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**THESIS**

**BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE  
AND NATO ALLIANCE RELATIONS**

by

John P. Raffier

December 1996

Thesis Advisor:

Peter R. Lavoy

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# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188

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1. AGENCY USE ONLY <i>(Leave blank)</i>	2. REPORT DATE December 1996	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE AND NATO ALLIANCE RELATIONS		5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Raffier, John P.		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey CA 93943-5000		10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.	
12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT <i>(maximum 200 words)</i>  <p>Short-range missiles in Third World arsenals pose a serious threat to forward-deployed U.S. and allied military forces. The acquisition of longer-range missiles has the potential to extend that threat to the population and territory of the United States and its allies. While NATO member states have agreed to develop Theater Missile Defense (TMD) systems to support forward-deployed troops, they continue to dispute which TMD systems ought to be developed and whether territorial or population defenses ought to be built. In this long-standing dispute, the United States has often found itself at odds with its European allies.</p> <p>This thesis argues that ballistic missile defense remains a potential source of friction between the United States and its European allies, but for substantially different reasons than in the Cold War era. The strategic and political differences which alienated allies during the Cold War have been replaced by economic considerations and the inability to develop a unified BMD strategy. These factors continue to make BMD a divisive issue. To prevent the erosion of Alliance relations, the United States must show greater sensitivity to the interests of its European allies, who in turn must exhibit a greater commitment to NATO goals.</p>			
14. SUBJECT TERMS Ballistic Missile Defense, NATO policy, deterrence, Alliance cohesion		15. NUMBER OF PAGES 134	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified		16. PRICE CODE	
18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL	

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)  
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18 298-102

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**BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE  
AND NATO ALLIANCE RELATIONS**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

from the


**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**


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## ABSTRACT

Short-range missiles in Third World arsenals pose a serious threat to forward-deployed U.S. and allied military forces. The acquisition of longer-range missiles has the potential to extend that threat to the population and territory of the United States and its allies. While NATO member states have agreed to develop Theater Missile Defense (TMD) systems to support forward-deployed troops, they continue to dispute which TMD systems ought to be developed and whether territorial or population defenses ought to be built. In this long-standing dispute, the United States has often found itself at odds with its European allies.

This thesis argues that ballistic missile defense remains a potential source of friction between the United States and its European allies, but for substantially different reasons than in the Cold War era. The strategic and political differences which alienated allies during the Cold War have been replaced by economic considerations and the inability to develop a unified BMD strategy. These factors continue to make BMD a divisive issue. To prevent the erosion of Alliance relations, the United States must show greater sensitivity to the interests of its European allies, who in turn must exhibit a greater commitment to NATO goals.





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## Executive Summary

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic missiles has become an issue of increasing concern in the post-Cold War era. NATO has devoted considerable resources to assess the threat that WMD proliferation poses to the Alliance and to identify ways to reduce that threat. The June 1994 Alliance Policy Framework on Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction identified the dual-approach strategy that NATO would use to defend member states: first, through political means to prevent proliferation and second, through defensive means to protect NATO territory and forces. On 29 November 1995, NATO's Response to Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction defined the specific means to achieve NATO's goals. Theater Missile Defense (TMD) for deployed forces was one of the capabilities to be developed.

Even though NATO member states have agreed on the need to develop TMD for deployed troops, no similar consensus has emerged on the means to develop TMD or regarding territorial or population defenses. This thesis asserts that ballistic missile defense (BMD) has been, and remains today a source of contention between the United States and its NATO allies. The friction between allies generated by the BMD issue weakens Alliance relations and erodes the level of transatlantic cooperation. The nature of this tension, however, has shifted from significant strategic disagreements during the Cold War, to economic considerations and the inability to develop a unified BMD strategy.

To demonstrate how divisive an issue BMD is, this thesis examines the missile defense debate throughout its forty-year history in the United States, and identifies the

primary controversies, policy decisions, and specific events that affected U.S. relations with Europe. This study focuses on Great Britain, France, and Germany, and analyzes the impact of BMD on the relationship of each country with the United States. To emphasize the changing nature of the missile defense debate, a comparison is made between Alliance relations during the Cold War and in the post-Cold War era. The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) increased tension between the United States and other members of the Alliance, largely because it threatened NATO's traditional nuclear deterrence strategy.

In the post-Cold War period, greater allied consensus on BMD has failed to yield a more cooperative approach to developing the necessary technology. European partners still appear unable to reconcile BMD with national needs and unwilling to commit scarce resources to support NATO goals. As a result, friction between Alliance members regarding missile defense might lead to an inability to reach consensus on other vital issues, including force deployment and the development of a more robust European pillar of NATO.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. THESIS ARGUMENT

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the means to deliver them (notably, ballistic missiles) was largely overshadowed by the strategic stalemate of the Cold War. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the concern over a future missile attack by potential adversaries such as Iran, Iraq, Libya, or North Korea has increased dramatically. Today, over thirty countries possess ballistic missiles and more than twenty-five are believed to be developing nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons.<sup>1</sup> The majority of Third World arsenals are comprised of short-range ballistic missiles, which, in themselves, pose a serious threat to forward-deployed U.S. and allied military forces. The acquisition of longer-range missiles continues, however, and the potential threat to the population and territory of the United States and its allies draws nearer each day.

