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U.S. – European Dialogue on National Missile Defense

Europe's Role in the NMD Program

Although intended to protect the United States only, the proposed national missile defense (NMD) system will not work without the use of radars in Europe or in territories controlled by European countries. Placing the radars closer to the expected enemy launch sites – known as *forward-deploying* in Pentagon jargon – allows for more accurate reading of the missile trajectories and the actual number of objects launched. Secretary

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of Defense William Cohen acknowledged the centrality of European allies to the NMD system during a July 2000 Senate hearing. When asked if it was possible to build an effective NMD system without European support, he replied “the answer at this point would be no... If you don’t have forward-deployed X-band radars, then you can’t see the missiles coming”.¹

In its first phase, known as Expanded Capability 1, the NMD system is expected to use two upgraded early warning radars – in Fylingdales, UK, and Thule, Greenland – to detect, track, and count the individual objects in a ballistic missile attack. The original radars were built during the Cold War as a part of a network designed to warn the command center in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado of intercontinental ballistic missile launches in the Soviet Union. The planned upgrade will make the radars’ projections of missile trajectories more accurate. It will also connect the Thule and Fylingdales radars to a dedicated NMD command center. In the latter stages, Expanded Capability 2 and 3, the Pentagon plans to expand the existing radar sites to include new X-band radars.

The need for NMD facilities on European territory has spawned a spirited debate between the United States and Europe on the virtues of the proposed system. The impact of NMD reaches beyond the two countries whose territory would potentially be used for radar sites: U.S. proposals have prompted questions all across Europe about America’s commitment to European defense and the wisdom of its strategic policy toward Russia. What began as a limited dialogue of mostly technical nature thus promises to lead to redefinition of key security principles such as deterrence and NATO’s Article V commitment.

Key Differences Between the United States, Europe

European reservations on the proposed national missile defense program revolve around two key issues: the extent of the risks posed by missile proliferation and the importance of deterrence and the current arms control system to global security. It should be pointed out that concerns articulated by the Europeans are not unique to the U.S. – European dialogue on NMD. They are shared by prominent experts and lawmakers on both sides of the Atlantic and mirror the debates within the defense and security community in the United States.

1) The Dangers of Missile Proliferation

North Korea’s 1998 launch of Taepo Dong 1 missile over Japan dramatically demonstrated to the whole world that advanced missile technology is no longer an exclusive domain of the rich and the powerful. Most European governments

would agree with U.S. intelligence assessments predicting that within a decade, North Korea, Iraq, Iran and others could possess long-range missiles. But the agreement often ends here. The fact that these countries *could* possess missiles in the future does not necessarily mean that they will represent a threat and that one must counter this possibility with military measures. The U.S. response – construction of a missile defense systems designed to counter the missiles – assumes that the threat *will* develop and that a military response is the only approach. It reflects a maximalist view of defense in the United States, summed up by a German newspaper, *General-Anzeiger*: “whatever serves American security, is technologically feasible, and can be financed, will be done.”²

The European governments as well as Washington are more or less in the dark about the intentions of the governments that may possess long-range missiles in the future. But while the United States tends to assume and prepare for the worst, European governments are reluctant to commit billions of dollars to fight what, in their judgment, may be a phantom threat. As a study prepared by the Atlantic Council of the United States pointed out, “... most [Europeans] would argue that [North Korea’s development of long range missiles] is more related to acquiring bargaining leverage linked to its economic development... than to any serious intention to present a military threat to the United States or Europe.”³ The disagreement extends further: even if both Europe and the United States concluded that North Korean, Iranian, and Iraqi missile pose a threat, they would likely choose different ways of countering it. The same Atlantic Council study points out that “Europeans often contrast their emphasis on ‘soft’ approaches to security, involving economic and diplomatic tools and policies, with a characteristically U.S. preoccupation with the ‘hard’ military and technological means of protecting their security.”⁴

The differences between the U.S. and Europe on the seriousness of the proliferation threat, although profound, tend not to be divisive. They pose a problem to the United States insofar as they hamper U.S. efforts to convince Britain and Denmark of the urgency to deploy NMD radars on their territory. But precisely because European governments feel less threatened by missiles in the hands of North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, the threat issue has failed to ignite a thorough transatlantic debate. The same cannot be said for the other point of contention between Washington and Europe – the impact of NMD on existing nuclear weapons agreements.

