.

In addition, Rep. Brad Sherman (democrat), a strong opponent to the GMD in Europe, declared “now the administration wants Congress to spend \$4 billion on another ground-based system, this time in Europe. [...] Not only does the administration want to deploy a system that does not work, it is willing to do so at the expense of cooperation with Russia and our NATO allies and a host of issues far more important to our nuclear defense” (US Congress 2007c, 5). The arguments of the opponents to the missile shield system were first, inefficiency, second, expansive⁵, third, could have negative consequences on the transatlantic relations, and last, could generate a new international arm races between states, but also non-state actors.

European Narratives and Perceptions around the Missile Shield

The question of the missile shield divided the EU into two groups: the ones in favor and the others against the construction of the GMD. This split represented the famous distinction made by former US Secretary of Defense Mr. Rumsfeld, between the ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Europe. The states of the ‘Old’ Europe – read France and Germany – rejected the missile defense project due to its

⁵ Concerning the cost of the GMD positioned in Europe, the Bush administration requested “about \$310 million to begin design, construction, and deployment of a ground-based midcourse defense (GMD) element of the Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS) in Europe” (Hildreth and Ek 2007, 1). According to Victoria Samson, the total cost for the European missile defense shield for the period 2009-2013 will be \$915.2 millions. It includes the interceptor site, midcourse radar, construction, planning & design, and the interceptor missiles (Samson 2008b). For the FY-2009, the President requested \$12.4 billion for DoD spending on missile defense. The MDA counts \$9.4 billion in total. If support of the Congress, by the end of 2013, over \$110 billion will have been spent since 2003 (Coyle 2008a, 20). When we add up everything, in 2013, expected date of accomplishment of the European GMD, the total cost should be around \$4.04 billion.

symbol of American unilateralism; while the ‘New’ Europe was seeking for US protection and bandwagon with it.

The German opposition

When Angela Merkel took office as the German Chancellor in November 2005, she declared that, “Germany must attempt to hold the international community together, also especially to hold Europe together” (Spiegel Staff 2007a, 5). This statement underlined the need to re-unite the EU following the 2003 Iraq crisis. On the issue of the missile defense system, German Chancellor Angela Merkel was very much concerned about the EU unity politically, as she worried about the consequences caused by the US defense system. She claimed that “Europe is weakened in its strength and ability to assert its position when it is not united” (Reuters 2007b, 1). On the side of EU unity, the question of US missile defense had been at the heart the domestic political debate between Merkel’s Christian Democrats and the center-left Social Democrats (Reuters 2007b; Spiegel Staff 2007a, 3). Not only it touched on the question of national security, but also on the German strategy vis-à-vis the US.

Likewise, Merkel’s Social Democrat predecessor Gerhard Schröder was opposed to the US missile shield. He considered it as politically hazardous and dangerous for the cohesion of NATO. “The security experts also argued ‘the German government position’ should place priority on securing what had already been achieved via arms control measures – including ‘alliance cohesion’ – before missile defense” (Beste, von Hammerstein, von Ilsemann, and Mascolo 2007, 3). The current government of Merkel believed in the necessity to discuss the question of the missile defense system multilaterally during NATO summits. Merkel warned and was concerned about a possible split in Europe as a consequence of bilateral agreements between the US and individual EU and NATO Member States (Spiegel Staff 2007b).

Furthermore, two German political figures expressed their concerns around the missile defense system. “German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier faulted the Bush Administration for failing to adequately discuss the proposal with affected countries” (Hildreth and Ek 2007, 7). And, Kurt Beck, the chairman of the SPD opposed the planned defense system for the reason that “we [Europeans] don’t need any new missiles in Europe,” and any new arms race on the European soil (Spiegel Staff 2007b). Kurt Beck expressed the real apprehension in Europe: would it create a new arm race in which Europe would be the field of competition between the US and Russia? Thus, concerning this military race, would Europe be able to compete? And did Europe want to run such race? And finally, could this race destabilize the fragile unity of the EU?