While consensus has been reached by NATO member states on the need to develop Theater Missile Defense (TMD) systems to provide support for deployed troops, unanimity has not been achieved on the means to develop TMD or regarding territorial or population defenses. U.S. policy makers have taken the lead in addressing this emerging threat from the South, in the form of a more focused Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) program. The BMD debate in the United States has been going on for nearly thirty years, and at various times throughout the period U.S. BMD programs have caused significant strain between the United States and its NATO allies.

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<sup>1</sup> Senator Jesse Helms, speech on the Strategic Anti-Missile Revitalization Act of 1996, U.S. Senate, 104th Cong., Congressional Record (6 February 1996), S 917.

This thesis argues that ballistic missile defense remains a potential source of friction between the United States and its European allies, but for substantially different reasons than in the Cold War era. The strategic and political differences which alienated allies during the Cold War have been replaced by economic considerations and the inability to develop a unified BMD strategy. These issues continue to make BMD a divisive issue. As a result, friction in this one specific area of defense may erode the level of transatlantic cooperation and weaken Alliance relations.

During the Cold War, the development of a common NATO BMD policy was extremely difficult due to the differing opinions held by Alliance members on mutually assured destruction, détente, arms control, and nuclear deterrence. In particular, the 1980s debate involving the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) highlighted the divergent strategic goals of the United States and its European partners. The United States forced its allies to choose between cooperation and confrontation, and the result was criticism, resentment, hostility, and eventually, some limited, reluctant support. The SDI was a source of friction between allies because of the strategic and political differences of the member states.

European governments now offer a much more supportive position on the need to consider missile defense. At the same time, these governments have demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to commit to BMD policies which support the efforts of the United States and common goals of NATO. Economic difficulties and the reluctance to depart from some Cold War policies continue to prohibit the development of a unified NATO program. The inability to reach a consensus on BMD will ultimately affect other

NATO considerations, including the decision to deploy forces and burden-sharing arrangements for European defense.

## **B. BACKGROUND ON NATO POLICY**

On 9 June 1994, NATO Ministers officially detailed the WMD threat in the Alliance Policy Framework on Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. In this document a threat assessment was outlined in order to define current and future WMD and missile proliferation risks. Based on this definition of risks, and NATO's responsibility to defend member states while sustaining a stable European security environment, a dual-approach strategy was discussed. First, politically, the goal of the Alliance and its member states would be to prevent proliferation, or reverse it through diplomatic means. Assisting current nonproliferation efforts without duplication of tasking was an emphasis. The second strategy would be a defensive analysis to determine the steps necessary to ensure the security of the members' territories and NATO forces against potential WMD proliferation.

On 29 November 1995, NATO officials further delineated their strategy in NATO's Response to Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Specific courses of action were laid out and the capabilities required for NATO's successful efforts against proliferation were highlighted. More than just an organizational condemnation of WMD proliferation, this message established the groundwork for a realistic and attainable plan of attack. One of the capabilities to be developed was "Extended Air Defence, including Tactical Ballistic Missile Defence for Deployed Forces."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> NATO's Response to Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, p. 4.

## C. THESIS ORGANIZATION AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis is organized to facilitate an understanding of the issues related to BMD that cause tension between the United States and its allies. Chapter II traces the historical evolution of the U.S. BMD program through four distinct periods:

- 1.) 1945-1972: Origins of the U.S. BMD program
- 2.) 1972-1983: ABM Treaty; mutual vulnerability embraced by NATO
- 3.) 1983-1990: The Strategic Defense Initiative debate
- 4.) 1990-present: The Post-Cold War environment.

Examining the evolution of BMD in the United States makes it possible to better understand the primary issues involved in the U.S. debate and also establishes the historical framework within which current U.S. policy makers operate in the drive to implement more advanced BMD technology.

Chapters III, IV, and V explore the relationship between the United States and the three strongest European members of the Atlantic Alliance: Great Britain, France, and Germany. Each chapter focuses on an individual country to illustrate how U.S. BMD programs, and ballistic missile defense in general, have impacted it and its relations with the United States. The debate surrounding the SDI is used to identify European reaction to a U.S. program during the height of the Cold War. The SDI was chosen due to the intensity of the controversy, and the direct involvement of the Europeans in the debate. The post-Cold War section of each chapter involves a survey of the developing attitudes towards missile defense of each government over the last six years. While post-Cold War European policies have yet to be clearly defined by each government, significant findings can be inferred from the available data, especially in comparison to the SDI debate.



