U.S./NATO Missile Defense in Europe
Implications for Iran and the Two Major Conveners of the Helsinki Conference

I
In Barack Obama’s 2009 Prague speech, in which he emphasized “America’s commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons,” the U.S. President clearly defined a special and positive role for European missile defense (MD). Obama presented this military program as part of the solution for “Iran’s nuclear and ballistic missile activity [which] poses a real threat, not just to the United States, but to Iran’s neighbors and our allies.” He also stated: “As long as the threat from Iran persists, we will go forward with a missile defense system that is cost-effective and proven.”

The U.S. President did neither specify his vision of Global Nuclear Zero in greater detail, for instance regarding the Middle East/Gulf, nor did he outline the role of missile defense in such a context. Admittedly, he gave his famous Prague speech almost a year before the international community called for a Middle East Conference (MEC) on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery systems (DVs); this was in May 2010 in the context of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). It was supposed to take place in Helsinki in 2012, but the Conference had to be postponed despite the uniring efforts of the MEC Facilitator, Ambassador Jaakko Laajava. This was due to disagreements among the major regional actors, but also between the United States and Russia which, together with the United Kingdom and the UN Secretary-General, were to invite Middle East participants to the Finnish capital. Missile defense has been a permanent prominent and controversial subject in relations between Washington and Moscow since before the Ukrainian crisis.

Against this backdrop, two themes are addressed with a focus on the role of missile defense in this issue: first (and foremost), the role of this military program as a response to Iran’s missile program; and second, its role with respect to the Helsinki Conference. My analysis proceeds in three steps: first by presenting the Western missile defense plans in Europe in its current state as part of U.S.-dominated policies towards Tehran; second by raising the question whether U.S./NATO programs are convincingly coordinated and justified as a response to Iranian missile activities; and third by examining the role of missile defense in the confrontational East-West context, with an emphasis on the behavior of the two major conveners of the envisaged Helsinki gathering. This Policy Brief draws conclusions from its main findings and provides recommendations for the two major themes presented.

The Western Iran Policy: Extended Deterrence, Sanctions, and Missile Defense

Missile defense is one of three elements that constitute the overall Western, U.S.-dominated strategy to prevent the Islamic Republic of Iran from becoming a nuclear weapon state. The two additional components of this comprehensive strategy are, on the one hand, Washington’s extended deterrence policy of bolstering its regional allies against the perceived Iranian menace; this is done by means of a strengthened American military presence, which makes the United States a regional power, and through its huge exports of weapons to the Gulf States and to Israel (see Policy Brief No. 12). On the other hand, the tightened web of sanctions on the unilateral, multilateral (European), and international (UN Security Council)
levels aims at isolating and weakening the leadership in Tehran. The hope is to alter its behavior and the most visible sign of a policy change would be if the government gave up its sensitive nuclear activities, especially (to a considerable extent at least) its enrichment efforts. The sanctions themselves are part of a dual-track approach also involving the element of dialogue which meanwhile has become reality in the ongoing E3+3 (or P5+1) talks on the Iranian nuclear issue.

Much more importantly, the overriding goal of all three elements – to prevent the emergence of a new nuclear weapon state with a basic anti-Western attitude in the Middle East – is no longer merely part of a containment strategy, as President Obama explicitly emphasized almost three years after his Prague speech. Before the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in March 2012 he stated: “I do not have a policy of containment; I have a policy to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.” This can be interpreted as a more offensive and determined Israeli-like stance of possible pre-emption.

At the time of his Prague speech, an evaluation of past American MD policies was under way. It led to the official announcement on September 19, 2009 of Obama’s new missile defense concept, the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA). In its original form, this plan aimed at gradually enhancing the protection of European allies in particular against missile threats emanating from Iran in four phases between 2011 and 2020. NATO’s programs are aimed at the same objective: in a historical decision at its summit in Lisbon in November 2010, the Alliance agreed to acquire an MD system in order to protect its entire territory and population against ballistic missiles from hostile states. Like the EPAA, these programs are also intended to protect troops during out-of-area activities in a hostile environment.

An additional rationale behind these projects is preventing Tehran from developing and improving especially those missiles which can carry nuclear, biological or chemical warheads – the standard argument is that Iran might recognize that its efforts are useless because those delivery vehicles cannot penetrate the shield considered to be technologically superior. The claimed added value of MD activities is also to increase Western freedom of action, to enhance (nuclear) deterrence, and to improve crisis stability as well as to provide damage limitation in the case of missile attacks.

There is a great difference between MD on the one hand and sanctions as well as extended deterrence policies on the other as the additional two elements of the overall U.S.-dominated strategy: the Iranian leadership has so far – even in the era of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad – taken the view that the huge U.S./NATO programs and their objective of protecting the continent are beside the point, since its own programs are driven by regional concerns. Therefore, Tehran has not expressed real concern about the Western missile defense program. If President Hassan Rouhani is able to translate his new soft tone into cooperative politics, Tehran’s attitude is not only likely to continue, but will make it harder to justify the costly missile defense activities in Europe. The historical meeting between the foreign ministers of the U.S. and Iran in the context of the UN General Assembly in New York on September 26, 2013, and the equally historic telephone call days later between the two Presidents could mark the beginning of a more productive relationship. The same holds true for the interim agreement on Iran’s nuclear program and the sanctions regime which was concluded at the E3+3 talks in Geneva on November 24, 2013; all parties agreed in mid 2014 in Vienna to extend the negotiations until the end of November 2014, since they had not been able to reach a final accord by July 20.

**U.S./NATO Missile Defense in Europe: The East-West Dimension and the Helsinki Conference**

In addition to these Iran-related aspects, missile defense plays a decisive role in the East-West context, including nuclear reductions. The controversial, in fact obstructive character of missile defense in the American-Russian relationship was rightly analyzed by the four American elder statesmen George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn: “Reducing tensions over missile defense will enhance the possibility of progress on the broader range of nuclear issues so essential to our security.” And they warn: “Failure to do so will make broader nuclear cooperation much more difficult.”

So far, the overly optimistic expectations of the role of missile defense expressed in the sales strategy of MD supporters have not been realized, and reveal a wide gap between rhetoric and reality. More specifically, it was no surprise that right from the beginning of the Western MD plans the SM-3 Block IIB interceptors which were to be deployed in the fourth phase (2020) drew heavy criticism from Moscow. The Russians were concerned that these missiles would neutralize their nuclear forces. On March 17, 2013, the Obama administration announced plans to cancel this fourth phase officially for technical reasons hoping (so far in vain) that this would mollify Moscow.

Missile defense has clearly been ineffective as motivation for a more cooperative security scenario – in fact, it has become a major complication. It needs to be seen in conjunction with the four factors – indeed losses – that Moscow regards as essential and that U.S./NATO missile defense programs have been impinging on negatively: the loss of its a) strategic security – displaying the military asymmetry that goes with this loss; b) power and status – both in military, political, and technological terms; c) influence and control in its vicinity – closely associated with Moscow’s sensitivity regarding the deployment of Western military assets close to its borders which also raises the issue of delineating spheres of influence; and d) respectful communication on an equal footing and equitable cooperation.

Against this backdrop, the role of missile defense in the East-West context allows me to shed light on the behavior of the U.S. and Russia as the two most important conveners of the Middle East Conference. If it takes place, it will provide an adequate forum for discussing the regional specifics of President Obama’s Global Nuclear Zero. Since this study argues that missile defense has to be seen as one element of the broader East-West relationship, the question arises whether its deterioration is likely to spill over to the Middle East Conference or not. The MEC in turn has so far been one of the foreign policy areas which despite some visible disagreements have not been affected by the East-West confrontation in a mostly negative way, despite the confrontational situation that has developed in the context of the Ukraine-centered conflict. The same holds true for Western cooperation with Russia regarding WMD proliferation (including tackling the conflict with Iran within the E3+3 framework), Afghanistan, international terrorism, and organized crime. Conversely, we are not in a situation of strong bilateralism as in the early 1990s, when the Bush/Baker and Yeltsin governments, despite the visible asymmetries between the two powers, were both interested in starting the Madrid process and keeping it alive for some years.

The current situation may not last forever: in its response to the planned tightening of EU sanctions, the Foreign Ministry in Moscow warned in mid 2014 that cooperation in all those areas would be jeopardized. Yet if the following analysis is correct, then there is a chance that under the conditions of equal partnership Moscow may indeed increase its
cooperative efforts so that the Helsinki gathering is more likely to take place. The common interest in not damaging the next NPT Review Conference in spring 2015 may be another incentive for constructive behavior. Unfortunately, the reverse path is not on the cards: that the bilateralism evident in the pre-Helsinki talks has had a visible positive impact on the East-West relationship in general.

U.S./NATO Missile Defense: Concept, Implementation, and Ongoing Shortcomings

The Obama Approach to Missile Defense

The Obama administration shifted the priorities for U.S. missile defense from systems designed to counter a remote threat to the North American continent posed by intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) to systems defending against existing or emerging missile capabilities in regional proliferation hotspots. In accordance with this shift, the Obama administration placed its emphasis on mobile systems that can be re-deployed and plugged into existing regional defense architectures. Washington envisages three regional defense architectures labeled the European, Southwest Asia, and Northeast Asia Phased Adaptive Approach.7

In contrast to his predecessor, President Obama abandoned the much criticized ‘evolutionary acquisition with spiral development’, which was intended to deploy initial capabilities, despite largely unknown system performance which was only to be improved over time.8 Although Pentagon officials have repeatedly emphasized the need to “stick with our fly-before-you-buy approach,”9 questions about the technical reliability and feasibility of effective BMD remain. In fact, criticism expressed in authoritative technical assessments has become devastating.«

Although Pentagon officials have repeatedly emphasized the need to “stick with our fly-before-you-buy approach,” questions about the technical reliability and feasibility of effective BMD remain. In fact, criticism expressed in authoritative technical assessments has become devastating.»

