

Global Defense: Return from Indifference to Rational Assessment?

by

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Today, I want to discuss how cooperation on building a global missile defense can work to strengthen the NATO alliance, which has served us so well for so many years. My paper is appropriately titled, “Global Defense: Return from Indifference to Rational Assessment” because we’ve been at this crossroads before. A decade ago, I participated first hand in developing global missile defense concepts with which many in NATO were growing comfortable. I believe the new Bush Administration will revive those concepts, dropped by the Clinton Administration in 1993. And I hope they do so with a sense of urgency because of the growing threat.

I refer you to the excellent work by the 1998 congressionally mandated bipartisan Commission chaired by now Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld as the most authoritative discussion of the threat available in the open literature. The bipartisan commission unanimously concluded that North Korea, among other nations, could build ballistic missiles “to inflict major damage on [the United States] within about five years of a decision to acquire such a capability.” The Commission also concluded that during several of these years, the intelligence community “might not be aware that such a decision had been made.” Although the Commission’s report was disputed by the Clinton Administration when it was first published, North Korea’s August 31, 1998, Taepo Dong launch over Japan and almost to U.S. territory dispelled those arguments. Clearly, the day is fast approaching when rogue leaders could use long-range missiles, armed with weapons of mass destruction, to hold hostage cities around the world—including in the American homeland.

Such a capability would be used to intimidate, blackmail, and coerce nations and alliances—possibly frustrating democratic processes and undermining our ability, and that of our allies and friends, to protect our mutual interests around the world. Imagine what would have happened in 1990 had Saddam Hussein the capability to attack the cities of Europe or the United States. It is highly unlikely that President Bush could have assembled the coalition that performed so brilliantly during the Gulf War. Indeed, it is doubtful the U.S. Senate would have approved U.S. participation—the margin of approval was only three votes as it was.

Effective defenses are needed to frustrate such blackmail strategies. And I argue they need to be continuously on-the-scene, worldwide. This is a challenge for all our nations, which, I believe, is best met in an alliance context. Nations can benefit on a multilateral basis—or a bilateral basis, as under current U.S. agreements with Japan and Israel.

Let me recount a few personal reflections from my background so that you will know the biases in my point-of-view—and why I believe the NATO nations should cooperate in building effective ballistic missile defenses.

Alliances Can Accomplish Difficult Tasks

In the early 1980s, it was my privilege—as Assistant Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA)—to work at the Assistant Secretary level in the U.S. Government

to help coordinate our INF policy leading up to the 1983 deployment of the Pershing medium range ballistic missiles in West Germany and the Ground Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCMs) in the U.K., Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy.

Our alliance held firm in the face of massive propaganda campaigns, Soviet threats, and eventually Soviet walkouts from all arms control talks in 1983. NATO solidarity in responding to the Soviet SS-20 deployment and build-up—beginning in the late 1970s and continuing over many years, through democratic elections in most if not all NATO nations, including the U.S.—was a high point in NATO’s history. And we were eventually rewarded with the first arms control treaty ever to eliminate an entire class of nuclear systems.

In 1983 and 1984, I also led in the development of U.S. space arms control policy and helped frame the policy underpinnings of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Thanks to our resolve—together with NATO and other allies, the Soviets returned to the negotiating table in March 1985. I believe SDI—and particularly the space defense part of SDI—was a major reason the Soviets returned to the negotiating table and, for the first time, negotiated seriously toward deep reductions in offensive nuclear arms.

My job as Deputy—and then Chief —Negotiator in the Geneva Defense and Space Talks was to find creative ways to say “no” to the Soviets, who were demanding we cancel the SDI program. Our agenda was to achieve deep reductions in offensive nuclear weapons without additional restraints on our efforts to change the strategic equation to include defenses as an important part of a new, more stable, security paradigm involving the United States and our friends and allies.

For five years while negotiating with the Soviets, I met regularly—at least quarterly—with the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and at the experts level in Brussels, explaining our Geneva agenda. The backing we received from NATO was important to us as we held firm to our principles in the talks in Geneva.

Throughout that time, we explained to the Soviets, our allies, the U.S. Congress and the press that our objective was to change the fundamental strategic regime from one of confrontation to one of cooperation. We argued against the mutual hostage doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), which is the underlying objective of the ABM Treaty, and for a cooperative regime that gave a prominent role to defending against ballistic missiles.