Great Britain, France, and Germany were chosen for two primary reasons. First, as the three strongest European members of NATO, they possess an overwhelming influence on the other members of the Alliance. Because of this, the state of relations between the United States and these three countries has a direct impact on the overall unity of the organization. Second, each nation is unique with regard to deterrence, nuclear strategy, and European security. Great Britain has long been the closest ally of the United States, and has had to balance its strong transatlantic ties with a growing attachment to continental Europe. Also, its nuclear deterrent force has always been closely linked to that of the United States. France, outside of NATO's integrated military structure, has developed its nuclear force and strategy independently, and has continually sought to emphasize that independence from the United States. Germany, the non-nuclear power, has relied heavily on the extended nuclear deterrence policy of NATO, and particularly, the United States, while attempting to groom positive diplomatic and economic relations with its neighbors to the East. The diversity of security perceptions and requirements poses a serious challenge to U.S. policy makers striving to increase U.S. security without sacrificing the unified support of European allies.

Finally, in Chapter VI, an evaluation is presented which draws on the above data to summarize the interaction of Europe and U.S. BMD during the Cold War and in the post-Cold War period. By highlighting these similarities and differences, policy makers may be able to tailor future BMD efforts to minimize damage to Alliance cohesion while maximizing defense capabilities to meet a ballistic missile threat.



## **II. THE EVOLUTION OF THE U.S. BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE PROGRAM**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

One of the most acrimonious national security debates in the United States over the past thirty years has involved ballistic missile defense (BMD). Throughout those years, the military and political effects of deploying ballistic missile defenses have been hotly contested, and the matter has never been adequately resolved. The attention of U.S. policy makers is once again fixed on BMD. This is so for two reasons. First, geopolitical changes, primarily the end of the Cold War, have altered the appearance of the global strategic balance which typified the previous forty years, and reduced the perceived danger of the East-West security threat. Second, the continuing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic missile technology throughout the Third World has increased concern over a burgeoning North-South security challenge.

While the end of the Cold War and the emergence of several potentially threatening nations are new factors to be included in the BMD debate, many of the arguments for and against BMD deployment have remained constant. The key bone of contention continues to be whether the development and deployment of BMD technology will strengthen the security of the United States, or whether it will erode its current level of security. Since the formation of NATO, U.S. security has been closely linked to European defense, and U.S. policy decisions can ultimately affect Europe. Over the past thirty years, U.S. BMD policies have been implemented without full consideration of the

impact on allies, and as a result, U.S. decisions have at times adversely affected Alliance relations.

This chapter explores the primary debates regarding this defense and will examine the evolution of the U.S. ballistic missile defense program. The development of U.S. BMD efforts can be broken down into four distinct periods: (1) from the earliest concepts of BMD during the Second World War up to 1972, a period in which the Sentinel and Safeguard BMD systems were proposed; (2) 1972 to 1983, the implementation period of the ABM Treaty; (3) 1983-1990, the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) debate; and (4) 1990 to the present, representing a post-Cold War, multipolar scenario. The BMD debate illustrates how U.S. decisions have affected European allies.

## **B. THE ORIGINS OF U.S. BMD: 1945 TO 1972**

### **1. Early Development**

The origin of the U.S. missile defense program dates back to 1945 and concern over the highly effective German V-2 missile, first used on 8 September, 1944 on a Paris suburb. Military planners were convinced that this new threat warranted study, and contracted the General Electric Company to examine defense options. The conclusions of the General Electric Project Thumper stated that current technological capability was inadequate to meet the V-2 threat, and that no reliable defense against missile attack was possible. Weaknesses in radar, data-processing, and missile guidance systems prohibited the development of an effective system.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Benson D. Adams, "The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM): A Study of the Effects of Strategic Weapons Technology on the Political System" (Ph. D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1968), 66.

Immediately following the war, the United States emphasized the use of heavy bombers as its main deterrent force. The belief that Soviet forces were configured in a similar fashion led missile researchers to emphasize anti-aircraft defenses. The absence of an immediate ballistic missile threat to the United States and strong memories of the damage wrought on U.S. warships by Japanese kamikaze attacks were also influential factors in the decision to give priority to anti-aircraft missile development, including surface-to-air missiles (SAMs). By the mid-1950s several SAM systems were deployed in both land- and sea-based systems, and it was from this technology that future BMD programs developed.<sup>4</sup>

By 1955 advances in several areas of technology suggested the need to reassess the potential effectiveness of a missile defense system. Both the Air Force and the Army initiated new studies which concluded that missile interception was no longer beyond the realm of possibility and that continued research could lead to a deployable defense. Based on these conclusions, the Department of Defense established the Nike-Zeus missile defense program. Consisting of a series of separate radars and the three-stage Zeus missile, this BMD research program operated from 1955 to 1963, and grew in importance following the successful Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test in 1957.<sup>5</sup>

By the turn of the decade, research in the Nike-Zeus program had developed to the point where a functioning model was produced and prepared for testing. The system was installed on the Kwajalein Atoll in the Pacific Ocean, and in July 1962 successfully

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>5</sup> Ballistic Missile Defense: Evolution and Current Issues, (GAO-NSIAD-93-229, July 16, 1993),

intercepted an ICBM launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, well over four thousand miles away.<sup>6</sup> That successful test was followed by eleven similar successes over the next year, demonstrating that the necessary technology was indeed available. Still, the interception of a single missile in a testing environment was by no means an indication that an effective BMD system was ready for deployment in the near future. Technical difficulties still posed limitations and the Nike-Zeus system was deemed inadequate to meet the growing Soviet missile threat. Rather than scrapping the program altogether, the Department of Defense chose to alter the make-up of the Nike-Zeus system by incorporating advanced radars and additional missile systems into the existing framework. Research continued but a decision on deployment was delayed indefinitely.<sup>7</sup>