The NRC Committee’s Report concluded that phase four “adds little or nothing to the defense of Europe” and “may not be the best way to improve U.S. homeland defense.”10 The Committee mentioned the Russian concerns and noted that the interceptors to be deployed in Poland in 2021 could threaten portions of Moscow’s nuclear forces, since they would be able to intercept Russian ICBMs fired from bases in southwestern Russia at targets in the eastern United States.11 Against this background, the Obama administration reacted in mid-March 2013 by canceling phase four. According to a senior government official, this decision was not actually affected by Moscow as a factor in the equation; the issue was the unavailability of a solution to a physics problem outlined above.

Not only is this decision important for assessing the technical aspects of Washington’s MD policy in Europe, but also for setting into context the findings by the NRC Committee regarding the preceding three phases. Here the study concludes that when completed as scheduled in 2018, phase three will add the

range missiles launched from Iran, would jeopardize their nuclear forces: this was according to technical analysis summarized by the General Accountability Office on the basis of classified technical reports by the Missile Defense Agency (MDA) in the Pentagon which initially assumed that SM-3 Block IIB interceptors would be based on land at host nation facilities in Romania and Poland. Subsequent MDA analyses, as the General Accountability Office wrote in its letter of February 11, 2013 to Congressman Michael Turner, considered the Romania site not to be “a good location from a flight path standpoint for defending the United States with the SM-3 Block IIB,” while the site in Poland “may require the development of the ability to launch the interceptor earlier […] to be useful for defense of the United States.” Given these limitations, MDA required the SM-3 Block IIB to be ship- and land-compatible, but realizing that if a sea-based version in the North Sea uses a liquid propellant (which would allow for a faster interceptor), there are “significant safety risks and unknown but likely significant cost implications.”

To briefly address only one point of criticism regarding the SM-3 Block IIB interceptors in the fourth phase which had sparked Russian concerns that the planned missiles in Romania and Poland, aimed at intercepting future long-

Bernd W. Kubbig is Project Director at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) and Adj. Professor (Privatdozent) at Goethe University, Frankfurt. Since 2006 he has been coordinating the international expert groups Multilateral Study Group on the Establishment of a Missile Free Zone in the Middle East and the ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST. He specializes in U.S. Foreign and Security Policy, especially on the Middle East, missile defense, and space.
in a take-it-or-leave-it manner, the Alliance missiles. Although agreement was negotiated all its territory and population against ballistic acquire missile defense capabilities to protect at a time when concerns were expressed that the United States was disengaging from Europe, its contribution to missile defense could be seen as “an extremely strong signal of America’s continuing commitment to our continent.” Not only does MD allow the dominant position of the United States in Europe to be reinforced, but at the same time it also keeps Russia and its interests in check while also keeping China as the key emerging rival at bay because of the anticipated flexibility of sea-based systems.

However, the new American missile defense plans with their explicit emphasis on the multilateral NATO context have put the actors on both sides of the Atlantic under pressure. In the case of the Obama administration, the unilateral and bilateral elements of its approach cannot be overlooked – they are in fact the mainstay of the entire project. To state, as Secretary General Rasmussen did, that the United States has decided to protect Europe on a multilateral basis in the Alliance is only part of the story. Washington’s plans to procure by 2015, in addition to 431 Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missiles, 436 SM-3 IA and IB interceptor missiles and to have available 38 BMD-capable ships amounts to pure unilateralism at sea.

What is more, senior American officials have asserted that the United States can in a few years provide protection for the entire European continent: “By the time of phase three, which is 2018, we will have complete coverage of Europe, and that will be a combined contribution of the site in Romania, the site in Poland and any additional sea-based sites as well.” In fact, bilateralism – the dominant feature of George W. Bush’s MD plans – has continued to be an extended element of the new approach. The agreement with Poland for the phase three land-based site entered into force; and the agreements with Romania to host the phase two land-based SM-3 site and with Turkey for the phase one AN/TPY-2 radar were finalized. Moreover, Spain agreed to provide a home port for four Aegis destroyers. Indeed: “That’s not bad for government work.” All in all the “initial deployment of capabilities for EPAA proceeded in line with the President’s announced timelines.”

NATO’s so-called Active Layer Theater Ballistic Missile Defense (ALTBMD) – now called NATO BMD – has become the focus of common interest on both sides of the Atlantic. It is the only project which the Alliance can offer, but it is the one that reveals in both variants – the territorial and tactical ones – European technological inca.

In operational terms this means that for defense in a crisis it is necessary to plan in advance what needs to be where. Prior to the Chicago Summit in May 2012, all 28 members of the Alliance had agreed on some 15 decisions at the North Atlantic Council level about rules of engagement, prioritization lists, and the initial position for the Aegis, i.e., strategic deployment options of the system that could offer protection in the Eastern Mediterranean; a second position was agreed upon if the threat was more diverse than initially assessed. As we shall see, these procedures are at odds with the undifferentiated official rhetoric regarding the missile threat.

**Missile Defense Activities of NATO**

At its summit in Lisbon in November 2010 the Alliance formally agreed for the first time to acquire missile defense capabilities to protect all its territory and population against ballistic missiles. Although agreement was negotiated in a take-it-or-leave-it manner, the Alliance members officially welcomed the European Phased Adaptive Approach, and accepted a long-standing American demand – and probably the most enormous Americanization wave in NATO since its nuclearization in the 1950s. Being put under the – this time non-nuclear – wings of the American eagle was familiar to the European military allies from the Cold War. At the same time it also keeps Russia and its interests in check while also keeping China as the key emerging rival at bay because of the anticipated flexibility of sea-based systems.

This assessment, which is consistent with the administration’s statements about the EPAA’s efficiency, raises the question discussed in the next section concerning what the NATO allies in Europe can and should contribute in the current era of scarce money and austerity without making the entire shield redundant. Nevertheless, a clarification and differentiation of what the term ‘entire coverage of Europe’ means on the operational level is necessary. As a senior representative of the Obama administration explained in mid 2013 at a background briefing in Washington, D.C., this does not mean defending everything from the Azores to Greenland to the eastern boundaries of Turkey at all times. Currently there are no Aegis ships assigned to NATO Command and Control, even though the Alliance declared an interim capability at the Chicago Summit in May 2012 – the reason being that the missile defense activities of the Alliance, i.e. by and large those of the United States, depend on the analysis of the threats and on signs indicating a higher threat warning level. With the exception of the Turkey-based TPY-2 radar, which operates around the clock, the interceptors themselves do not have to be engaged unless it is thought the security situation requires it.

So, when the Obama administration presented its new plans for the defense of Europe, NATO had an impotent territorial ALTBMD and was developing a less demanding version for the entirely different purpose of defending troops and military facilities. This dilemma explains the need on both sides of the Atlantic to make the tactical missile defense efforts for the protection of soldiers and small areas fit for the new mission: when leaders of the Alliance decided at the 2010 summit in Lisbon to include the protection of European territory and population, the mission of the tactical ALTBMD was correspondingly expanded – and in fact re-branded.

This expanded theater missile defense program is considered to constitute the “command, control, and communications backbone,” while the EPPA is seen by the Alliance as a “valuable national contribution to this...
capability.” This variant will be put into place in several phases. When completed, probably in 2018, it will consist of a multi-layered system, including low- and high-altitude defense, battle management, communications, command and control (BMC3I), early warning sensors, radar systems and various interceptors. “NATO member countries will provide the sensors and weapon systems, while NATO will develop the BMC3I segment and facilitate the integration of all these elements into a coherent and effective architecture.”

For Secretary General Rasmussen, all these coordinated activities of the United States and European NATO members “provide the glue to hold everything together with our command and control system.” Senior officials of the Obama administration made clear from the beginning that they expected the command and control arrangements to function in a way that would reflect the technological superiority of the United States. Once they are developed in an appropriate manner, President Obama intends to transfer control of the European Phased Adaptive Approach to NATO; like any other voluntary national contribution, the U.S. systems would be operated under the auspices of the Alliance. The NATO procedures imply that the final decision to intercept missiles for the BMD area would be made by the military representative of the United States, i.e. by the chief of the Allied Air Command in Ramstein, Germany, since the NATO Headquarters there has meanwhile become part of the command structure of the Alliance.

At the NATO summit in May 2012 in Chicago, the Alliance announced that it had achieved so-called interim ballistic defense capability. This was defined by senior U.S. defense officials such as Ellen Tauscher, then the U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, and the NATO Secretary General. It is now clear that in 2013 the U.S. Department of State Special Envoy for Interim capability Alliance policies, i.e. as the “next big demonstration of our progress.” Interim capability basically means that Allies will start operating under the same ‘playbook.’” The NATO Secretary General spoke along the same lines but emphasized that the results of political resolve more than technical reality. “In Lisbon, we agreed to create a NATO missile defense system. Today, in Chicago, we have declared that a reality” – Rasmussen was explicitly referring to the future system “that will link together missile defense assets from different Allies.” The precise definition of the interim capability as provided by the German government is telling in that it demonstrates how limited those capabilities really are, consisting only of one Aegis ship in the Mediterranean, the AN/TY-2 radar in Turkey, and the initial command elements in Ramstein.