2) Deterrence Vs. “Rogue” States

The second point of disagreement revolves around Russia. Even though the national missile defense system aims to counter missile threat from “ro-

gue” states such as Iran, Iraq, and North Korea (the U.S. State Department recently stopped using the “rogue” term), it also threatens to upset the existing nuclear balance of power between the United States and Russia. The current doctrine of *deterrence* which guides U.S. and Russian nuclear policies is based on two premises: both countries must continue possessing nuclear arsenal of sufficiently destructive power to survive an initial attack and deliver a counterpunch. Secondly, no country may develop a defensive system that could deny the other a chance to retaliate for a nuclear attack. Once one or both of these premises are undermined, the country falling behind offensively or defensively will be tempted to use its nuclear arsenal before it becomes useless.

The first premise of the U.S.-Russian nuclear balance is now being eroded by Russia’s economic crisis. The country cannot make nuclear missiles fast enough to replace its ageing arsenal. Russia is also facing increasing difficulties in deploying the existing missiles on land, sea, and in the air. The second premise is being undermined by the U.S. national missile defense system. Although designed to intercept only a limited number of incoming missiles, the amount Russia can launch is decreasing and may in the future drop below the limits of the NMD system.⁵ This is especially true if the United States continues to expand the system in the future.

Russia therefore strongly opposes NMD, and has fought it by taking a hard line on the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. This 1972 agreement explicitly forbids the deployment of more than one missile defense system, with limited territorial reach, in each signatory country, the United States and the USSR (now Russia). The launch of the national missile defense system would require either a revision or an abrogation of the ABM Treaty. The Clinton Administration acknowledges Russia’s opposition but hopes to deploy NMD and secure Russia’s permission to amend the Treaty at the same time. Presidential candidate George W. Bush said that he was ready to withdraw from the Treaty if the Russian side does not agree to the changes proposed by the U.S. side.

The European governments’ view on ABM is much closer to Russia’s than to that of the United States. Most European governments seem convinced that any potential benefits derived from deploying the NMD system (especially if it does not cover Europe) are not worth abandoning the current *deterrence* system and increasing the risk of nuclear confrontation. “The European Union and Russia have an identical viewpoint,” said French President Jacques Chirac during the October 2000 EU-Russia summit. “We have condemned any potential revision of the ABM treaty, believing that

such a revision will involve a risk of proliferation that will be very dangerous for the future.”⁶ Other European leaders echoed President Chirac’s view. British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said that “it is important that NMD does not proceed in a way which undermines the [ABM] Treaty.”⁷ The other country slated to host NMD facilities, Denmark, took a similar stance (see below for more information on Britain’s and Denmark’s positions on NMD).

Differences between Europe and the United States on ABM have a potential to seriously upset relations between the allies. The dispute has been relatively quiet so far, mostly because the United States has not yet decided to proceed with NMD, and was thus far spared a decision on whether to abandon the Treaty. That choice, however, will have to be made soon as testing and preparations for NMD deployment continue. The system enjoys overwhelming support in the U.S. Congress and both candidates in the November 2000 U.S. presidential elections strongly endorsed it.

Washington has chosen to present Russia with a *fait accompli* and hopes that Moscow will blink and agree to ABM Treaty revisions if proper concessions are offered. But Russia may choose not to compromise precisely because most European countries agree with its position. If so, NMD would drive a wedge between the United States and its allies.

There are several possible outcomes to the current conundrum. The United States will no doubt try to soften EU states’ position on ABM. Washington can offer missile defense coverage to European states (an idea strongly advocated by George W. Bush). It can also try to preserve nuclear weapon parity with Russia by unilaterally cutting its nuclear arsenal. But there is another option; one that European governments keenly hope to avoid. If Washington fails to reach an agreement with Russia, it may choose to force Europe to side with either the United States or Russia. This is especially true for Britain and Denmark, which will have to decide whether to approve NMD facilities on their territories and thus cannot avoid taking sides. Both the Danish and British governments gave more or less explicit assurances to their parliaments to observe the ABM Treaty in their decision, and will find it extremely difficult to back down. However, the British government has already pointed to an escape clause in the ABM Treaty. If the United States and Russia disagree on ABM revision, Washington can and likely will withdraw from the Treaty, as stipulated in its provisions. If so, British approval to station NMD facilities would not violate the Treaty because the document itself would no longer be in force, said the UK Foreign Office.⁸

Positions of European Countries With Proposed NMD Facilities

1. Britain

President Clinton has begun informal negotiations with Prime Minister Tony Blair over the integration of the British installations into the NMD system. In addition to the Fylingdales radar station, U.S. technicians are also upgrading a separate facility in Menwith Hill, UK, which will be used as a downlink station for a network of space-based infrared detection satellites.