The new program, renamed Nike-X, emphasized radar improvements in acquisition, discrimination, tracking, and interceptor guidance, all relatively ineffective aspects of the Nike-Zeus system. The Zeus missile was upgraded to the Spartan missile, capable of intercepting ICBMs outside of the Earth's atmosphere at altitudes of seventy to one hundred miles. The Sprint missile was added to destroy warheads at a lower altitude of twenty to thirty miles. Both the Sprint and Spartan missiles were themselves carrying nuclear warheads, and the introduction of the Sprint missile caused additional problems for future deployments. While the likelihood of successful interception improved due to its relatively low intercept altitude, the issue of radioactive fallout became a major concern. In 1964, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara indicated that:

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<sup>6</sup> Donald Baucom, The Origins of SDI, 1944-1983 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 17.

<sup>7</sup> Benson D. Adams, "McNamara's ABM Policy, 1961-1967," Orbis 12, no. 1 (Spring 1968): 203.

The effectiveness of an active ballistic missile defense system in saving lives depends in large part upon the existence of an adequate civil defense system. Indeed, in the absence of adequate fallout shelters, an active defense might not significantly increase the proportion of the population surviving an all-out nuclear attack.<sup>8</sup>

At the time, the civil defense infrastructure was by no means capable of offering the protection which McNamara envisioned, and there were still many questions to be addressed prior to deployment.

## **2. Influences on the Missile Defense Debate**

Throughout the mid-1960s, the technological developments in the field, the successful intercept tests at the Kwajalein Atoll, and the increasing acceptance of the feasibility of effective missile defense each contributed to other concerns outside the technical area. In the magazine Missiles and Rockets, the political utility of BMD was questioned by an unnamed Washington official, who asked, "Even if we can develop an effective ballistic missile defense system, should we deploy it?"<sup>9</sup> Assuming that the strategy of mutual assured destruction (MAD) was the basis for a stable U.S.-U.S.S.R. security relationship, a growing number of BMD critics opposed the deployment as a destabilizing force. They argued that BMD deployment would initiate yet another arms race, and would reduce national security. Advocates of BMD, on the other hand, argued that effective missile defenses would increase security and provide a shield under which offensive systems could be reduced. With technical impediments being overcome, the political challenges of ballistic missile defense began to increase.

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<sup>8</sup> McNamara cited in Adams, "The Anti-Ballistic Missile," 166.

<sup>9</sup> James Trainor, "Nike-X Fate Keyed to DoD Study," Missiles and Rockets, 18 May 1964, p. 14.

By 1967 three developments led to yet another review of the feasibility and desirability of deploying a BMD system. First, improvements in long-range interceptor technology dramatically altered the conditions under which a BMD system could operate. The newest technology greatly improved the likelihood of intercepting ballistic missiles outside of the Earth's atmosphere, thus thwarting decoys or penetration aids which interfered primarily with lower altitude interceptors. Additionally, the greater distance would reduce the number of anti-missile missiles necessary to provide a defense, allow for a greater area of coverage, and reduce the overall cost of a system. The problems associated with fallout resulting from low altitude intercepts became less significant, and the overall program was considerably more palatable.<sup>10</sup>

Second, beginning in October 1964, the People's Republic of China had conducted a series of nuclear tests, demonstrating its increasingly advanced technical abilities. By 1967, the Chinese were testing short-range missiles, and U.S. leaders were wary that Chinese ICBM capabilities were estimated to be only seven or eight years away. Supporters of missile defense emphasized the utility of a system which could address the limited Chinese missile capability, or even the emergence of other, small nuclear powers. It was unclear to policy makers how the MAD strategy, which appeared to be successful in deterring the Soviets, would affect the Chinese, and an ability to minimize or prevent damage from a small nuclear strike was appealing.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> J. I. Coffey, "The Anti-Ballistic Missile Debate," Foreign Affairs 45, no. 3 (April 1967): 403-404.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 404.



Third, while the United States continued to conduct research, it appeared that the Soviets had proceeded to deploy one or more BMD systems. The inability to obtain accurate intelligence, a problem that had plagued the United States throughout the Soviet nuclear development program, continued to force policy makers to rely on speculation, and the extent of Soviet defenses remained largely unknown. Some sources indicated that only a limited BMD system existed, protecting Moscow, while others suggested the existence of a much larger, nationwide system.<sup>12</sup> In either case, Soviet deployment had, at a minimum, a psychological impact on U.S. leaders.