We argued that even if the original reasons behind the ABM Treaty had been sound, they were no longer so—and that effective defenses had a role to play in the then current strategic reality of the 1980s and 1990s. As an aside, I’d note that Henry Kissinger—the architect of the 1972 ABM Treaty—now agrees with this position, as he reiterated in the February 9, 2000, *Washington Post*:

“[W]hatever tenuous plausibility the MAD theory had in a two-power world disappears when eight nations have tested nuclear weapons and many rogue regimes are working feverishly on the development of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction and the ballistic missiles to deliver them. If one of these destroyed an American city by accident or design, how would an American president explain his refusal to protect our country against even limited attacks?”

We were rewarded for our principled positions in Geneva—with the INF Treaty in 1987 and the START I Treaty in 1991. These were the first arms control agreements ever actually to reduce offensive nuclear systems. Moreover, many—including your truly—credit Ronald Reagan’s

refusal to compromise on SDI at the October 1986 Reykjavik Summit as being a major reason for the early breakup of the Soviet Union—the Evil Empire. Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, Gorbachev’s main advisor on arms control and military matters, said Reykjavik was a “watershed event.” Vladimir Lukin, when Russia’s Ambassador to the United States, said SDI shortened the Cold War by at least five years. The resulting savings paid for the SDI program many times over. (Ambassador Lukin now chairs the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Duma.)

Genesis of the Need for Global Defenses

Beginning in early 1990—prior to and then during my time as SDI Director in the Bush Administration—I worked to refocus the SDI program and our associated policy after the breakup of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact. I conducted a review of the SDI program and our arms control policy for then Defense Secretary (and now Vice President) Dick Cheney and President Bush in early 1990. In my March 1990 report, I recommended that we move away from defending the U.S. against a massive attack from the Soviet Union, then considered to be very unlikely. Instead, I recommended we focus on protecting U.S. citizens and our overseas troops, friends and allies against a limited attack from any number of threatening nations.

The principal concern was an accidental or unauthorized launch from the former Soviet states or deliberate attack from a number of nations then seeking to buy and/or build ballistic missiles. In the latter case, threatening ballistic missiles could be used to blackmail or coerce us—constraining our freedom of action, particularly in dealing with far away crises involving our security interests. Here, my recommendation built on a Defense Science Board (DSB) study, led by Dr. Joe Braddock, that concluded in the late 1980s that proliferation of ballistic missile technology was a growing problem. That concern was exacerbated by the removal of Soviet constraints on its client states as the Cold War ended. Indeed, technology was becoming Russia’s primary source of hard currency as the Soviet break-up continued—and so the problem was much more troublesome than perceived by the DSB during the latter days of the Cold War.

In any case, the focus moved away from a U.S. homeland defense to a defense of the U.S. homeland and our allies and friends, including NATO. To this end, “Theater Missile Defenses” became part of an integrated global architecture to protect our overseas troops, friends and allies. I gave my report to Secretary Cheney in March 1990, and he shortly thereafter asked me to lead the SDI program and execute my recommended agenda. President Bush called this redirected SDI program his own in January 1991, at about the same time that Desert Storm began.

The 1991 Gulf War and the associated Scud-Patriot duel soon demonstrated our concerns about the growing need to defend against ballistic missiles in the New World Disorder. Saddam Hussein turned deterrence theory on its head by trying to provoke Israeli retaliation—and Patriot saved the day by providing Israeli leadership an alternative to that retaliation that could have split the Arab alliance with us.

Furthermore, imagine the mischief Saddam could have caused had he long-range ballistic missiles that could have reached the undefended cities of Europe or even the United States. I have little doubt that Saddam’s blackmail threats in that situation would have created a grave problem for us, indeed. Effective defenses for the cities of America and our friends and allies around the world will be needed to counter attempts at intimidation by some rogue leader in some future crisis.

We called such a worldwide defense to counter future threats of intimidation GPALS—Global Protection Against Limited Strikes. Global, because we perceived the threat as global, requiring an ever present global defense response. (It is difficult to move defenses quickly into the troubled region after the crisis begins to develop—as we learned in moving Patriot to South Korea to deal with threats from the North in the early 1990s.) Protection, because we wanted to protect population centers that might be the target of blackmail threats. Limited Strikes rather than massive missile attacks, because that was perceived as being more likely in the conditions where blackmail threats might be tried.

The largest raid during the Gulf War involved seven Scuds, as I recall it. Actually, our objective with GPALS was to provide a high probability of destroying all of up to 200 attacking nuclear warheads. I arrived at this number by considering how many nuclear warheads might potentially be controlled by a renegade Russian submarine commander—in a variant of Tom Clancy’s “Red October” scenario.