The European Phased Adaptive Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Measure(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>“Deploy current and proven missile defense systems available in the next two years, including the sea-based Aegis Weapon System, the SM-3 interceptor (Block IA), and sensors such as the forward-based Army Navy/Transportable Radar Surveillance system (AN/TPY-2), to address regional ballistic missile threats to Europe and our deployed personnel and their families;”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>“After appropriate testing, deploy a more capable version of the SM-3 interceptor (Block IB) in both sea- and land-based configurations, and more advanced sensors, to expand the defended area against short- and medium-range missile threats;”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>“After development and testing are complete, deploy the more advanced SM-3 Block IIA variant currently under development, to counter short-, medium-, and intermediate-range missile threats;”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>“After development and testing are complete, deploy the SM-3 Block IIB to help better cope with medium- and intermediate-range missiles and the potential future ICBM threat to the United States.” This phase was cancelled in March 2013.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Exaggerated Missile Threat: Iran’s Missile Capabilities and Intentions

An existing or potential threat is the major justification of any new military program, and MD is no exception. However, the official threat analyses are the weakest point in making the case for MD deployment in Europe, and the general assessments are analytically inadequate, vague, selective, mostly non-specific, and inconsistent. The following sections examine Iran’s missile capabilities and Tehran’s intentions as the major factors behind missile defense activities in order to show that the Iranian missile threat is mostly exaggerated. I define the basic term ‘threat’ as a combination of capabilities and intentions, while a single component on its own (capabilities or intentions) represents a potential menace.

Iranian Missile Capabilities

Over the past 20 years Iran has deployed a range of ballistic and cruise missile systems and developed a substantial industrial base for missile production. Systems now in service
include the Shahab-1 (Scud-B/Hwasong-5) and Shahab-2 (Scud-C/Hwasong-6) short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs), with a range of 300 km and 500 km and payload of 1,000 kg and 700 kg, respectively. Iran is thought to possess several hundred of these missiles, along with up to 18 transporter erector launchers. Also in service is the Shahab-3, a copy of the North Korean NoDong, with a range of 800 to 1,000 km and a payload of 750 to 1,100 kg. An improved version of this missile, the Ghadr-1, has also been deployed; its range is estimated at 1,500 to 1,600 km with a warhead of 750 kg. Estimates of Iran's inventories of Shahab-3/Ghadr-1 vary widely, but these types could now very well number in the hundreds as well.  

All of the systems described above are liquid-fueled. When equipped with conventional high-explosive warheads, their military utility is limited by circular errors of approximately several hundred meters or more. Only very large area targets, such as cities, could be attacked with any degree of confidence; this would make these types of missiles true weapons of terror. While most of NATO's territory is well beyond the range of the Shahab-3, the southern flank of the Alliance, especially Turkey, is within its range. In addition, the Ghadr-1 could have the ability to reach some locations on the Romanian and Bulgarian Black Sea coast if launched close to Iran's northern border with Turkey and Armenia.  

Iran is also developing the Sajjil-2, a solid-fuel medium-range ballistic missile with an estimated range of 2,200 km and a payload capacity of 750 kg. Several successful flight tests have been undertaken but so far the missile has probably not become operational. While it may suffer from similar limitations as the Ghadr-1, this weapon could reach all of Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece. In addition to the well-advanced Sajjil-2 effort, Iran is probably working on several longer-range missile programs to expand its reach in the medium- to long-term. The introduction of a missile system with a range of up to 4,000 km is within the realm of possibility during a 2015-2020 timeframe.  

Beside its ballistic missile infrastructure, Iran has some limited cruise missile capability. This includes six to twelve Kh-55 air-launched cruise missiles acquired from Ukraine in 2001. The Kh-55 was designed to deliver a 200 kt nuclear warhead over a distance of 3,000 km. However, it is unlikely that any of these cruise missiles are operational. It seems that Iran has also developed some cruise missile surrogates in the form of armed unmanned aerial vehicles. Its other capabilities in this area come mainly in the form of anti-ship cruise missiles with a range of up to 350 km. If Iran decided to invest in long-range cruise missile capability, it would probably take a substantial amount of time to put a system into the field that could reach European targets.

As far as Tehran's traditionally weak air and missile defense activities are concerned, Russia seems to have cancelled its contract for five S-300MPU1 systems in September 2010 due to the tightened arms embargo by the UN Security Council (the leaders in Tehran strongly desire these weapons). Iran claims rapid development of a substitute, the Bavar-373, which is supposed to be “much more advanced” than the Russian system. This has led to speculation that the country was working on this system before Moscow cancelled the S-300MPU1 deal. All in all it can be said that Tehran's missile activities have continued, albeit probably at a slower pace due to the sanctions, and it will be necessary to wait and see to what extent, if at all, this changes under President Hassan Rouhani.

**Iranian Intentions**

Tehran's missile capabilities serve at least two purposes. First, the ruling elites have transformed the development of ballistic missiles into a symbol of the country’s technological craftsmanship, self-reliance, and superior power status; the extensive domestic network of scientists, engineers, universities, institutes, companies, and the military is associated with these national qualities. Second, and more importantly, missiles provide Tehran with its only credible deterrent vis-à-vis its neighbors in the Gulf, Israel, and the United States.

While the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Israel are among the leading importers of American armament, the forces of the Islamic Republic are in a rather desolate state: “Iran’s conventional military inventory is dominated by obsolete weapons systems purchased before the 1978-1979 Iranian Revolution. Its military forces have almost no modern armor, artillery, aircraft or major combat ships, and UN sanctions will likely obstruct the purchase of high-technology weapons for the foreseeable future.” The role of ballistic missiles as a deterrent also reflects Tehran's experience of missile attacks during the Iran-Iraq War, its perception of the military and political utility of missiles during the 1991 Gulf War, and its experience as a practitioner of asymmetric warfare tactics during the
Tankan War of 1984-1988. Iran's deterrent is predominantly based on the capability to harm U.S. assets and other actors in the Middle East region. The scenarios for the deployment of its missile forces probably include attacks on American bases in the Gulf region, punishment campaigns against the oil infrastructure of the GCC states, as well as their cities, and in the case of its anti-ship cruise missiles – attacks on American naval forces and civilian shipping up to and including an attempt at closing the Strait of Hormuz.36

There are currently no indicators that Europe plays a role in Iran's deterrent calculations. Domestic and regional determinants are the driving factors behind its missile activities, which Tehran distinctively does not justify as a reaction to Western missile defense plans. Even the decision of Turkey to accept a NATO radar facility on its territory has not been directly criticized by Iran: one commander of the Revolutionary Guards Corps indicated that Turkey might face retaliatory consequences from his country for hosting the NATO radar.37 Up to now Tehran has used the Western deployment of missile defense only rhetorically as a welcome opportunity to castigate the United States for its hegemonic role in the East-West arena: “America creates and qualitatively, and is likely to continue to do so over the next decade.”38 Similarly, according to NATO Secretary General Rasmussen, the missile menace is “grave and growing. Over 30 states are working on advanced missile technology. Some of them already have ballistic missiles that can be fitted with conventional warheads or with weapons of mass destruction.”39 In fact, some 28 countries are working on ballistic missile technology or have missiles on their territory – with the former category of states having a manufacturing capability.40 Rasmussen did not refer to cruise missiles against which MD is virtually impotent. Most of those states are NATO members or do not have an adversarial stance towards the Alliance. Even within the Alliance the “grave” threat is seen as less dramatic. The updated assessment of the Pentagon’s Missile Defense Agency refers to “over twenty” states “including hostile regimes with ties to terrorist organizations.”41

The German government has excluded all NATO member states from its list and has identified eleven countries in possession of missiles. Eight of the eleven countries have missiles that can reach NATO territory: Armenia, Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Syria; North Korea and Pakistan cannot reach Alliance territory. Whether countries on the list constitute a real or potential threat is unresolved. For instance, in the case of Armenia and Azerbaijan, whose missiles can reach part of Turkish territory, an attack seems unlikely – both countries maintain Individual Partnership Action Plans with NATO, and Baku has close relations with Turkey. A scenario where missiles play any role in the latent Armenian-Turkish conflict is admittedly far-fetched.

While individual NATO members usually refer to ‘countries such as North Korea and Iran’ as the main source of concern, the Alliance as a whole faces an unprecedented dilemma: with few exceptions, official NATO statements do not mention the Islamic Republic as the sole or primary source of a threat to which the American and Alliance BMD efforts are the answer. Thus, NATO takes Turkey’s wishes into account, since Ankara has in principle good relations with Tehran; the hosting of the AN/TPY-2 radar has not changed this situation. While the Alliance does not have a consensual threat definition, the priority of menaces is also different: Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski is on record with the statement that his country does not feel threatened by Iran – but by Russia.42 Reflecting a deep mistrust towards Moscow, this point of view also applies to other former allies of the Soviet Union such as Romania and the Czech Republic.