If we take a look and analyze German newspapers at the time, one could realize the existence of disagreements, debates and fears around the issue of the GMD. For example, German center-left newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* wrote, “in the end it’s not a missile defense system that will offer protection, but rather – as abstract as it sounds – unity, for example on the use of sanctions” (Spiegel Staff 2007b, 2).⁶ The left-leaning newspaper *Die Tageszeitung* noted that, “it would be wonderful if the US were to decide to abandon the system. But they are not going to do so – and why would they? They have wanted one for decades, and they now have the opportunity to fulfill this wish within a ‘coalition of the willing’ and without having to bother with NATO and the EU” (Spiegel Staff 2007b, 2).⁷ Another left-leaning newspaper, *Berliner Zeitung*, published that “the SPD leader (Kurt Beck) is not a cabinet member and so can say quite simply: We don’t need or

⁶ The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* also published that “The best of all solutions would be if the system wasn’t even needed – if the US, Russia, and the Europeans were to follow a strict Iran policy, which tightened the sanctions screw slowly but surely, and if Tehran were to give up its nuclear program in the face of a mutually agreed missile defense program” (Spiegel Staff 2007b, 2).

⁷ The *Die Tageszeitung* also wrote that “The German Chancellor is right in wanting to get the issue away from bilateralism and to put it under NATO’s control. It is only possible to push for the inclusion of Russia in the plans within the alliance. That is a peace policy” (Spiegel Staff 2007b, 2).

want new missiles in Europe. Most Germans think the same way, especially when the missiles are American. Now Chancellor will have to constantly answer the same simple question: Do we need, and does she want, new missiles in Europe? But she can not give a simple answer, because she has to consider treaties and commitments to the alliance” (Spiegel Staff 2007b, 3). Interestingly, even policy advisers from the German Institute for International and Security Affairs and other German think tanks were opposed to the defense project and warned of possible disruption of the current European and international balance of power.

The voice of Germany within the EU has been increasingly important, constructive, and followed. German economy within the Eurozone is one of the strongest, which gives a huge credibility and recognition to Merkel government. In addition, Chancellor Merkel has been working on the unification of the EU at every level: economic, political, and to a lesser extent military. Her works paid off, when on May 1st, 2008, Chancellor Merkel received the Charlemagne Award for European Unity, which is considered as one of the most prestigious European prizes. Germany truly believes in multilateral solutions and the use of diplomacy and the rules of law. Germany has been pushing the EU towards this direction.

The obscure position of France

The case of France is quite different from Germany, especially since the arrival of Nicolas Sarkozy at the French Presidency in May 2007. President Sarkozy was in total rupture with former President, Mr. Chirac, especially in trying to reestablish stronger ties with Washington. Former President Chirac was a symbol of anti-American unilateralism, which attained its paramount in March 2003 prior the beginning of the war in Iraq. Since 2003, Mr. Chirac was opposed to most of American foreign policy initiatives, and on the case of the missile shield, “former French President Chirac cautioned against the creation of ‘new divisions in Europe’” (Hildreth and Ek 2007, 7). Chirac wanted to keep to some extent harmony within the EU, which was already weak since the rejection of the Constitution in 2005. But, with President Sarkozy, one could argue that a real shift had occurred as he was working on harmonizing diplomatic relations with Washington. This harmonization started with a rapprochement on different levels: individual, between Sarkozy and Bush, and international. Internationally, Mr. Sarkozy, for example, increased the number of troops in Afghanistan and backed up more policies implemented by the Bush administration. In addition, Sarkozy was working on reintegrating France as a full time member of NATO, which took place in 2009. As proved by Mcardle Kelleher, “Russia has had less success with Nicolas Sarkozy than with Jacques Chirac. Sarkozy’s first visit to Moscow gave far more approval to the general concept of missile defense and the position of the United States. Popular sentiment is divided although there is surprising sympathy for a multilateral European solution” (Mcardle Kelleher 2007, 12).