### **3. The Sentinel Program**

As a result of these developments, on 18 September 1967 Secretary of Defense McNamara announced the decision by the Johnson administration to deploy a BMD system. The Sentinel program, based largely on Nike-X components and technology, was designed to be a seventeen-site defensive shield of U.S. urban-industrial areas. It was to be a "thin" BMD system, deployed to address only a limited nuclear threat, primarily that posed by the People's Republic of China, but also to protect against an accidental or unauthorized Soviet launch.<sup>13</sup> Following this announcement, the Johnson administration made several attempts to reassure the Soviet Union that the Sentinel system was in no way a threat to Soviet security and should not alter the security environment. The decision to deploy sparked intense debate in scientific, military, and political communities and represented the culmination of over a decade of increasing controversy.

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<sup>12</sup> Baucom, 30.

<sup>13</sup> Ballistic Missile Defense: Evolution and Current Issues, 17.

Opposition to the Sentinel BMD system came from those who viewed deploying any variety of a national missile defense as a greater danger to national security than not deploying a system. Even though Sentinel was initially planned as a “thin” system, to operate against a limited threat, critics believed that as Chinese technology advanced and the size of their arsenal increased, the U.S. missile defense would need substantial upgrades and expansion. Those of this opinion believed that Sentinel would ultimately have a direct impact on Soviet offensive missile capability, regardless of what the Johnson administration intended. Ironically, supporters of the Sentinel BMD system also believed that the “thin” anti-missile system would need to be expanded to meet a growing threat from China, and saw this as a positive, not negative result. Discussion on the Sentinel system, always described by government officials as defense against a Chinese threat, usually returned to the impact the system would have on Soviet forces.

The Johnson administration hoped that the deployment of this system would serve as a deterrent to China, and convince that government that the development of long-range ballistic missiles would serve no strategic purpose. With a defensive system already in place, U.S. officials concluded that China would review its policy and see the futility of continuing with a costly missile development program. For BMD skeptics, it was questionable whether the Chinese government would see things quite the same way. Rather than pursue ICBMs, it was possible that research in China would shift to delivery systems that would simply avoid the U.S. BMD system, designed to meet the majority of missiles beyond the Earth’s atmosphere. For example, the development of submarine-launched missiles, which could approach the coastline of the United States prior to launch

could circumvent the Sentinel system.<sup>14</sup> Such a shift would merely change the nature of the threat, not eliminate it.

While some argued that any defense that saves lives should be implemented, critics disagreed. The system would be extremely expensive, its effectiveness could never truly be tested until a nuclear attack occurred, and its capabilities would forever be challenged by technological advances. Critics argued that all a BMD system could do was to force an enemy to invest a greater amount of resources to improve or expand its offensive capability. As one Department of Defense expert remarked, "any defensive system can really do no more than to raise the entrance price which an attacker must pay in order to destroy a target."<sup>15</sup> Critics believed that an arms race would be the inevitable result of the Sentinel deployment, as adversaries sought to overcome U.S. defenses, and any future hopes for arms control initiatives would be impossible.

The timing of Secretary of Defense McNamara's announcement also led critics to suggest that the Sentinel missile defense had nothing to do with national security, and was, instead politically motivated. News of Soviet missile defenses protecting the people of Moscow, the initial domestic problems resulting from increased involvement in Vietnam, and the upcoming presidential election might have had a significant influence on President Johnson's decision.<sup>16</sup> In fact, in 1966, one unnamed official in the Johnson administration is reported to have stated that the President "could be crucified politically...for sitting on

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<sup>14</sup> Coffey, 407.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Herzfeld, "BMD and National Security," *Survival* 31, no. 1 (March 1966): 74.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Rothstein, "The ABM, Proliferation and International Stability," *Foreign Affairs* 46, no. 3 (April 1968): 489-90.

his hands while the Russians provide a defense for their people.”<sup>17</sup> Critics warned that the decision had been made by an administration pressured to respond to domestic concerns, without examining the full range of strategic ramifications.

BMD advocates expressed concerns over additional countries obtaining nuclear and ICBM capabilities, or even the possibility of an anonymous attack being launched on the United States. In either case, the current U.S. deterrence policy would have been inadequate for preventing an attack, while a missile defense might have been the only practical method of preventing or reducing damage to U.S. territory. An active defense capable of intercepting an accidental or unauthorized launch from the Soviet Union also would have two positive effects: it would limit damage; and would reduce the likelihood of escalation by leaders who might feel obligated to respond in kind. In this respect, BMD was defended as a means to increase international stability.

If deterrence ever failed, and the United States found itself under attack, however, advocates of BMD emphasized that the number of lives saved would, in itself, justify the deployment of a missile defense. One figure offered by Secretary of Defense McNamara in 1968 suggested that in one war-time scenario, one hundred and twenty million American fatalities were possible without BMD. A BMD system operating against a similar attack would reduce casualties to between ten and forty million. Supporters concluded that:

such a defense might change the postwar situation from one in which over half the U.S. population was gone, and recovery in any time period would be problematical, to one in which perhaps 90 percent survived and

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<sup>17</sup> Coffey, 408.

economic recovery might be achieved within five to ten years. This difference would be enormous.<sup>18</sup>

While even this number of fatalities was far greater than anyone would desire, the statement reflects the greater acceptance of a warfighting strategy by BMD supporters.