The generally non-specific threat assessments by leading MD supporters are not helpful, and in fact confusing. Rasmussen has declared that the missile threat is “real,”43 while cautioning that the proliferation of missile capabilities “does not necessarily mean there is an immediate intent to attack NATO.”44 The claim that the number of countries possessing ballistic missiles, “especially in the Middle East” (and its vicinity), is growing (so-called horizontal proliferation)45 is not compatible with the facts. On the contrary, the number has decreased in that region and its vicinity, if it is acknowledged that the admittedly highly volatile countries Libya, Iraq, and Afghanistan can, at least from today’s perspective, no longer be regarded as problematic in this respect. I concur, however, that countries possessing missiles are working on ‘improving’ the ‘quality’ of their already existing systems (so-called vertical proliferation): “All the time, technology is advancing. Ranges are increasing. Accuracy and payloads are increasing.”46

Yet for MD proponents, the acknowledgement of the “growing” missile threat is at odds with their traditional claim that has already been mentioned: an efficient MD is a tool for thwarting adversaries who plan to build or ‘improve’ missiles. In the Iranian case the major reason for this inconsistency is that BMD programs do not tackle the great variety, mentioned above, of domestic and regional driving forces behind Tehran’s missile activities.47 One entirely new dimension of the certainly unintended horizontal missile proliferation is not usually mentioned in current threat analyses: more than 10,000 missiles are missing from Libyan stockpiles after the ouster of the Muamar Gaddafi regime, and may have fallen into the hands of terrorist groups.48

To make a long story short: two out of some 28 countries with missile capabilities, Iran and Syria, could attack NATO territory and its populations if they had the intention of doing so, which is not even clear in the case of Damascus. Hence, they cannot be regarded as a real threat, but just as a potential one. As shown above, the undifferentiated and exaggerated Iran-related missile threat is inconsistent with ongoing operational plans for the European Phased Adaptive Approach, which indeed is flexible, depending on the development and urgency of a crisis. As one senior official of the Obama administration stated in mid-2013: there are real limits to how many American Aegis cruisers the NATO allies can
reasonably expect Washington to allocate to the European continent, not only on a given day, but even in a given, probably Iran-related, crisis. This again raises the question whether China is the major rationale behind the flexibly deployable systems. Especially if the new-found conciliatory tones from the new Iranian leadership turn into visible and sustainable policy changes, Western threat analyses will have to be reassessed – and with them costly operational requirements.

The Missing Credible Scenarios and Security Gains

Since there have been no verbal threats against Europe by the Tehran leadership, and because no consensus exists within the Alliance on the missile menace from Iran, two major scenarios which would bear out the relevance of missile defense have to be assessed. They involve the shielding of soldiers in out-of-area interventions and the newly assigned task of protecting European NATO territory and populations. These two basic tasks of missile defense were best presented by then U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried in the Iranian context:

- **MD protecting deployed troops**: a multinational coalition would – similar to the Iraq war in 2003 – invade Iran in order to prevent the Islamic Republic from going nuclear, with the soldiers protected by anti-tactical missiles.

- **MD protecting Europe**: “What he [Ahmadinejad] was telling the Europeans is Iran may be in a position to threaten Israel, and I will make sure that Iran is in a position to threaten you so that you cannot come to Israel’s assistance. […] The situation we want to avoid is one where Europe would be in a position of absolute vulnerability to an Iranian nuclear arsenal, even a small one, thereby decoupling transatlantic security also giving Iran an ability to use its other forces in support for terrorism in the Middle East and perhaps, at some point, conventional forces to threaten Israel.”

In my view, these scenarios are far-fetched. In spite of the invasion of NATO in Afghanistan and of single members such as France in Africa (Mali): out-of-area activities are no longer the formal objective of the NATO strategy adopted in Lisbon in November 2010 – this goal is at least controversial among its allies. If put into practice in the context of invading Iran, this would nullify another basic claim put forward by MD supporters: that missile defense is “purely defensive”. I question the three major advantages claimed by MD supporters, i.e. increased freedom of action in the realm of foreign policy as a clear security gain; enhanced (nuclear) deterrence and improved crisis stability; and provision of real damage limitation in the event of missile attacks.

First Doubtful Claim – MD Increases Western Freedom of Action

In a general statement, Secretary General Rasmussen has asserted: MD deployment in Europe “will demonstrate that we will not be coerced or intimidated by proliferation programmes.” Indeed, missile defense can in principle provide some protection for interventions in the Middle East, or at least the deceptive sense of being truly protected. But this does not necessarily amount to a security gain. For instance MD may induce decision-makers to embark in crisis situations on a risky policy with unforeseen consequences not even covered by a mandate of the UN Security Council. Such an invasion (far-fetched as it may be) could quite conceivably aggravate a crisis and favor the outbreak of a war, thus providing false security. By contrast, not having such specific protection available may increase the incentive for pursuing a cautious, diplomacy-dominated and compromise-oriented course. It may in fact have a destabilizing effect and ultimately prevent a war.

Second Doubtful Claim – MD Enhances (Nuclear) Deterrence and Improves Crisis Stability

How convinced are MD supporters themselves that the leadership in Tehran cannot be deterred, i.e. is not acting rationally – were Iranian leaders to engage in such intense political blackmail and actually run the risk of retaliation by the United States and/or Israel? It is noteworthy that Assistant Secretary Fried himself remarked in the context of the scenario presented: Ahmadinejad “may be an extremist, but he is not stupid.” Fried has not been the only decision-maker by far who does not consider the Tehran leadership a suicidal actor. The virtue of missiles is that they have a tag which identifies the sender as a likely target for retaliation – the nuclear variant included – in the highly unlikely case that the Islamic Republic as a nuclear weapon state launched a nuclear attack. In fact, the record clearly shows that other strong MD supporters such as Keith Payne have not ruled out the possibility that Tehran (as well as Pyongyang) could be deterred by nuclear retaliation: “[... as we look into the future, given the uncertainties of deterrence, I think we can be confident that deterrence will fail in the future as it has failed in the past. Whether it will be specifically against North Korea or Iran is an open question.”

Nuclear deterrence – even at much lower levels – may be sufficient in both cases. This brings us to the often-overlooked core of the entire MD debate: at the end of the day (nuclear) deterrence, not missile defense, as an essential component of security, determines the decisions of the crucial actors to launch or not to launch their missiles in crisis situations. To conclude with the classical statement by Secretary of Defense William Cohen on April 26, 2000: “We have a retaliatory capability that if anyone should ever be foolhardy enough to launch a missile attack of a limited or expanded nature against the United States [and highly likely against its allies], they would be destroyed in the process. That ordinarily should be a sufficient deterrent for […] Iran […] and any other country that would seek to acquire this capability.”

Third Doubtful Claim – MD May Lead to Real Damage Limitation

Missile defense is described by its proponents as the alternative lying between pre-emption and retaliation. As Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried stated: “I would not want to have no recourse to an Iranian nuclear missile – a nuclear armed missile – other than preemption or retaliation. I want to have an alternative. Or, to put it in another way, Ahmadinejad with nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles really worries me. The thought of that bothers me. […] I want the United States to have an option to protect its homeland and its allies from that contingency.” Fried did not specify under which conditions this option – BMD as the alternative – would be credible. One essential precondition is technological feasibility, which in turn presupposes reliable results from realistic testing. Yet, as documented above, the systems’ efficiency is both highly questionable and very controversial. Fried was honest enough to declare missile defense – even only against “smaller threats” – a satisfactory phenomenon of the distant future: “When I think 25 years into the future, a modest missile defense system can be deeply stabilizing.”

In the current debate, MD supporters have stated that it makes a fundamental difference whether a missile defense system is able to intercept ten or four incoming hostile warheads. But with such prospects, who as a decision-maker would really rely on missile defense? MD would indeed be the much desired alternative to both pre-emption and retaliation if a leakproof kind of technology were ready for deployment. Not making
it clear that this option is nonexistent means offering false security.

The Redundancy of Additional NATO Systems, Their Technological Feasibility, and Affordability

Why are the NATO Programs in Addition to the EPAA Needed? The Issue of Redundancy

Had there been a strong consensus within the Alliance on the threat from Iran during the George W. Bush administration, an additional BMD system for Europe would have made sense from the supporters’ point of view. The Bush plans did not cover the entire European continent; they aimed first and foremost at defending the American homeland. This situation is entirely different under the Obama administration, which changed that very priority with its European Phased Adaptive Approach. This is why supporters struggle to explain the necessity for programs on this side of the Atlantic. Secretary General Rasmussen has felt compelled to downplay the American EPAA and actually contradicted senior American officials when he claimed that the U.S. contribution “on its own is not enough. To be effective in protecting all European Allied territory, the American assets need to be accompanied by other nations’ defence systems, sensors and interceptors. Seven European Allies [...] already contribute their national missile defence systems for the protection of Allied forces. We now need European Allies to contribute to territorial missile defence too. And all these national elements need to be integrated into a single NATO network.”

The additional value of the Alliance’s ALTBMD can hardly be identified, since the American contribution in the form of the European Phased Adaptive Approach is to provide coverage for all of Europe.

While acknowledging that the European NATO partners are already participating through substantial contributions to the architecture, the Obama administration has approached the Europeans and inquired if they are satisfied with the coverage provided by the American system – or whether they want to be more involved by procuring the sea- or land-based upper-tier systems which would complement the already existing lower-tier systems against short-range missiles. Therefore, the current discussions focus on the issue whether the Europeans want to achieve an Aegis-like capability, for instance by buying the SM-3 interceptor or the land-based Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system for defense against medium- and intermediate-range missiles. Within the Alliance these debates will certainly be influenced by the political – and, at the time of writing, promising – stance of President Rouhani towards the West.

Can EPAA and NATO Programs Effectively Fulfill Their Missions? The Issue of Technological Feasibility

Despite the Obama administration’s intention to return to the traditional American ‘fly-before-you-buy’ approach, this system shares the fate of all EPAA-related technology: the inability to be tested under realistic conditions, i.e. with counter-measures, in an attack setting unknown to the intercept team, or against sophisticated missile capabilities – for instance, the Aegis cruiser has not been tested in rough weather. Therefore, Rasmussen’s claim in connection with a NATO system to protect deployed troops from missile attack that it is “‘tried and tested technology’,” needs to be supported with evidence when it comes to territorial defense. As far as the technological feasibility of the Alliance programs is concerned, Secretary General Rasmussen asserts that the existing tactical national missile defense systems’ sensors and interceptors can be used for territorial defense. He is far from alone. The German government asserts (although with an implicit caveat) that “[i]n principle,” systems such as the Patriot can also contribute to territorial defense against missiles. “Within a territorial architecture of a NATO BMD, systems protecting against both longer- and shorter-range missiles would then have to be deployed, especially at the periphery of the Alliance.”