In the case of the construction of the missile shield, it was unclear where France stood. Discussions between politicians and political advisers were very marginal. And as explained by Krzysztof Soloch, analyst at the French Institute of International Relations, the real debate around the missile shield was to define if this American program was multilateral, global or bilateral. Under Chirac, such program was considered as being bilateral, but under Sarkozy, it had been considered as a multilateral global project in the sense that it could be used for the protection of Europe (Rosenzweig 2008). France under Chirac was representing a rupture in the transatlantic dialogue, whereas Sarkozy has tried to close the gap between France and the US.

To summarize, French position on the missile shield has been very complex and unclear. There is no total agreement or disagreement. It seemed that the topic had been avoided since the arrival of Sarkozy at the Elyssée. Hence, French media mainly focused on the Russian-American dialogue/tension over the missile shield without mentioning the French position. It could also be argued that France was seeking for possible solutions multilaterally during NATO meetings.

The positions of Poland and Czech Republic

The positions of Poland and the Czech Republic were very surprising in the fact that both countries would host part of the GMD, but were also facing divisions domestically over the approval of the project.

In the case of Poland, polls indicated that a majority of Poles disapproved the idea of hosting a part of the missile defense. “Most objections were based upon concerns over sovereignty, as well as over the belief that the presence of the system would diminish rather than increase national security and might harm relations with neighboring states” (Hildreth and Ek 2007, 5). In addition, Poland was asking for guarantee of US protection against eventual attacks orchestrated by rogue states and/or Russia. Poland had been “requesting that the United States provide batteries of Patriot missiles to shield Poland against short- and medium-range missiles” (Hildreth and Ek 2007, 5).

Politically speaking, Polish politicians saw the GMD as a way to be respected regionally and internationally, but also fully integrated within the Euro-Atlantic community. Concerning the GMD, “German calls for negotiation are also seen as just one more German unwillingness to treat Poland as a full member of Europe, able to determine to defend its own national interest, and unwilling to follow any German aspirations to superiority” (McCardle Kelleher 2007, 12). The historical tensions between Germany and Poland were probably underestimated by politicians.

In the case of Czech Republic, the government believed that the decision to host the radar was too important to leave the decision to the people, knowing that 70% of Czechs would reject such construction, and that national opposition was considerably growing (Coyle 2008b). Even against popular opposition, Czech government officials supported the US plan and believed that it was in their interests to carry on a project that would increase their national security. However, in the worst-case scenario, officials believed that even if the system did not work, the cost of construction and US investments would help strengthening Czech economy and security. For example, the US planned to spend \$1 billion in Czech Republic, and the construction of such radar would benefit local firms and bring them around \$90m (Coyle 2008b).

From a military standpoint, according to Czech officials, the GMD would offer the Czech Republic a protection from Russia. But, an undesired outcome was that it could attract attention from Iran or other states pushing them to destroy the radar affecting the security of Czech Republic. The Czech Republic was playing a dangerous game that could be costly at the domestic and regional level.

Both countries were looking for moving under the umbrella of the world superpower by hosting a piece of the missile shield. But, was the outcome of such gamble worth it in the long term? Was such decision made by Poland and Czech Republic an illustration of the failure of European enlargement and the process of integration? Was it also an illustration of the lack of projection of hard power from the EU?

The lack of a unified EU voice

Were the decisions made by Poland and Czech Republic a representation of a lack of cohesion in shaping a common EU foreign and security policy? On one side, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) belong to the second pillar of the European institutional system, meaning that the decision-making remains intergovernmental. There has not been an unified EU foreign policy. The second side is that EU Member States were – are still – not willing to pool their capabilities together as it is perceived as loss of national sovereignty and too some extent weakening of national security. States like France, Britain, and Italy are still strongly attached to their national sovereignty and autonomy, and rarely talk of pooling their defense together unless it fits with their interests.