Prime Minister Blair and Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon are both reported to be supportive of British participation in the U.S. system but the government has so far avoided taking a public stance on Britain's participation in NMD. The ruling Labor Party is split on the issue. Peter Hain, the Foreign Office Minister, denounced NMD as untested and unreliable.⁹ The head of the Foreign Office, Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, is also reputed to oppose NMD for its probable impact on arms control treaties with Russia, but has not publicly declared his views. Opposition Conservatives are strongly in favor of British participation in NMD, and have accused the Labor government of "anti-U.S. Cold War attitudes".¹⁰

The strongest criticism of NMD to date has come from the British Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs. In an August 2, 2000 report on weapons of mass destruction, the committee questioned the rationale for the system and warned that NMD may spark a new round of nuclear arms race in Asia. It criticized the Blair government for avoiding taking a position on NMD and called on the administration to publicly "articulate the very strong concerns that have been expressed about NMD within the UK".¹¹ However, the committee also acknowledged that Britain's "refusal to allow the upgrading of facilities at Fylingdales would be unprecedented and prove very testing for the [NATO] alliance".¹²

Britain hopes to avoid choosing sides in the NMD debate to prevent tensions with Russia and a possible rift in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a military alliance of 17 European states, the United States and Canada. The UK has put pressure on Russia to obtain a pledge from North Korea to stop development of long-range missiles. Such a pledge, it is hoped, would remove the rationale for NMD. If the United States proceeds with NMD, Britain will likely accommodate U.S. requests for building NMD installations on its soil in order to preserve its excellent relations with Washington. The Blair government also faces strong domestic pressure from the Conservative Party and will likely seek to avoid giving its opponents ammunition for continued attacks. London may, however, seek missile defense protection for itself in exchange for its cooperation. Defense Secretary Hoon stated that the UK government "will continue to consult closely with the US... to help us take an informed decision on whether

to acquire [NMD] capability ourselves in the future".¹³ The British press reported that Defence Secretary raised the possibility of NMD coverage for Britain at his January 2000 meeting with Pentagon officials.

2. Denmark

The Pentagon's NMD plans do not include installations in Denmark. However, Denmark is responsible for administering the foreign and security affairs of Greenland. Thule, Greenland currently houses a U.S. early warning radar that the Pentagon wants to upgrade for the Extended Capability 1 phase of NMD. For Extended Capability 2 & 3, Thule is to be equipped with an X-band radar. The Clinton Administration has briefed the Danish government on its plans for the Thule base for NMD, but has not yet made a formal request for the upgrade or for installation of the X-band radar.

The Danish government agrees with the U.S. Administration on the potential threat posed by long-range missiles in the hands of North Korea and Iraq. Without declaring a position on NMD, Danish Foreign Minister, Niels Helveg Petersen, expressed his country's reservations about the system by stressing that the use of the Thule station must not contravene the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty.¹⁴ The Danes as well as the population of Greenland are clearly concerned about Russia's retaliation against countries cooperating with the United States on NMD. As with other European countries that the Pentagon hopes will host NMD facilities, Denmark has come under pressure from Moscow. "If Washington puts its ABM plans into action and the system involves Danish radar," said Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, Copenhagen "will be responsible for pulling down the ABM Treaty".¹⁵ Ivanov added that Russia could take retaliatory measures in this case.

Denmark's NMD deliberations are further complicated by Greenland's stance on NMD. Although Copenhagen is officially responsible for the island's foreign and security affairs, as a matter of policy the Danish government strives to involve Greenland's authorities in issues of special importance to the island. A left-leaning government party in Greenland, Inuit Ataqutigiit, opposes the island's involvement in NMD. The United States, in a move that could be aimed at placating opposition to NMD in Greenland, offered to return the Pituffik peninsula to the native Inuits. The Danish government expelled the local population in 1951 and consigned Pituffik to the U.S. government for use by the Thule base.