Even this more concrete scenario is at odds with the decision of the Bundeswehr to reduce its Patriot batteries from 29 to 14. A report by the Pentagon in 1999 had already stated that territorial defense could be provided only by the much larger number of 100 Patriot Advanced Capability-3 batteries. But the report concluded that this Patriot option was impractical for defending large areas. In its sober assessment of 2012 the German government unequivocally stated: “Aside from the American systems redundant capabilities regarding territorial defense against missiles do not currently exist.”

Against the backdrop of (possible) technological shortcomings, was the claim by the NATO summit in Chicago in May 2012 regarding the interim capability of the deployed systems valid?
What Are the Real Costs? The Issue of Affordability and Burden Sharing

Secretary General Rasmussen has proved to be an able proponent of NATO’s territorial defense, even prior to the 2010 summit, by constantly downplaying the Alliance cost as “less than €200 million more from our common budget, over 20 years”; costs of €800 million “spread over 14 years, and shared by all allies” must be added to that figure. After the summit, the Secretary General advanced the “Smart Defense” approach by asserting that NATO allies “plug their own capabilities into a common system” instead of “spending more money.” To demonstrate a generally convincing and transparent architecture, Rasmussen needs to explain how many additional sensors and interceptors are needed in which concrete scenario and for how many assumed Iranian ballistic missiles. Whatever requirements and associated costs NATO’s Missile Defense Action Plan identifies: the duplicates will be costly. Depending on the scenario, the European contribution could amount to billions of Euros. It is inconceivable, in view of the financial crisis, that such an expensive and redundant system would be affordable for the NATO members on this side of the Atlantic.

Even if the financial burden were lower, it would not match Rasmussen’s rhetoric of “Smart Defense” – the same applies to his vague deliberations in Chicago about ‘pooling’ the Alliance resources as a multilateral way of making the Euro go further. Reportedly, the Obama administration is putting pressure on its allies to buy the expensive SM-3 variant, which currently can only intercept incoming missiles with a range of less than 800 km, while the test of the more advanced version in September 2011 failed. Citing the imperative of dealing with austerity, officials in the Pentagon recognize that across Europe there is no commitment by any ministry of defense to taking on a new mission area that they are not yet involved in, i.e. to opt for upper-tier sea- and land-based systems, even though their defense industries have proposals on the table for such capabilities.

Missile Defense as a Major Game Spoiler Impinging on Russia’s Four Basic Losses

Up to the Crimean/Ukrainian crisis, two missile defense issues stood out and can serve well to concretize the role of this military project in the deterioration of the East-West relationship: the first issue regards the high expectations of MD as the major transformative element expressed especially by Secretary General Rasmussen in the wake of the Lisbon summit in November 2010 on the one hand – and the negative state of affairs between East and West in the context of the Chicago summit of the Alliance in May 2012: here, NATO rejected Russia’s participation in an overarching MD architecture. The second issue concerns the development of missile defense in the broader East-West context since mid-March 2013, when the Obama administration announced its decision to cancel the fourth phase of the EPAA – this decision was taken with the anticipated side-effect of removing the Russian core concern.

The East-West Dimension of U.S./NATO Missile Defense

As mentioned in my introductory remarks, the international gathering envisaged in the Finnish capital stands out as one area in which cooperation, especially between Washington and Moscow, has dominated; other policy fields are WMD proliferation with a focus on Iran, but also joint efforts regarding Afghanistan, international terrorism, and organized crime. In the following, missile defense and the Helsinki Conference are addressed as one important and possibly representative area which has not been affected in a negative way either by the MD topic in particular or by the broader confrontational East-West situation. The question is whether (or under what specific circumstances) this relatively positive situation is likely to continue until the next milestone, the NPT Review Conference in 2015, takes place.

The Western-Russian dimension of the missile defense issue focuses on its controversial – and actually negative – role in the entire East-West setting first, and secondly on the reduction of nuclear (tactical) weapons. A focus on the first aspect should be sufficient to advance my argument. In the case of the second, it should only be necessary to repeat that missile defense has so far been a major stumbling block for any (further) arms reduction progress in connection with both nuclear (strategic and tactical) weapons as well as conventional ones – and this may continue to be the case in the future if President Vladimir Putin implements his expressed clear-cut threats anew: “The increase by foreign countries of their strategic, high-precision non-nuclear systems potential and boosting missile defense possibilities could ruin agreements reached earlier in the sphere of nuclear arms control and reduction and lead [to] the disruption of the so-called strategic balance.”

Whatever requirements and associated costs NATO’s Missile Defense Action Plan identifies: the duplicates will be costly. Depending on the scenario, the European contribution could amount to billions of Euros. It is inconceivable, in view of the financial crisis, that such an expensive and redundant system would be affordable for the NATO members on this side of the Atlantic.
As to the first issue, the contrast between highly positive expectations of MD in Lisbon and the negative East-West development culminating in Chicago, NATO's highest representative was especially optimistic that adversarial Cold War thinking could be overcome through intensified missile defense cooperation. For example, Rasmussen had already stated in autumn of 2010 prior to the Lisbon summit that missile defense would not only “offer opportunities for genuine cooperation with Russia,” but would “finally, and firmly, herald a genuinely new era of cooperation under a common Euro-Atlantic security roof.”

Rasmussen’s optimism was strongly echoed by non- and post-governmental actors whose proposals more or less followed the overriding principles adopted by the U.S. Congress for not limiting missile defense in negotiations with the Russians on arms control and reductions. In an effort to change the discourse on MD, they claimed that especially this specific military program would be the appropriate instrument for fundamentally transforming the entire East-West constellation from confrontation to a “common security community from Vancouver to Vladivostok.”

At the Lisbon summit in November 2010 the prospects for positive development looked promising. President Dmitri Medvedev of Russia, who praised the “constructive atmosphere” there, and his counterparts from the other 28 NATO-Russia Council (NATO-RC) member states issued a joint statement to “work towards achieving a true strategic and modernized partnership based on the principles of reciprocal confidence, transparency, and predictability, with the aim of contributing to the creation of a common space of peace, security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area.” In addition, the Heads of State and Government of the NATO-Russia Council took a number of decisions. They endorsed the first ever Joint Review of 21st Century Common Security Challenges outlining the shared views of Russia and Alliance members on key security questions and ways to address them through practical cooperation.

The leaders from East and West also agreed on a joint ballistic missile threat assessment, and decided to resume theater missile defense cooperation. Moreover, they called for the development of a comprehensive Joint Analysis of the future framework for broader missile defense cooperation with the NATO-Russia Council as the decisive forum. This work was to be assessed at the June 2011 meeting of NATO-RC Defense Ministers. The United States and Russia completed their Joint Report on Assessment of 21st Century Challenges, but the NATO-Russia Council was not able to reach agreement on developing a broader cooperative MD framework.

Thus, in view of the praise of missile defense in Lisbon in November 2010, a positive East-West relationship characterized by a good atmosphere and low tension in a generally constructive setting would have been expected, with distinct areas of cooperation in missile defense and beyond and a well-functioning NATO-Russia Council as a crucial forum for dialogue at the institutional level. The Chicago summit would have been the peak of all these positive elements by cementing them. But this is not what happened. The Russians, the main cooperation partner in the field of missile defense, did not participate, and the NATO-Russia Council did not celebrate its tenth anniversary in Chicago in May 2012. This was living proof that missile defense as the hoped for cooperative tool had turned into a confrontational device between the East and the West. The high expectations of missile defense expressed in Lisbon proved to be oversold, hollow claims in Chicago, where Russia was excluded from the MD architecture. Wolfgang Ischinger, one of Germany’s most respected and active supporters of including Russia in a comprehensive missile defense architecture, succinctly criticized the “strategic mistake” of the United States and its NATO allies in leaving Russia out in the cold; for him, this Western decision at the May 2012 summit of the Alliance in Chicago marked “[t]he return of the Cold War.”

As to the second issue, the role of missile defense between mid-March 2013, when the U.S. took a decision that responded to Moscow’s greatest MD-related security concerns, and summer 2014, including the Crimean/ Ukrainian crisis: Here, supporters of a cooperative approach in this area hoped in West and East, that a major stumbling block would be removed so as to improve the relationship between the U.S.-/NATO and Russia. Again, this did not happen – and again MD can to a considerable extent be held accountable for the negative situation between East and West. Why in both cases did positive features – high expectations of MD and a U.S. decision sensitive to Moscow’s security concerns – not prevent a negative development both in this arms sector in particular and in the East-West context in general?

In order to answer this question, i.e. to explain the mostly negative role of MD, this program has to be related to the above-mentioned four losses perceived in Moscow: Missile defense has impinged on all of them. Since his “broadside”, his Paukenblag, at the 43th Münchener Sicherheitskonferenz on February 10, 2007, which marked the beginning of Putin’s aggressive rhetoric towards the Western states, the four Russian losses he complained about have constituted his leitmotif, with MD as a permanent element. What is more, within the ongoing intra-Russian controversies between the increasingly confrontational (and influential) ‘Putinist’ faction and the cooperative minority group there is a relatively high degree of agreement on several relevant matters.