Another argument was founded on the life-saving principal, rather than the goal of strengthening deterrence. A robust missile defense system situated in defense of urban population centers would force the Soviets to alter their attack strategy in one of two ways. First, they might choose to concentrate a greater portion of their offensive forces on the larger cities, in an attempt to overwhelm missile defenses and ensure destruction of their targets. This decision would reduce the number of medium and smaller cities to face a nuclear attack. A second Soviet option would be to retarget offensive missiles on cities not covered by a missile defense system, to inflict more widespread damage.<sup>19</sup> In either case, according to those who wished to deploy BMD, the net result would be millions of lives saved, even if the systems in place failed to perform effectively. Critics replied that "an ABM system guarantees decreased casualties *only* if both sides refrain from simultaneously increasing their offensive capabilities."<sup>20</sup>

European reaction to the Sentinel program was remarkably muted. One possible reason was the inability to determine the extent of Soviet missile defenses. Allies may have believed that the U.S. announcement was justified in response to the Soviet BMD development. A more plausible alternative, however, relates to The Future Tasks of the Alliance, a NATO report commonly referred to as the Harmel Report. This study was

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<sup>18</sup> D. G. Brennan, "The Case For Missile Defense," Foreign Affairs 47, no. 3 (April 1969): 434.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

<sup>20</sup> Rothstein, 499.

released on 14 December 1967, only months after the Sentinel announcement, and reaffirmed NATO's dual-track approach of defense and détente. Efforts by the Johnson administration to reassure the Soviets, and its insistence of the limited nature of the missile defense, was seemingly compatible with the Harmel Report's conclusions.

#### **4. Safeguard**

By 1969 the Sentinel program came under the scrutiny of President Nixon, who shifted the emphasis of the program. Rather than concentrate on the protection of cities and the U.S. population, the BMD system, now bearing the name Safeguard, would defend the retaliatory strike capability of the United States. The Safeguard system was designed to consist of 12 BMD sites, developed in a series of stages, and the first stage would provide a defense for two missile bases: one at Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota, and the other at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana. Follow-on stages would be contingent on the actions and military developments of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.<sup>21</sup>

Improving relations with the Soviet Union and China in following years would cut short the Safeguard plan, and would dramatically alter the approach to BMD taken throughout the 1960s. The years between 1945 and 1972, however, were valuable to the country in two ways. First, the investment in the scientific community and the exponential improvement in U.S. missile technology assured the United States that it would remain in the forefront of a global missile competition. Second, the period enabled leaders to consider some of the vital strategic concerns associated with the nuclear age, the spread of

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<sup>21</sup> Baucom, 58.

intercontinental missile capabilities, and missile defense issues. These same issues have reemerged repeatedly in the years since.

### **C. THE ABM TREATY: 1972-1983**

The 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty was negotiated to establish more favorable conditions for additional reductions in strategic offensive weapons. The treaty was based on the premise that a limitation of anti-ballistic missile defenses would ensure the deterrent capability of U.S. and Soviet nuclear arsenals. A lack of defensive measures would lessen the need for continuous offensive force expansion, and would maintain strategic effectiveness, as visualized through MAD, even in the event of substantial offensive reductions. Conversely, the development and deployment of effective ABM systems at the time might have destabilized deterrence and led to a spiraling arms race. By guaranteeing the vulnerability of each side, the ABM Treaty ensured that MAD remained intact.

#### **1. Treaty Provisions**

The treaty achieved this mutual vulnerability by prohibiting the deployment of a nationwide ABM system through a limitation on fixed site, land-based systems designed to counter strategic ballistic missiles in flight trajectory. Initial agreements limited each signatory to 100 launchers with no more than 100 interceptor missiles at two sites: an area containing an ICBM launch site and the nation's capital.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, on 3 July 1974, a Protocol to the Treaty was signed by both nations reducing this provision to the deployment of only one ABM site per nation. The Soviet Union chose to leave its

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<sup>22</sup> Department of State, "Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, " 1972, Article III.

Moscow defense system operational, while the United States chose to maintain its ABM system in defense of an ICBM silo launcher deployment area in Grand Forks, North Dakota. In October 1975, the Grand Forks defensive site became operational, but was disestablished only four months later,<sup>23</sup> based on the cost of maintaining the system, and the belief that the diversity of the U.S. nuclear arsenal guaranteed that a significant portion would survive a first strike, without BMD, while maintaining the ability to respond.<sup>24</sup>

A second important aspect of the ABM Treaty was the restriction on providing “a base for such a defense.”<sup>25</sup> The limitation on the establishment of a *base* was intended to prevent each nation from actively pursuing a national defense ABM system capable of rapid deployment. Such a rapid deployment could facilitate a “breakout” from the treaty with severe implications for the strategic balance, and several guidelines were included to inhibit this potential problem. A ban was placed on deployment, development, and testing of space-based, sea-based, and mobile land-based ABM systems; the deployment of early warning radars was limited to the periphery of each nation, facing outward; and restrictions were placed on testing non-ABM systems “in an ABM mode” or giving non-ABM systems “capabilities to counter strategic ballistic missiles or their elements in flight trajectory.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ballistic Missile Defense: Evolution and Current Issues, 18.