Note that our objectives with GPALS were entirely consistent with the negotiating objectives we had sought with the Soviet Union for the preceding five years. We sought to replace confrontation with cooperation—including with Russia, NATO and other nations—specifically on building a global defense against a common emerging threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missile technology to states that could threaten the peace in a variety of places around the world. And we sought to build such defenses while still seeking additional reductions in offensive nuclear weapons.

Boris Yeltsin Said “Yes” in 1992

After we persistently held for seven years to this principled position—defenses and reductions—Russian President Yeltsin said “yes” in January 1992. In a speech to the U.N. General Assembly, he proposed the deeper reductions that became Start II, that SDI be refocused to take advantage of Russian technology, and that we work together to build a joint global defense to protect the world community against ballistic missile attack. So, Russia accepted the U.S. position of “reductions and defenses” after insisting for the preceding seven years that defenses would make reductions impossible.

While our subsequent negotiations did not close—regrettably—we made a great deal of progress on Yeltsin’s proposal before the end of the Bush Administration in January 1993, in consultation with NATO and other allies and friends. In particular, we worked closely with our friends in the U.K. and France because of their concerns about their nuclear deterrent forces.

Between June 1992 and the end of the Bush Administration, High Level Group negotiations were led by Ambassador Dennis Ross—until recently our Middle East Envoy—and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Georgiy Mamedov. Progress was made in three working groups: one on technology co-operation, one on the Proliferation threat, and one on the architecture for a Global Protective System. Notably, then Lt. General Barry McCaffrey (Assistant to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and now Secretary of State Colin Powell) briefed the entire GPALS concept in the Kremlin—after discussing it with our NATO allies. (General McCaffrey continues to serve U.S. interests in the Clinton Administration as the Drug Czar.)

While we did not reach closure, we made a great deal of progress, including in defining joint technology programs, which I agreed to support as SDI initiatives—and did, as we were making progress in defining a global architecture acceptable to both sides. We talked quite seriously

about multiple ground-based sites, sea-based defenses, and even space based sensors. Only in the area of space-based interceptors did we develop little common ground. But the point is that we and the Russians were seriously talking about a Global Protection System architecture that went well beyond the limits of the ABM Treaty—at the same time that we were completing the START II Treaty. So, a strong precedent was set for arguing that we can have both effective defenses and deep reductions of offensive nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, we reached agreement with the Democrat-controlled Congress on missile defense programs that the U.S. should pursue. The Congress approved development of several theater missile defense systems, a comprehensive national missile defense program—mandating deployment, and robust funding for R&D on space-based defenses. (The 1991 and 1992 Missile Defense Acts, passed by a Democratic controlled Congress, were much stronger bills than that President Clinton vetoed in 1995—or that signed in 1999 after Congress passed it by a veto-proof margin. As you know, President Clinton then refused to execute this “law of the land” in September 2000, thus “kicking the can” to his successor, now President George W. Bush.

Because of the strong support in 1992 from Congress and our allies and friends—as well as the cooperative spirit then in our talks with the Russians, I believe the Bush Administration could have reached agreement in another six months on how to proceed with a joint global defense. But the November 1992 elections put an end to those hopes.

Eight Years of Regression

The Clinton Administration immediately changed directions in a dramatic way. The Clinton Pentagon scuttled the national missile defense acquisition program—cutting the associated budget by 80 percent, canceling the fully approved development program, and returning associated proposals to industry unopened; eliminated the space defense programs; and even cut by 20 percent the theater defense programs, which the Clinton Administration emphasized was its top priority.

More importantly, Clinton officials reverted to Cold War arms control positions based on confrontation by declaring their allegiance to the ABM Treaty—that mutual suicide pact intended to give a free ride to ICBMs. They removed from the negotiating table the U.S. positions seeking a new treaty arrangement based on building jointly a global defense. And they declared their commitment to the mutual hostage arrangement of the ABM Treaty, which they called the “cornerstone of strategic stability.” Regrettably, this signaled a return to the “reductions or defense” position that the Soviets and Russia had held until Yeltsin’s January 31, 1992, speech.

In April 1993, Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin held their first meeting in Vancouver. Yeltsin suggested continuing the negotiations on a joint global defense—and I understand no one on our side of the table even knew what Yeltsin was talking about. This was a major lost opportunity to have changed the strategic environment—and it undercut those in Russia who had urged Yeltsin to support the proposition that reductions and defenses could be in both our interests. It will be difficult to re-establish this support in Russia—although there are some recent developments that give hope it may be possible. I’ll return to this in a moment.