Jean-Sylvestre Mongrenier argued in his article that the EU is a conglomerate of twenty-seven sovereign states having divergent political projects and that their cohesion is in fact based

on the American leadership. He added that European protection remains under an American-occidental agreement and that the EU follows this path because it is satisfying for both governments and public opinion. This pact had been made in order to protect the European model of Welfare states, and its economy (Mongrenier 2007, 4). However, such comments do not take into consideration the fact that the EU is not only working on its own defense program, but also that the original European project was not designed to become a military union, but instead to enforce peace between Member States in Europe through deep economic integration. The EU has certainly been able to grow under NATO/US umbrella throughout the Cold War, but it did not mean that the EU had to agree with and back up any military moves made by Washington – especially when the outcome could destabilize the European balance of power. Furthermore, the US position towards the EU on the question of defense and security has been quite paradoxical, as it had pushed Europeans for years to increase their contributions to their own security and the security of the region such as the Balkans. Following the Treaty of Saint Malo in December 1998, which established the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), the Americans raised their concerns about such European project. During the early years of the Bush administration, the US expressed considerable skepticism concerning the ESDP and the consequences it could have on the survival of NATO.

In April 2008, while being interviewed, Javier Solana, the High Representative of the CFSP, acknowledged “so far, the missile defense issue has not been discussed in the EU framework” because it is a matter of national responsibility (Solana 2008). In a statement made by French senator, Yves Pozzo di Borgo, at the French Sénat, concerning the US missile shield, the author explained that the EU had always been kept on the side, and that the US had been interacting bilaterally with Poland and Czech Republic. The senator also criticized the fact that German Foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, wanted to raise the issue within NATO, but not within the institutional framework of the EU. Only Solana had tried to insist on the necessity to bring the issue between EU Member States within an European forum. Very rarely, the question of US missile shield in Europe had been brought during meeting of the Council of Minister or even the Commission (Pozzo di Borgo 2007, 39). During another interview, Solana confirmed that “the European Union is not directly involved in the issue of missile defense. [...] Agreement on how to proceed would indeed be very positive for European security” (Golovanova 2007, 2). So there was a real lack of EU harmony simply because EU Member States blocked the process.

The tensions caused by Russia

The GMD plan had also affected the relationship between the US and Russia, but also the balance of power in Europe. Putin affirmed that it would reignite the arms race, but the US rejected Russian criticism. However, the US guaranteed that the interceptors “could not possibly act as a deterrent against Russia” (Hildreth and Ek 2007), because there are only designed to protect Europe and the US from an Iranian attack.

During the security conference in Munich in February 2007, Putin threatened to abrogate the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and would not follow the obligations of the Conventional Forces Treaty in Europe. If GMD construction were to be built, Russia warned to “target Poland and Czech Republic and place medium-range missiles in Kaliningrad; suspend participation in the treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, potentially restarting the Cold War; announce the successful development of new ICBMs and new maneuvering RVs; put its strategic bombers back on training flights; and threaten to pull out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty” (Coyle 2008b, 2). In the same conference in Munich, President Putin on the topic of missile defense system accused the US of pursuing world domination and warned against a militarization of space.

During the annual address to the Federal Assembly, Putin declared on the question of the US missile defense system in Europe that, “our partners [the US] are not displaying correct behavior, to say the least, in their attempts to gain unilateral advantages.” He added “while making use of

an invented pretext for not ratifying the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, they are taking advantage of the situation to build up their own system of military bases along our borders” (President of Russia 2007, 13). Even if Russia had been aware of this project for several years, it feared that “the modest GMD facilities planned for Eastern Europe are likely just the harbinger of a more ambitious program” (Hildreth and Ek 2007, 9). According to Goldman, Russia had six objections against the deployment of a ground-based midcourse missile defense system in Europe:

“a) the proposed GMD, situated close to Russia’s borders, poses a threat to Russia’s strategic nuclear deterrent retaliatory capability and is really directed against Russia, not against some non-existent Iranian or North Korean threat; b) Russia was not adequately consulted about the GMD deployment; c) the GMD will spur a renewed nuclear arms race; d) the proposed deployments in Poland and the Czech Republic violate earlier US/NATO pledges to Moscow not to establish new military bases in those countries; e) the missiles deployed in Poland could have offensive capability to strike targets in Russia; f) the radar in the Czech Republic could be used to ‘spy’ on Russia” (Goldman 2007, 20).