<sup>24</sup> Sherwood Boehlert, “Sub-Committee on the Proliferation of Military Technology,” NATO, Scientific and Technical Committee (October 1975), 4.

<sup>25</sup> “Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty,” Article I.

<sup>26</sup> Jack Mendelsohn and John Rhineland, “Shooting Down the ABM Treaty,” Arms Control Today 24, no. 7 (September 1994): 8.



## 2. Weaknesses of the ABM Treaty

The ABM Treaty was established to deal with the strategic ballistic missile scenario and was *not* intended to interfere with the development, testing, or deployment of Theater Missile Defense (TMD) systems designed to counter a short-range ballistic missile threat. The exceptions mentioned, of course, prevent the testing of a TMD system *in an ABM mode* or the development of TMD *capabilities* that would credibly provide an interceptor with the ability to act against a strategic ballistic missile. One of the greatest criticisms of the treaty, however, rests in its failure to differentiate formally between ABM and TMD systems.

This distinction was never agreed upon among Americans and Soviets, but the U.S. Senate and executive branch shared an informal agreement on what technical aspects differentiated an ABM system from a TMD system. Named after its originator, John S. Foster, Jr., Director of Defense Research and Engineering, the "Foster Box" attempted to establish a standard which could be applied to delineate between ABM and TMD systems. The "box" applied to the range of testing development that was to be submitted for defense department review for treaty compliance. Any U.S. testing of anti-missile systems conducted against targets traveling above an altitude of forty kilometers or traveling between two and four km per second would be submitted for review on an individual case- by- case basis. Tests conducted on targets traveling below forty kilometers or traveling at velocities less than two km per second were deemed to be treaty-compliant, while testing of systems against targets exceeding five km per second was outside of

Treaty limits, as it indicated strategic missile speeds.<sup>27</sup> These guidelines were unilaterally adhered to for years, but were never officially incorporated into the treaty or negotiated with the Soviets.

### 3. European Approval

Western European governments appeared comfortable with the 1972 ABM Treaty and its 1974 Protocol. The stability in East-West relations generated by the treaty was viewed as a strong platform to further détente. Additionally, three factors contributed to European approval of the ABM Treaty. First, the independent strategic nuclear arsenals of Great Britain and France were secured by the limits on BMD employment. Second, Article IX of the ABM Treaty prohibited the transfer of anti-ballistic missile technology to third countries, but allowed the continuing transfer of offensive weapons technology. Third, the very nature of the treaty left the United States as vulnerable to ballistic missile attacks as its European allies.<sup>28</sup> Europeans viewed the ABM Treaty as a positive contribution to NATO security and arms control, and these sentiments remained consistent over the next two decades.

The period following the signing of the ABM Treaty was one of significant decline in the level of resources dedicated to BMD research. The program operated within treaty limits, and continued to seek advances in missile guidance, optical sensors, and data processing technology. A number of alternative weapon systems were also studied, including directed energy weapons, spaced-based lasers, high-powered chemical lasers,

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>28</sup> David Yost, "Ballistic Missile Defense and the Atlantic Alliance," *International Security* 7, no. 2 (Fall 1982): 146.

and particle beams.<sup>29</sup> Until 1983, there were no plans to construct a deployable system, making President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative that much more provocative.

#### **D. THE STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE: 1983-1990**

President Ronald Reagan arrived in Washington intent on rebuilding the military might of the United States and handling the Soviet Union in a very different way than the United States had in the previous decade. Rather than extending the conditions of cooperation and détente that had typified the 1970s, President Reagan viewed the Soviet Union as an unalterable threat to the United States and launched what could be called a moral crusade against the "Evil Empire." In addition to the escalation and improvements to be made in the U.S. military, he challenged MAD, one of the foundations of U.S. strategic policy, as a morally deficient solution to the defense of the American people and U.S. national security interests. Relying on the ability to avenge the death of millions of Americans by guaranteeing an equally devastating retaliatory strike on the Soviet Union was, in Reagan's eyes, an unacceptable strategy.

##### **1. Origins of the Strategic Defense Initiative**

On 23 March 1983, President Reagan announced a dramatic change in U.S. policy. Without prior discussion with the Soviets, U.S. allies, or even the U.S. defense bureaucracy, he declared that the United States would begin "a comprehensive and intensive effort to define a long-term research and development program to begin to achieve our ultimate goal of eliminating the threat posed by strategic nuclear missiles."<sup>30</sup> The United States policy would shift from deterrence to defense, and he challenged the

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<sup>29</sup> Ballistic Missile Defense: Evolution and Current Issues, 19.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 19.

U.S. scientific community to undo what it had done forty years before, and render nuclear weapons “impotent and obsolete.”<sup>31</sup>

Such a dramatic departure from the status quo reopened the debate on deterrence, mutual vulnerability, the morality of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and the ABM Treaty. One initial outcome of the president’s announcement was to effectively silence the growing “nuclear freeze” movement in the United States. For those advocates, criticism of a policy which sought to make nuclear weapons obsolete was increasingly difficult. Other issues were not to be as easily solved.