The Alliance – and especially the United States with its indispensable contribution to the protection of the entire European continent – rejected any restrictions on the capabilities of the systems. This involves not only the traditional qualitative and quantitative aspects but also the geographical one (and, therefore, touches on the third loss as well). The freedom of deployment and maneuvering of the multi-mission Aegis ships, which are not used for missile defense purposes alone in the European area, will not be curtailed: “[W]e would be willing to agree to a political statement that our missile defenses are not directed at Russia. […] Let me say it again: any statement will be politically binding and it would publicly proclaim our intent to cooperate and chart the direction for cooperation, not limitations.”

By contrast, Russia’s preference – clearly in the tradition of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty – aimed at seeking written legal assurances containing military technical criteria which restrict U.S. capabilities and freedom of maneuver. Rightly or wrongly, Moscow expressed fears that especially the capabilities in phase four of the American MD concept would have a negative impact on its strategic nuclear forces. It is at this crucial point that confidence building through intensified cooperation in the missile defense area turned into confrontation. This found expression in President Medvedev’s warnings that Russia would deploy its own missiles and could withdraw from the New Start nuclear arms reduction treaty.

In early May 2012, General Staff head Nikolai Makarov rhetorically went one step further by warning that Moscow may launch pre-emptive strikes against U.S. radar and interceptor installations located close to Russia’s borders. And in late May 2012, Moscow reportedly tested a new
As noted below (see second loss), two exponents of the cooperative-minded Russian group – Alexei Arbatov and Vladimir Dvorkin – dismissed official Moscow’s grave concern regarding the fourth phase of the Europe-based missile defense system, considering it exaggerated. They have a point, because of the Obama administration’s announced decision in mid-March 2013 to cancel that phase. While they see power- and status-related fears in part as the true rationale behind these security concerns, it is interesting to note that a senior official of the Obama administration, intimately involved in MD matters, added another power- and status-related aspect in order to explain the continued Russian negative attitude towards U.S./NATO missile defense programs even after mid-March 2013.

The (Second) Loss of Power and Status – Both in Military, Political, and Technological Terms, and Associated with Moscow’s Harsh Criticism of Western Policies towards Russia

As argued by the senior member of the Obama administration, to accuse the Russians of not having been sincere when they expressed their fears regarding the fourth phase misses at least to some extent an MD-related point: in his view the Russian attitude towards missile defense in general has changed. Russians are increasingly looking at the entire capacity of the Aegis force, not only in the European context but in the Asian one too, as one way of pursuing U.S. missile defense options and broader strategies in those regions. Here China enters the scene as the probably paramount reason for the flexible “E”PAA. The fact that the hoped for positive Russian response to the cancellation of the fourth phase of the EPAA did not become reality, goes well beyond the MD field – and, it can be argued, results on the one hand from the enormous power and status gap between the winner and the loser of the Cold War as reflected in the current military and technological asymmetries: Moscow does not accept its status as a second-rate great power. On the other hand the uncontrolled flexibility of the Aegis ships operating in the Black Sea area impinges on Russia’s understandable sensitivity of foreign military equipment in its vicinity.

Arbatov and Dvorkin, the two very well informed supporters of cooperative MD, see the reasons for the “extreme exaggeration” of American missile defense capabilities in connection with Moscow’s strategic forces as lying in Russian “internal political developments.” They regard it as a “reaction by certain political circles to the concepts of a non-nuclear world and a joint missile defense system, which could hypothetically lead to the possibility that Russia could lose its nuclear status and be deprived of its ‘traditional enemy,’ the U.S./NATO.” But those two Western- and cooperative-minded Russian experts add a long list of counterproductive American/Alliance policies that endorsed the views of those “political circles,” with Putin as the most visible representative: “However, it should be emphasized that the policy of the United States and NATO has given numerous grounds for Russian suspicion and apprehension, especially during the end of the 1990s and the Republican administration of George W. Bush. In particular, this was manifested by NATO’s expansion, attempts to diminish Russia’s influence in the countries of the former Soviet Union, the use of force in Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Libya, and the dismantlement of the arms limitation system. The conceptual justification for the U.S. missile defense program following the withdrawal from the ABM Treaty has been inconsistent and often contradictory, and it has not inspired trust.”

It could be assumed that both authors limited their list of criticisms to former U.S. administrations and would spare the current one of President Obama from criticism, especially after the American-Russian ‘reset’ policy starting in 2009. Similarly, with a distinct emphasis on Vladimir Putin and the phenomenon of ‘Putinism’, it would be expected that Arbatov and Dvorkin would make a major difference between Putin and Medvedev. Again, this is not the case, which highlights for the period covered the structural actor-related factors mentioned above. Nevertheless, in view of Putin’s central role, demonstrated in the context of the conflict in and around Ukraine in 2014, any appropriate analysis has to take the ‘Putin system’ with its underlying nationalistic ideology as well as with its major actors (such as the military, secret services, major economic players, and oligarchs) and focused decision-making processes into account: “The United States did not demonstrate enough flexibility in its dialogue with Russia in 2006-2008 and in 2010-2011, and it failed to comprehend that unity with Russia on nonproliferation issues would be much more important than one or the other technical or geographical parameter of the missile defense program (a positive example of this relationship was the cancellation of Russian shipments of S-300 systems to Iran after the Obama administration had reconsidered the previous president’s plan to deploy BMD elements in Europe).”

This long list of criticism of Western policies comes close to the one presented by Russian President Putin in his basic March 18, 2014 speech, in which he justified the annexation of Crimea entirely as a reaction to and as a climax of those Western strategies (a conclusion that Arbatov and Dvorkin would probably not draw). For “there is a limit to everything. And with Ukraine, our western partners have crossed the line, playing the bear acting irresponsibly and unprofessionally. Russia found itself in a position it could not retreat from. If you compress the spring all the way to its limits, it will snap back hard. You must always remember this.”

Putin’s criticism in his March 18 statement included U.S./NATO missile defense deployment, although in a nonspecific way – the decision of the Obama administration to give up the fourth phase of its missile defense plans to allay Moscow’s concerns was not addressed at all. As a variation on the theme, the MD policies were now put in the broader context of Western policies and concrete actions in Ukraine, where the Western actors “have thrown in an organised and well-equipped army of militants.” In Putin’s view, “these actions were aimed against Ukraine and Russia and against Eurasian integration. And all this while Russia strove to engage in dialogue with our colleagues in the West. We are constantly proposing cooperation on all key issues; we want to strengthen our level of trust and for relations to be equal, open and fair. But we saw no reciprocal steps. On the contrary, they have lied to us many times, made decisions behind our backs, placed us before an accomplished choice. We will never allow this.”
deployment of a missile defence system. In spite of all our apprehensions, the project is working and moving forward. It happened with the endless foot-dragging in the talks on visa issues, promises of fair competition and free access to global markets."

The (Third) Loss of Influence and Control in Its Vicinity — Closely Associated with Moscow’s Sensitivity Regarding the Deployment of Western Military Assets, Including Missile Defense Systems, Close to Russian Borders, which also Raises the Issue of Delineating Spheres of Influence

Border-related sensitivities as expressed by Putin in his March 18, 2014 speech associated with American/NATO deployment of military equipment and in fact troops in Eastern European countries echo — and underscore — previous Russian concerns and resentments. As Vladimir Putin stated at the 43th Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz on February 10, 2007: “And we have the right to ask: against whom is this [NATO] expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today? No one even remembers them. But I will allow myself to remind this audience what was said. I would like to quote the speech of NATO Secretary General Mr Woerner in Brussels on 17 May 1990. He said at the time that: ‘the fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee.’ Where are these guarantees?”

It is noteworthy that Putin did not refer to the “Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation” of May 27, 1997, in which the members of the Alliance “reiterate that they have no intention, no plan and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members”; the same applies to the establishment of nuclear weapon sites.

As to the scope and depth of the cooperation envisaged, the United States and its European allies actually adopted a new approach of mere minimalist coordination as a replacement for cooperation. This even involves the joint center for sharing warning data, information, and assessments regarding hostile missiles: “We could also envisage setting up a joint centre where we could coordinate our responses. And let me emphasize the word coordinate.”

While top NATO officials and, somewhat surprisingly, also non- and post-governmental supporters of MD echo the dominant positions...
of the Obama administration, the executive branch in Washington, in turn, reflects the majority in the U.S. Congress. In fact, the legislative branch has increasingly intervened by micromanaging the administration’s MD policy towards Russia to the effect that the administration “would not give away”™ hit-to-kill technology, telemetry or any other types of information that would compromise American national security.

But this technological protectionism is an accelerator – even if it did not exist, three additional barriers for equitable cooperation between the U.S./NATO and Russia could not be overcome in the past: the lowest obstacle is economic and involves comparable specific systems (for instance the S-300 vs. the Patriot) – even if Russian systems were the cheaper ones, this did not pay off in view of the regular rule of ‘buying American’; the second lowest obstacle is the enormous technological backwardness of the Russians in almost all areas (see second loss); all in all, the highest barriers are security-related and actually amount to leaving Russia out in the cold outside the Western architecture.

In sum, missile defense has clearly not turned out to be a game changer to a more cooperative security scenario, but instead to be a confrontational one – in fact it has become a major game spoiler in East-West affairs. [...] But in summer 2013, in the Syrian crisis and thereafter, a selective bilateralism has developed which despite the East-West crisis also applies in principle to the behavior of both conveners with respect to the Helsinki Conference; this does not exclude disagreements between them.«

Where the Regional and East-West Dimension Come Together: The United States and Russia as the Major Conveners of the Helsinki Conference

The mandate by the international community of spring 2010 to hold the Helsinki Conference tasked the three depository states Russia, the U.S., and the UK plus the UN Secretary General with convening the gathering in 2012. This was to be done “in consultation with the States of the region [...], to be attended by all States of the Middle East [...], on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the States of the region.” This task goes well beyond the East-West context, but it is obvious that the increasingly adversarial relations between Washington and Moscow also led to some unproductive frictions in this regionally-focused endeavor. But in summer 2013, in the Syrian crisis and thereafter, a selective bilateralism has developed which despite the East-West crisis also applies in principle to the behavior of both conveners with respect to the Helsinki Conference; this does not exclude disagreements between them (see below).