3. Norway: The Vardo Radar Controversy

Norway, although not included in U.S. missile defense plans, has come to play a controversial role in the ongoing U.S.-Russia dialogue on NMD.

Moscow has on numerous occasions alleged that a U.S.-made radar deployed near the Russian border in Norway is part of the NMD system and as such violates the ABM Treaty.

The X-band radar in Vardo, Norway, was manufactured by Raytheon in the early 1990s. It operated for three years at Vandenberg Air Force base in California under the name of HAVE STARE before being dismantled and moved to Norway. The Norwegian government maintains that the radar's sole purpose is to monitor space debris. "We have an exceptionally clear agreement with the Americans. If they wish to use the radar for another purpose than space surveillance, the whole agreement [on the use of the radar by the United States] has to be renegotiated," said the project leader for the Vardo radar at Norway's defense intelligence agency.¹⁶

However, the radar's unique technical capabilities and its proximity to Russia – 40 miles from the border – aroused suspicions in Moscow of foul play. Raytheon's web site on HAVE STARE described the radar as "originally designed to collect intelligence data against ballistic missiles".¹⁷ The Pentagon's earlier NMD designs specifically call for "making the best use" of the HAVE STARE radar.¹⁸

General Ivashov, the head of the Russian Defense Ministry's Military Cooperation section stated that "in the opinion of our analysts, the [Vardo radar] station will function as part of the anti-missile system [NMD]".¹⁹ He added that Russia would take unspecified measures unless Norway closes the radar during Russian military exercises.²⁰ The Vardo radar, even if not connected to the NMD system, could be used to monitor Russian tests and gather information on the radar signature of Russian missile launches – information that could be used to improve performance of the NMD system.

In July 2000, a Russian defense expert with close ties to the military, Pavel Felgenhauer, said that Russian weapons were programmed to target the Vardo radar station in Norway.²¹ A day later, Norway's Defense Minister Sigur Frisvold suggested that Norway be included in a U.S. missile defense program, ostensibly to protect against threats from "terrorist nations".²² However, the timing of the request indicates that the move was linked to Russian warnings of a nuclear strike against the Vardo radar.

Impact Of NMD On European Countries Hosting NMD Facilities

Countries hosting NMD facilities on their territory have come under immense diplomatic pressure from Russia. In June 2000, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned that Washington's European allies, "primarily Great

Britain, Denmark, and Norway, are taking the risk of becoming dragged into a process which will result in an unpredictable loss of strategic stability".²³

Moscow suggested two possible responses to European cooperation on NMD. In the event that the United States withdraws from the ABM treaty, Russia threatened to build missiles aimed at European cities. President Putin said in June 2000 that Moscow "may abandon its commitments... under the treaty on elimination of intermediate-range and shorter range nuclear missiles".²⁴ The treaty, known as INF, required the destruction of missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers (312 to 3,125 miles), capable of hitting any European city from Russian territory. However, President Putin's warning to resurrect the intermediate range missile program is likely to prove a hollow threat, at least in the short term. The only Russian plant capable of producing intermediate range SS-20 missiles is already producing long-range SS-27 missiles at full capacity. More recently, however, Moscow also warned that it might target NMD facilities on European territory with nuclear weapons.

The NMD plans put the European countries in a position of assisting a program aimed at providing additional safety for the United States but doing so at the likely expense of their own security. Many European states do not agree with the threat assessment that has led to NMD's conception in the first place. All oppose any steps that would violate the ABM Treaty. Even the Parliament in Britain, traditionally the most loyal among European allies, has warned the United States that it cannot "necessarily assume unqualified UK co-operation with... plans to deploy NMD in the event of unilateral US abrogation of the ABM Treaty".²⁵

Europe's importance to NMD and the clear doubts there about the value of the NMD program has made it a subject of lobbying effort by both sides of the NMD dispute. Even Moscow has mixed its occasional threats to Europe with offers of cooperation. In June 2000, President Putin offered to construct a Europe-wide missile shield with Russian involvement. Similarly, Pentagon spokesperson Ken Bacon has said that President Clinton is prepared to share NMD technology with U.S. allies.²⁶ As noted above, Britain and Norway raised the possibility of NMD coverage for its territory with Pentagon officials.