Suffice it to say that as the Clinton years passed, the rhetoric sounded like the mid-1980s— notwithstanding the changed threat and the very modest ABM Treaty changes now being sought

by the Clinton Administration. Again, it was taken as conventional wisdom that defenses make reductions impossible. This is a sad and potentially dangerous regression.

Global Protection Systems for the Future

We—in the U.S., NATO and elsewhere—need to return to the GPALS concept, based on a cooperative strategic regime rather than continuing one that perpetuates notions of East-West confrontation as strategic reality. This time, I suggest we call this concept a Global Protection System—in honor of Boris Yeltsin’s historic 1992 proposal.

Such a Global Protection System would be strategically important for NATO, as the ballistic missile threat grows among the nations to the South. Also, our allies and friends around the Pacific Rim would benefit from such an effective defense as the threat from North Korea and, potentially, China grows.

Let me illustrate how such a cooperative defense might work particularly for NATO—and how it can come into existence much more rapidly than most understand is possible.

Sea-, air-, and land-based defenses could be deployed to intercept attacking missiles from threatening states as early in their flight as possible, preferably in their boost-phase before they can release multiple weapons and decoys. In this most desired case, debris would fall back on those launching threatening rockets, and that could help deter such an attack in the first place.

Here, I agree with Dr. Richard Garwin, a member of the Rumsfeld Commission, who proposed that the U.S. and Russia cooperate on building a ground-based interceptor site in Eastern Russia so that it could intercept North Korean ballistic missiles in their boost-phase. The Administration should be talking with the Russians about this possibility, because it would be very effective in defeating the North Korean threat. Note that the entire world can be protected from North Korean missiles if they can be intercepted in their boost-phase.

Sea-based defenses would be key in providing an early global defense, as discussed in a paper I co-authored with former Vice Admiral J.D. Williams—which is attached. About two-thirds of the Earth’s surface is covered by international waters, and ship-based interceptors could easily provide a global defense capability. Long-range defensive interceptors onboard cruisers in the Mediterranean Sea could be integrated with a sensor network and a global command and control system to begin defending NATO within four years. And here, I mean all of NATO—the European contingent and North America, i.e., the U.S. and Canada.

Any ship with a vertical launch system (VLS) could launch interceptors—actually the VLS system already deployed on many U.S. vessels could be also deployed on barges or even on the ground and used to launch defensive interceptors. Various sensors throughout NATO could be used to help guide the interceptors to destroy attacking missiles.

Our Aegis Cruisers are already deployed around the world—the result of a \$50 billion investment by the American taxpayer. Their associated air defense system is being upgraded and included in just such a “cooperative engagement concept” whereby forward based sensors can be used to guide defensive interceptors to shoot down cruise missiles long before their co-located radar can pick up such a target. We should go to the next step and provide the improvements that would permit these same ships to also shoot down ballistic missiles. Such a system could begin operations in less than four years for less than \$3 billion more than is already being spent on the Navy Theater Wide and related programs—about a tenth of what the first ground-based NMD site will probably cost, and the Aegis system could be operational years sooner.

Note, this sea-based defense could operate to complement THAAD, Arrow, PAC(3), and other ground-based defenses that could be deployed throughout NATO and elsewhere. Such a combination of sea- and ground-based defenses could provide a very effective wide-area defense of NATO. All NATO members could participate in such a cooperative defense with bases for interceptors, sensors, command centers, etc. For example, sensors throughout Europe could be integrated into a European defense, just as the Fylingdales and Thule radar could be integrated into a missile defense system to protect the U.S. and Canada.

Similar arrangements could be made for Israel, Japan and other allies and friends. There could be a role for Russia as well—but we must return to Yeltsin's 1992 formulation for cooperation rather than continuing the current rhetoric and policies of confrontation.

I want to note that Russian President Putin suggested last summer that Russia might be prepared to cooperate on such defenses—particularly boost phase defenses, in the context of protecting all of Eurasia from threatening ballistic missiles. More recently, he proposed using Russian theater defenses to defend the European contingent of NATO—but this initiative was clearly intended to split NATO. Happily, NATO Secretary General George Robertson made clear to Mr. Putin that such divisive tactics would not work. Something may come from Mr. Putin's suggestions if he is willing to cooperate with all of NATO—on both sides of the Atlantic. So I would not dismiss his suggestions. So, while Mr. Putin's proposals must be rejected as they stand, they might be modified in obvious ways to support a joint global defense, as Boris Yeltsin proposed in 1992.