The U.S. and Russia have been united on a few procedural issues, but also in praising the formidable role of the Finnish Facilitator, Ambassador Jaakko Laajava, and his team. The first serious impasse occurred when the U.S. Department of State announced in November 2012 that the Helsinki Conference planned for mid-December would not take place. The Americans gave two reasons for their decision: the protection of Israel (“We would not support a conference in which any [sic!] regional state would be subject to pressure or isolation”) and a “deep conceptual gap” in the region on security and arms control matters.77 Russia was against the postponement, but finally agreed. However, it was clearly stated that “the new dates should be fixed right now in order to convene the
Conference at the earliest possibility, but no later than April next year.”

Both Washington and Moscow obviously sided with the respectively opposed ‘camps’: the Obama administration adopted the role of protector of Israel and its interests, whereas the Russian government became the supporter of crucial positions put forward by Egypt – still the most vocal government, despite the dramatic changes at the top of its political system – and the Arab League. Knowing that momentum could not be maintained indefinitely, the Facilitator proposed holding multilateral preparatory consultations at the Ambassador level in Geneva in mid-February 2013; because the Arab states refused to participate, it was re-scheduled for mid-March, but did not take place for the same reason. An early re-start of the Helsinki-related efforts in the first months of 2013 failed – also because of lack of commitment from the conveners’ side.

During the meeting of the Second Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the 2015 NPT Review Conference in Geneva in spring 2013, it seemed that the gap between the U.S. and Russia was increasing even further. Thomas Countryman, U.S. Assistant Secretary for International Security and Nonproliferation, criticized those who act “as if the only issue to be discussed is Israel.” Without accepting any blame, he made very clear that for the U.S. an agenda “cannot be dictated from outside the region – it must be consensual among the States who must live with the agenda”. He had remarked earlier that “the responsibility to hold the Helsinki gathering does not fall solely to the Conveners and Facilitator. […] But leadership must also come from the states of the region.” Countryman further stated that the postponement of the Helsinki Conference “was not a breach of the Action Plan as some suggest – but it was a major disappointment.” Washington supported the proposal of Ambassador Laajava and his team: “before we can take a step to Helsinki, we need to recognize the opportunity to take one half-step – to direct multilateral consultations” in Geneva.

In contrast to the Americans, the Russians continued to regard the mandate as part of the agreed-upon Action Plan. Consequently, it should “remain in force and should be implemented without further delays,” as Mikhail Ulyanov, Director of the Department for Security Affairs and Disarmament in the Russian Foreign Ministry, stated at the meeting of the Second NPT PrepCom in Geneva. In fact, the mandate constituted the “basis” on which a solution should be sought, but “in combination with creative approaches and willingness for reasonable […] compromises acceptable to all.”

Thus, the Russians accepted the proposal of the Facilitator to engage in multilateral informal consultations in Switzerland. The Putin government saw “no alternative” to such preparatory activities. But in stark contrast to Washington, Ulyanov made it clear that “we must first of all decide upon the new date for convening the Conference.” Moscow had a fairly clear schedule in mind: “We should get down to them [the consultations] immediately and construct our work in such a way as to complete it by all means at the latest by the beginning of December [2013].” By proposing starting the discussions on a final document of the Helsinki Conference in the course of the informal preparatory consultations in Geneva the Russian Foreign Ministry directly linked Geneva with the planned Helsinki Conference. But it did so in terms of substance and not in terms of the “basic criteria” put forward by Egypt and the other members of the Arab League.

These criteria were in fact pre-conditions aimed at Israel, since all states would only be invited to the Geneva multilateral preparatory consultations if they “declare officially their intention to attend the Conference,” as Waël Al Assad, the Representative of the Secretary General of the Arab League for Disarmament and Regional Security, stated. In light of these developments, the Egyptian delegation withdrew from the remainder of the meeting of the Second NPT PrepCom on April 29 “to protest this unacceptable and continuous failure to implement the 1995 Middle East Resolution” and “to send a strong message of dissatisfaction with the lack of seriousness in dealing with the issue of establishing a zone free of nuclear [sic!] weapons.” It seemed that any momentum in favor of the Helsinki Conference had been lost.

However, new developments aroused some hope. The U.S. and Russia acted in concert after the horrible use of chemical weapons in Syria on August 21, 2013. Against all odds, it was jointly possible to force the Assad regime to join the Chemical Weapons Convention and destroy its chemical weapon stockpile. This constructive East-West bilateralism may also have had an impact on the Helsinki preparation. In October 2013, Israel, Iran, and 12 Arab states followed Ambassador Laajava’s invitation to hold informal multilateral consultations in Glion, Switzerland. The meeting was subsequently described as a respectful exchange of views.

At a follow-up meeting in November, again in Glion, the conveners presented a joint paper which was welcomed by all participating states (from this gathering on, Iran did not attend). The third consultation at Glion took place in February 2014, while the fourth and fifth meeting – both under the auspices of the UN – occurred in Geneva in mid-May and at end of June 2014. “These states have not come together since 19 years to sit at the same table. That is, however small, progress,” Deputy Facilitator Lars Backström stressed at a side-event, organized by the Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East in New York on May 6, 2014. These activities occurred in the context of the Third Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference in New York in April/May 2014, which saw the continuation of the basic positions and (dis-) agreements of the Geneva meeting, although at a much lower, in fact unspectacular level, with the cautious Egyptians leaving the strong Arab League Statement to the Iraqis, and the two major conveners exchanging their views as if the East-West crisis did not exist.

From the outside, it seems that the pre-Helsinki dynamics have regained some momentum. Although the Middle East/Gulf is not the geographical prolongation of the northern East-West hemisphere, it is obvious that only a less confrontational and more cooperative relationship between Moscow and Washington could open up a number of ways of closing the “deep conceptual gap” on security and arms control, of offering reassurances to the participants, and of steering the Helsinki Conference and its dynamics.

In sum, the efforts to create a WMD/DVs Free Zone in the Middle East will only be successful with the full support of both the United States and Russia. The jury is open on how the turbulences in and around Ukraine will impact on the (pre-) Helsinki Conference process. Putin may come up with another (this time constructive surprise) as an antidote to his illegal and aggressive behavior in his ‘near-abroad’, since he can act in the WMD-related policy field at an equal level with the other major convener, the United States.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This POLICY BRIEF has evaluated Western missile defense activities as the third component
I would like to thank Sven-Eric Fikenschier, Giorgio Franceschini, Nasser Hadian, Michael Haas, Sabahat Khan, Götz Neuneck, Hans-Joachim Schmidt, Martin Serin, Jerry Sommer, and Hans-Joachim Spanger for their very helpful comments on an earlier draft which, in an earlier version, was submitted on September 5, 2013, to the conference “The Global Zero and Beyond: Theory, Politics and Regional Perspectives” organized by the Institute of International Relations Prague, Metropolitan University Prague, and the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague. The various missile defense activities in the Middle East/Gulf itself and their impact on the region are not part of this POLICY BRIEF and will be analyzed separately in greater detail.

1. Missile defense (MD) and ballistic missile defense (BMD) are used synonymously in this POLICY BRIEF.


4. It is in this context that the enormous American MD exports especially to the Middle East raise not only the problem of horizontal proliferation that is constantly overlooked in this area, but also that of triggering a regional offensive-defensive arms race.


no connection between its regionally motivated projects and Western MD activities. The good news therefore is that—up until now—no arms dynamics in this area exist between the U.S./NATO and Iran. There is hope that the Islamic Republic will not become part of a twofold—offensive and defensive—arms race. The impact on Tehran’s attitude towards joining the Helsinki Conference if it takes place should not be underestimated, for those developments, if they occurred, could be a stumbling block in the way of Iran’s participation. But the relationship between the two major conveners did not keep Iran from staying away from the Glion meetings (as mentioned, the Rahlhann government sent a representative only to the first one in October 2013). Iran made clear that the E3+3 talks were its foreign policy priority that took all its energy, and that it would come to Helsinki once it was certain that the gathering took place.

With respect to the role of missile defense in the East-West setting, especially between Russia and the United States, this Policy Brief concludes: more than twenty years after the Good News, therefore is that—at least up to now—no arms dynamics in this area exist between the U.S./NATO and Iran. There is hope that the Islamic Republic will not become part of a twofold—offensive and defensive—arms race. The impact on Tehran’s attitude towards joining the Helsinki Conference if it takes place should not be underestimated, for those developments, if they occurred, could be a stumbling block in the way of Iran’s participation. But the relationship between the two major conveners did not keep Iran from staying away from the Glion meetings (as mentioned, the Rahlhann government sent a representative only to the first one in October 2013). Iran made clear that the E3+3 talks were its foreign policy priority that took all its energy, and that it would come to Helsinki once it was certain that the gathering took place.

With respect to the role of missile defense in the East-West setting, especially between Russia and the United States, this Policy Brief concludes: more than twenty years after the Good News, therefore is that—at least up to now—no arms dynamics in this area exist between the U.S./NATO and Iran. There is hope that the Islamic Republic will not become part of a twofold—offensive and defensive—arms race. The impact on Tehran’s attitude towards joining the Helsinki Conference if it takes place should not be underestimated, for those developments, if they occurred, could be a stumbling block in the way of Iran’s participation. But the relationship between the two major conveners did not keep Iran from staying away from the Glion meetings (as mentioned, the Rahlhann government sent a representative only to the first one in October 2013). Iran made clear that the E3+3 talks were its foreign policy priority that took all its energy, and that it would come to Helsinki once it was certain that the gathering took place.