The European Union On NMD

While the EU strives to speak with a single voice in foreign and security affairs, it has so far been unable to arrive at a common position on NMD. The power to decide on issues affecting territorial defense, such as NMD, is

being jealously guarded by national capitals. British Foreign Minister Robin Cook spoke for many EU governments when he told the British Parliament: “I am not sure I would regard it as wise for us to seek a specific European Union policy on NMD given our own very entrenched view that the European Union should not be a place for territorial collective defence.”²⁷ German Foreign Minister Joschka Fishcher, while urging the EU countries to adopt a joint position, admitted that “interests are not homogeneous within Europe”.²⁸ Given that the EU can only adopt a position by consensus, European countries may find it impossible to discuss NMD on the EU level and will likely seek resolution of their differences with the United States on a bilateral level or through NATO.

Similarly, the EU is unlikely to adopt a position on NMD installations on the European continent. Of the three countries involved directly or indirectly, Norway is not an EU member, Denmark does not participate in EU’s defense policies, and Britain, as noted above, has resisted discussing NMD in the EU for domestic reasons.

National Missile Defense And the NATO Alliance

One view commonly expressed in the European media describes NMD as a potential threat to the defense ties established by NATO and a threat to the stability in Europe. NMD is viewed, as a symptom of an emerging “fortress mentality” in the United States, which, many European governments fear, will weaken the U.S. commitment to defend its NATO allies. U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen admitted that European countries are worried that NMD “will decouple us from our European friends”.²⁹ The fears in Europe of rising tendency in the United States to act unilaterally, often against the wishes of its allies, were also fueled by suggestions in October 2000 by presidential candidate George W. Bush that the United States withdraws its troops from NATO peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Kosovo.

NMD, however, poses somewhat of a dilemma to America’s NATO allies in Europe. As U.S. officials frequently point out, under certain circumstances a missile defense system may actually strengthen U.S. commitment to defend Europe. Would the United States, American officials ask, have launched a war against Iraq if Saddam Hussein was capable of threatening Washington with nuclear missiles? The U.S. President would certainly have had more reservations about ordering the attack knowing that it could result in a nuclear explosion on U.S. territory. Potential enemies could therefore use missiles as a wedge between Europe and the United States – in crises where

European interests are involved, foes could deter the United States from aiding its allies by threatening a missile attack against U.S. territory. This possibility cannot be easily dismissed especially if, as most European governments seem to believe, America is already growing increasingly isolationist and therefore less willing to risk lives abroad. On the other hand, most European countries have chosen a policy of engagement with the very countries the United States is protecting from by building the NMD system. In general, the countries of Europe enjoy much better relations with Iraq or Iran than the United States. Therefore, a scenario in which Iran or Iraq attack Europe but not the United States seems very far-fetched today. ■

Notes:

1. *Transcript of Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on national missile defense, July 25, 2000.*
2. *General-Anzeiger, July 10, 2000. Quoted in: "NMD: Failed Test Prompts New Criticism, Speculation About Clinton Decision," Foreign Media Reaction, U.S. Department of State, July 14, 2000.*
3. *Steven Cambone, Ivo Daalder, Stephen J. Hadley, Christopher J. Makins: "European Views of National Missile Defense," The Atlantic Council of the United States, September 2000, p. 6.*
4. *Ibid, p. 4.*
5. *For a detailed analysis of the erosion of Russian nuclear arsenal, see: Bruce Blair: "The Impact of National Missile Defense on Russia and Nuclear Security," The Defense Monitor, Number 8, Volume 29, October 2000, www.cdi.org.*
6. *Quoted in: RFE/RL Newline, October 31, 2000.*
7. *Robin Cook: Examination of Witnesses, House of Commons, United Kingdom Parliament, June 28, 2000.*
8. *"NPT Review Conference," Supplementary Memorandum Submitted By Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK), April 18, 2000.*
9. *"Hain Cautious Over American Missile Shield," The Times (UK), June 21, 2000.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Select Committee on Foreign Affairs report on Weapons of Mass Destruction, August 2, 2000.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *House of Commons Debate, March 21, 2000.*
14. *Answer of Minister for Foreign Affairs, Niels Helveg Petersen, to question from the Danish parliament, February 25, 2000.*
15. *"Russia Concerned Over Construction of Radar Station in Greenland," Interfax, June 21, 2000.*
16. *"Hard Fight About the Vardo Radar," Bergens Tidende (Norway), June 6, 1998.*
17. *"How A Storm Spread A Cold War Chill," The Wall Street Journal, June 6, 2000.*
18. *"National Missile Defense Options," Ballistic Missile Defense Organization, July 31, 1995, p. 9.*