But if there is to be progress, there must be a stop to Cold War rhetoric regarding a need to preserve the ABM Treaty as the “cornerstone of strategic stability”—code words for assuring that America remain vulnerable to ballistic missile attack. Regrettably, such words have found resonance in Europe and elsewhere—as the ABM Treaty is perceived as an arms control political icon, although many understand it has little technical merit in the new world disorder. And there are some positive signs that European leaders understand and are responding positively to President Bush's commitment to ending America's total vulnerability to missile attack.

The ABM Treaty Trap

I must emphasize that the only reason such common sense systems as the above-discussed sea-based global defense are not being built today is because of our unilateral restraints related to the ABM Treaty, which bans development, testing and deployment of sea-based defenses to protect the U.S. We have not permitted theater missile defenses to be all they can be, because if we did they could also defend the U.S.

I repeat, we have been dumbing down our theater defenses so that they can only defend our overseas troops and the cities of our allies and friends—because of the ABM Treaty. Again, consider the sea-based Navy Theater Wide—or NTW—system.

In addition to slowing down the defensive interceptor from 4.5 to something closer to 3 km/sec, the Clinton Administration did not exploit the best sensor architecture—on the interceptor or elsewhere—no doubt because that would enable the Navy Theater Wide system also to defend Americans at home—which was not a priority with the Clinton Administration. Don't take my word, consider what Robert Bell—while serving as Special Assistant to President Clinton for Defense Policy and Arms Control—had to say on January 7, 1999:

“You can take an Aegis Cruiser and . . . some stage of internetting [of sensors] and take very fast missiles that we are building for the [sea-based] TMD systems and link them up with ABM

capable sensors and radars to get the capability against [intercontinental ballistic missiles]. . . . But at that point, it is no longer a TMD, there is no issue here of ambiguity. What you have done here is built and produced a sea-based ABM system [prohibited by the ABM Treaty].”

The most ludicrous NTW constraint is that the Clinton Administration limited the firing protocol of the NTW interceptors so they can not be launched until after the target ballistic missile’s rockets have burned out. Then, the slower interceptor from a forward-based Aegis cruiser cannot catch-up to the faster flying missiles that could attack U.S. territory.

Such constraints, if continued, will mean that an Aegis cruiser in the Sea of Japan will be able to intercept a Taepo Dong from North Korea headed to Japan, but not if it is headed to Alaska, or the Northwestern United States. If that day ever comes, I wouldn’t want to have the President’s job of explaining to the American people why “dumbing-down” our TMD systems was a good idea—especially since America is spending about \$4 billion a year to defend America’s friends and allies while leaving America vulnerable to even a single ballistic missile.

Our slavish adherence to the ABM Treaty has cost us money, time and effectiveness—and, if not fixed, one day will cost us lives. President Bush and his senior officials would be absolutely right to end our adherence to its terms, as is our right. And I hope they do so soon.

Closure

I believe we need to replace the confrontation model of the ABM Treaty with new alliance agreements based on cooperation—for NATO and others. This can be accomplished through multilateral alliance arrangements or through bilateral arrangements—as is being done with Japan and Israel, and increasingly NATO nations as well.

We need very effective defenses, beginning with the capability to intercept attacking missiles in their boost-phase, to defeat likely near-term countermeasures such as clustered submunitions—which would defeat all the defense systems currently being developed at the expense of over \$4 billion a year.

I mentioned earlier that a ground-based interceptor site in Eastern Russia could intercept North Korean missiles in their boost-phase. Ground-based interceptors in Turkey might intercept missiles launched from parts of the Middle East. Boost-phase interceptors can be launched from aircraft—such as unpiloted air vehicles, which could be based in any number of countries. And the best way to achieve a global boost-phase intercept capability is from space—and there should be serious R&D programs to develop and deploy such space-based defenses as soon as possible.

The technology to build such a global defense is mature. Our main problem is policy and politics—mostly centered around the ABM Treaty. My own view is that we must abandon the Treaty—cooperatively if possible, but unilaterally if we must. But the clock is running out, and we must act with dispatch.

I want to close by emphasizing that NATO—including the Partnership for Peace—can participate in a cooperative regime that can form the basis for much greater security than continuing the trappings of the Cold War’s mutual hostage relationship of the ABM Treaty. So can our other friends and allies around the world.

We should establish a basis for such cooperation as soon as possible—and I hope that our discussion today will help toward that end.

Thank you for your attention.