One of the solutions proposed to the US was to share a military base in Azerbaijan. Putin offered the US to use a Russian radar station in Qabala, Azerbaijan, complemented by interceptors in Iraq and Turkey. However, the station of Qabala was built 20 years ago, and the facilities needed to be either updated or replaced. The US reply was that “if we [the US] agreed to share the radar, we would expand Moscow’s influence in an anti-Russian region at little military benefit to ourselves” (Szrom 2007).

During a presidential debate between Putin and Bush in April 6, 2008, Putin declared: “I will not hide the fact that missile defense in Europe was and still is one the most difficult problems. This is not a matter of language, of diplomatic wording, but a problem of substance” (President of Russia 2008, 1). During the Q&A about the missile defense site in Europe, considering a possible agreement on the issue, Putin answered: “I am cautiously optimistic about our ability to reach a final agreement. [...] But the devil, as is so often the case, is in the detail” (President of Russia 2008, 4). In the same time, he called for the creation of a ‘global missile defense system’ in which the US and Russia would collaborate.

Final Remarks

To conclude this paper, four points need to be addressed. First, the US actions around the case of the missile shield in Europe were a representation of the Bush era and the foreign policy emerging from it. American unilateralism was perceived by Washington as the appropriate strategy as long as it increased US national security at the expenses of cooperation with allies. Interestingly enough, during a series of hearings at the US Congress in 2007, US senators never mentioned or even took into consideration the divisions created among EU Member States around the question of missile shield. US national interests were simply at the heart of discussions. In a majority of hearings, it was apparent that the US was simply thinking on unilateral terms. Talks were always about the Czech Republic and Poland as recipients, but never about Brussels and/or other EU Member States. The missile shield exemplified the notion of American exceptionalism very present during the Bush era.

The second point is that this issue of missile defense system was much more than a military and security issue, it was perceived as the way the US interacted with the EU and respects its allies. But, most significantly, it seemed that the understanding of international relations was diverging on both sides of the pond. The EU has historically perceived international relations and international security based on cooperation, multilateralism – effective multilateralism –,

diplomacy and so on as it was addressed in the 2003 *European Security Strategy*; whereas the US has been following a different path with a foreign policy based on unilateralism and hard power. This could undeniably illustrate the famous expression of the Venus versus Mars. Furthermore, the concept of the 'coalition of the willing' had already damaged the way the EU perceived the US and divided Europeans, but also considerably changed European perceptions of the US and the transatlantic dynamics.

The third point that needs to be raised is about the future of the EU CFSP. Can the EU unify its foreign and security policy? and ultimately be in charged of its military destiny? With the widening of the EU, many new Member States have been extremely dependent on and to some extent bandwagoning with the EU powerhouses. Poland and the Czech Republic were no exception to the rule unless that they chose to bandwagon with the US rather than the EU. Back then, the US was perceived as a better option guaranteeing their security. The EU membership was more of a symbol of economic stability and prospective growth rather than military security. NATO and the US were and are still perceived as the real security provider.

The last point reflects on the fact that the missile shield system should have been instead placed under NATO auspices. By acting unilaterally, the US was indirectly or consciously disrupting the fragile unity of the EU over the contentious question of defense and security. This specific sector of the EU is already a problem by itself, so if a third party were to interfere it may slow down the deepening process of the institutional evolution of the second pillar in the long term. The lesson of this chapter is simple: the EU needs to find a way to solve its problems through the use of a single voice. This has been a real challenge considering the centrality of nation-states and the limited power of the High Representative. However it appears that even today after the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon and the creation of the External European Action Service, the EU would have been in a similar situation, no unity and national responses.

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