With respect to the role of missile defense in the East-West setting, especially between Russia and the United States, this Policy Brief concludes: more than twenty years after the Good News, therefore is that—at least up to now—no arms dynamics in this area exist between the U.S./NATO and Iran. There is hope that the Islamic Republic will not become part of a twofold—offensive and defensive—arms race. The impact on Tehran’s attitude towards joining the Helsinki Conference if it takes place should not be underestimated, for those developments, if they occurred, could be a stumbling block in the way of Iran’s participation. But the relationship between the two major conveners did not keep Iran from staying away from the Glion meetings (as mentioned, the Rahlhann government sent a representative only to the first one in October 2013). Iran made clear that the E3+3 talks were its foreign policy priority that took all its energy, and that it would come to Helsinki once it was certain that the gathering took place.

With respect to the role of missile defense in the East-West setting, especially between Russia and the United States, this Policy Brief concludes: more than twenty years after the Good News, therefore is that—at least up to now—no arms dynamics in this area exist between the U.S./NATO and Iran. There is hope that the Islamic Republic will not become part of a twofold—offensive and defensive—arms race. The impact on Tehran’s attitude towards joining the Helsinki Conference if it takes place should not be underestimated, for those developments, if they occurred, could be a stumbling block in the way of Iran’s participation. But the relationship between the two major conveners did not keep Iran from staying away from the Glion meetings (as mentioned, the Rahlhann government sent a representative only to the first one in October 2013). Iran made clear that the E3+3 talks were its foreign policy priority that took all its energy, and that it would come to Helsinki once it was certain that the gathering took place.

With respect to the role of missile defense in the East-West setting, especially between Russia and the United States, this Policy Brief concludes: more than twenty years after the Good News, therefore is that—at least up to now—no arms dynamics in this area exist between the U.S./NATO and Iran. There is hope that the Islamic Republic will not become part of a twofold—offensive and defensive—arms race. The impact on Tehran’s attitude towards joining the Helsinki Conference if it takes place should not be underestimated, for those developments, if they occurred, could be a stumbling block in the way of Iran’s participation. But the relationship between the two major conveners did not keep Iran from staying away from the Glion meetings (as mentioned, the Rahlhann government sent a representative only to the first one in October 2013). Iran made clear that the E3+3 talks were its foreign policy priority that took all its energy, and that it would come to Helsinki once it was certain that the gathering took place.

With respect to the role of missile defense in the East-West setting, especially between Russia and the United States, this Policy Brief concludes: more than twenty years after the Good News, therefore is that—at least up to now—no arms dynamics in this area exist between the U.S./NATO and Iran. There is hope that the Islamic Republic will not become part of a twofold—offensive and defensive—arms race. The impact on Tehran’s attitude towards joining the Helsinki Conference if it takes place should not be underestimated, for those developments, if they occurred, could be a stumbling block in the way of Iran’s participation. But the relationship between the two major conveners did not keep Iran from staying away from the Glion meetings (as mentioned, the Rahlhann government sent a representative only to the first one in October 2013). Iran made clear that the E3+3 talks were its foreign policy priority that took all its energy, and that it would come to Helsinki once it was certain that the gathering took place.

With respect to the role of missile defense in the East-West setting, especially between Russia and the United States, this Policy Brief concludes: more than twenty years after the Good News, therefore is that—at least up to now—no arms dynamics in this area exist between the U.S./NATO and Iran. There is hope that the Islamic Republic will not become part of a twofold—offensive and defensive—arms race. The impact on Tehran’s attitude towards joining the Helsinki Conference if it takes place should not be underestimated, for those developments, if they occurred, could be a stumbling block in the way of Iran’s participation. But the relationship between the two major conveners did not keep Iran from staying away from the Glion meetings (as mentioned, the Rahlhann government sent a representative only to the first one in October 2013). Iran made clear that the E3+3 talks were its foreign policy priority that took all its energy, and that it would come to Helsinki once it was certain that the gathering took place.


54. Nevertheless, I hold that there are cases where MD can indeed be defensive: the deployment of Patriots in Turkey against potentially incoming Syrian missiles is an example – as long as Ankara would not get involved in offensive military activities vis-à-vis the regime in Damascus.


58. It should be noted that any Iranian president is not identical with the heterogeneous elite in that country, and is supposedly not the central figure within command and control structures, but it is the religious leader who would have the final say when it came to using missiles, especially if they were WMD-tipped.


60. U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen on April 26, 2000, responding to a question from Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) (unofficial transcript).


66. Answer (No. 73) of the German government to the Große Anfrage by the Social Democrats of September 28, 2011, op.cit.


68. Answer (No. 78) of the German government to the Große Anfrage by the Social Democrats of September 28, 2011, op. cit.


71. “SM-3 Block IB interceptor failed in flight during one of the three flight tests. [...] A failure review is ongoing [...] Effects in production remain unclear.” U.S. General Accountability Office (2014b) Table 4 on p. 14.

72. On the current German situation, see my forthcoming publication on MEADS.


75. Rasmussen (2010).
the Syrian chemical stockpile as the ‘political precursor’ to UN Security Council Resolution 2118. In that context, Russia acted as a superpower on the global stage. This suggests that such a constellation could be a game changer leading to some form of cooperation.

Against the backdrop of these findings and conclusions, this POLICY BRIEF makes the following recommendations:

• The supporters of missile defense on the Track I and II levels such as NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and the experts mentioned in this paper should start carrying out sound and sober (threat) analyses and stop overselling their pet program as a panacea (or as a positive game changer).

• The Obama administration, facing severe economic problems, should invest fewer financial and human resources in MD. Since there is no “real threat” from Iran (to quote the President’s Prague Speech again) and their leadership may become more cooperative, current MD activities can hardly be justified. The proposed purchase of sea- and land-based interceptors to counter medium-range missiles from Iran should not become reality.

• In view of the current Ukrainian crisis and the overwhelming coercive reactions (sanctions) and cancellation of cooperative projects, it would be implausible to recommend bilateral MD cooperation – this is due to the overall negative record of missile defense programs; yet efforts to establish joint U.S.-Russian threat analyses and a truly joint center on data sharing should be explored such as bringing joint U.S.-Russian threat analyses and their leadership may become sober (threat) analyses and stop overselling their pet program as a panacea (or as a positive game changer).

78. Tauscher (2012), p. 4. Not surprisingly, Ellen Tauscher was echoed by Anders Fogh Rasmussen: “We can give these [guarantees] by agreeing that our systems will not undermine the strategic balance.” (Rasmussen, 2011a)
82. Jane’s Defence Weekly, April 18, 2012, p. 12, and December 19, 2012, p. 12, respectively.
83. ‘Putin Says Missile Defence Systems Threaten Strategic Balance’, op. cit. – To the best of my knowledge, President Putin sent positive MD-related signals at only one major event, namely as the guest speaker at NATO’s summit in Bucharest in 2008 (Martin Winter [2014] ‘Putin: “Lasst uns Freunde sein, Leute!”’, Süddeutsche Zeitung, April 6-7).
91. Quotations in Süddeutsche Zeitung, February 8, 2007 (’Thema Sicherheitskonferenz’), and Der Spiegel No. 11, March 10, 2008, p. 123, respectively.
92. ‘The Russian president gave his reasons for the annexation of a region of Ukraine’, op. cit.
93. Sergey Lavrov, quoted in Der Spiegel, No. 6, February 5, 2007, p. 128.
94. Both quotations by Rasmussen (2011a), p. 3 (emphases in original).
101. See on this Dembinski et al. (2014), pp. 26-36.
U.S./NATO.” Basically, the Western security architecture should be kept open for Russia once it meets fundamental normative standards.

• In addition, not offering Kiev even the option of joining NATO seems plausible on the assumption that Russia will be needed to solve a number of international and regional problems, including “stabilizing Ukraine.”402 But the basic challenge remains for both NATO and the EU: to find a balance between Russia’s sensitivities on the one hand and the right of all sovereign states to opt for any membership in the relevant alliances and unions.

• For the two major conveners of the envisaged Helsinki Conference it is not yet too late for an intensified bilateral constructivist approach so that the gathering in the Finnish capital could become reality. Because of the chemical weapon issue in Syria new windows of opportunity have opened – and they opportunities they offer should be seized. In the same way as the Assad regime was forced to join the Chemical Weapons Convention, in the context of a Russian-American cooperative policy diplomatic means should be brought to bear to encourage Israel and Egypt to become more flexible. Such a move would definitively facilitate the path towards Helsinki. Again, at the time of writing it is not clear whether the constructive bilateralism which still worked in the concrete technical case of dismantling Syria’s chemical stockpile will develop in the ‘Helsinki area’ to, and eventually lead to convening the envisaged international gathering – with the common interest of both major conveners not to have the NPT Review Conference damaged if Helsinki does not take place. If history is any guide, the possibility cannot be entirely excluded that Washington and Moscow will show some joint effort in this policy field: when the Soviet Union-led Warsaw Pact states invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968 the planned bilateral arms control talks were not cancelled, but only delayed.

But if against all the odds, many of them associated with the current conflicts within Ukraine and its vicinity, the promising events mentioned above were seized upon in a productive way, the Helsinki Conference could become a reality. To seriously discuss a regional WMD/DVs Free Zone in a series of meetings would regionalize President Obama’s vision of a Global Nuclear Zero, and make his speech seminal.