19. "Russia Suspects Norwegian Radar Station Will Work For Future US Anti-Missile System," *Interfax*, March 9, 2000.
20. "Norwegian Radar Target for Russian Nuclear Weapons," *The Norway Post*, July 17, 2000.
21. *Ibid.*
22. "Defence Chief: Norway Should Consider USA's Defense Shield," *The Norway Post*, July 18, 2000.
23. "Putin Warns Europe Against US Plans for ABM, NATO Expansion," *Interfax*, June 10, 2000.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Report on Weapons of Mass Destruction, Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, United Kingdom Parliament, August 2, 2000.*
26. "Pentagon: Missile Defense Discussions With Allies Underway," *Aerospace Daily*, June 5, 2000.
27. *Examination of Witnesses, Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, United Kingdom Parliament, June 7, 2000.*
28. *Joint press conference with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC, May 8, 2000, <http://secretary.state.gov/www/statements/2000/000508.html>.*
29. "Europeans Lukewarm on Need for U.S. National Missile Defense," *Aerospace Daily*, March 2, 2000.

Resumé:

Tomáš Valášek: *Americko-európsky dialóg o systéme národnej raketovej obrany*

Systém národnej raketovej obrany (NMD), navrhnutý Spojenými štátmi, bol v Európe prijatý chladne. Väčšina európskych krajín nesúhlasí so záverom, ku ktorému dospela americká vláda, že rakety dlhého doletu v rukách prezidentov Severnej Kórey, Iránu či Iraku predstavujú bezprostredné nebezpečie. Hoci ich potenciálne deštruktívne účinky sú dobre známe aj v Paríži či Bruseli, európske krajiny udržiavajú s Iránom a Irakom lepšie vzťahy ako USA, a teda sa necítia byť ich raketami ohrozené.

Európa je oveľa viac znepokojená možným dopadom amerického systému národnej raketovej obrany na jadrovú rovnováhu medzi USA a Ruskom. Ruský jadrový arzenál sa neustále znižuje, pretože Moskva nestačí vyrábať nové rakety, ktoré by nahradili tie dožívajúce. Hoci systém NMD je stavaný iba na zostrelenie relatívne malého počtu rakiet naraz, je možné, že počet ruských rakiet s jadrovými hlavicami klesne na úroveň, ktorú by už NMD systém vedel zastaviť. Narastá teda nebezpečenstvo, že Rusko použije svoje rakety skôr, ako by ich systém NMD vedel zneškodniť.

Moskva sa preto pokúša predísť konštrukcii národného raketového systému v USA nástojením na dodržaní zmluvy o Protiraketovej obrane (Anti-

Ballistic Missile Treaty, ABM), ktorú Spojené štáty americké a vtedajšie ZSSR podpísalo v roku 1972 a ktorá bola neskôr potvrdená Ruskom. NMD systém predstavuje jasné porušenie tejto zmluvy v jej dnešnej podobe. Spojené štáty a Moskva sa pokúšajú dohodnúť na prípadnej revízií, ktorú Rusko zatiaľ odmieta. Hrozí teda, že ak sa USA a Rusko nedohodnú, Európa sa bude musieť pridať na stranu Ruska (a tým ohroziť nielen vzťahy s USA, ale aj fungovanie NATO) alebo Spojených štátov (čím by sa mohla porušiť jadrová rovnováha a zhoršiť medzinárodná politická klíma). Týka sa to hlavne Veľkej Británie a Dánska, ktoré v prípade, že sa Washington rozhodne pre vybudovanie systému NMD, budú musieť rozhodnúť o schválení konštrukcie radarov na ich území. Vlády oboch týchto krajín sa vyjadrili proti revízií zmluvy ABM a jej vypovedanie Spojenými štátmi by ich postavilo do veľmi nepríjemnej situácie.

Americké plány na vybudovanie systému národnej raketovej obrany spôsobili znepokojenie v Európe aj preto, lebo ich vlády považujú EÚ za prejav rastúcej tendencie k unilaterálnemu rozhodovaniu bez zohľadnenia názoru európskych spojencov. Poukazujú pritom aj na nedávny návrh Georga Buscha, kandidáta v prezidentských voľbách, na stiahnutie amerických vojsk z misíí NATO v Bosne a Kosove.