Within a year, the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization (SDIO) had been created by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger to coordinate the consolidated missile defense research program as directed by the president. The SDIO was chartered to not develop or deploy a specific BMD system, but to “research and develop a comprehensive set of technologies supporting concepts of BMD.”<sup>32</sup> The Reagan administration initially stressed its intention to remain fully compliant with the ABM Treaty, and by 1985 the SDI program had become the Pentagon’s largest research and development program.<sup>33</sup>

The SDI research program was initially developed with the protection of urban centers and population defense in mind. President Reagan’s desire to “save lives” rather than “avenge them”<sup>34</sup> was the driving moral force behind his 1983 speech. By 1985,

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<sup>31</sup> Ronald Reagan, cited in McGeorge Bundy, George F. Kennan, Robert S. McNamara, Gerard Smith, “The President’s Choice: Star Wars or Arms Control,” Foreign Affairs 63, no. 2 (April 1984): 265.

<sup>32</sup> Ballistic Missile Defense: Evolution and Current Issues, 24.

<sup>33</sup> Boehlert, 4.

<sup>34</sup> William Durch, The ABM Treaty and Western Security (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing, 1988), 12.

however, the emphasis on life-saving had diminished and was now identified only as a long-term goal of the program. In its place, the SDI would be designed to enhance the U.S. deterrent policy, whereas eliminating the nuclear missile threat was now the *ultimate* goal. To achieve this, research would proceed into the early 1990s, at which time U.S. leaders would have the technical foundation available to decide whether or not to proceed with the development of an actual system. The program would also provide a capability to develop quickly a BMD system in the event of a Soviet violation of the ABM Treaty.<sup>35</sup>

A 1985 Department of Defense Report to Congress discussed how the SDI program would comply with the ABM Treaty. According to this report:

the ABM Treaty prohibits the development, testing, and deployment of ABM components that are space-based, air-based, or mobile land-based.... That agreement does permit research short of field testing of a prototype ABM system or component. This is the type of research that will be conducted under the SDI program.<sup>36</sup>

The need to proceed beyond limits established by the treaty to advance research soon developed, however, and the Reagan administration attempted to apply a new, *broad* interpretation to the ABM Treaty which would enable testing to continue.

## 2. The SDI Challenge to the ABM Treaty

Part of the scheduled SDI program entailed the testing of specific hardware which would provide much-needed technical information. One such demonstration was described as an *advanced boost-phase detection and tracking system*. While the ABM Treaty clearly prohibited the development or testing of "space-based" ABM *components*,

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<sup>35</sup> Ballistic Missile Defense: Evolution and Current Issues, 25.

<sup>36</sup> John A. Jungerman, The Strategic Defense Initiative: A Primer and Critique, (La Jolla: University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, 1988), 11.

the Reagan administration claimed that the *detection and tracking system* was not comprehensive enough to be identified as a *component* and field-testing was, therefore, allowable.<sup>37</sup> The nature of this debate over the interpretation of the ABM Treaty was one of the prime points of contention throughout the period of SDI research.

Critics also argued that the development of SDI-related technology provided the United States with an offensive capability that threatened to upset the strategic balance. A BMD system that provided the level of defense which President Reagan envisioned would significantly enhance the first-strike capability of the United States. Opponents argued that the effectiveness of an SDI system would best be realized if the opponent's retaliatory strength had been diminished by a U.S. first strike.<sup>38</sup> Arguments such as these fueled the debate over the defensive nature of the SDI research.

### **3. General European Reactions to SDI**

The Strategic Defense Initiative came as a great surprise to Europe. After the initial shock had worn off, and with President Reagan's election to a second term, Europeans realized that the SDI was a political reality, at least for the next four years. Between 1984 and 1986, Europe's primary concerns about the SDI spawned a great deal of debate, and the issues were deeply connected to the decade-old support for the ABM Treaty. David Yost summarizes the core European anxieties in four points: 1.) BMD will lead to destabilization of East-West security; 2.) arms control and détente will suffer; 3.) alliance cohesion will diminish as U.S. security guarantees to Europe lose credibility

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<sup>37</sup> McGeorge Bundy, et. al., 274.

<sup>38</sup> Jungerman, 24.

with the creation of a "Fortress America"; and 4.) the stature of the British and French deterrent forces will be damaged.<sup>39</sup>

The fear of East-West destabilization was based largely on the assumption that abandoning mutual vulnerability and placing greater emphasis on defenses would increase the danger of nuclear war, and lead to a new arms race. As U.S. and Soviet efforts to improve BMD capabilities developed, it was argued that the defensive arms race would lead to fears of a preemptive strike by the other side, and increase the likelihood of an accidental launch. The defensive arms race would, in turn, lead to an increase in *offensive* capabilities as both sides attempted to overwhelm the opponent by increasing the number of missiles, decoys, and penetration aids.<sup>40</sup> The end result of this would be increased tension between the superpowers, with Europe caught in the middle.

European supporters of the ABM Treaty believed that Reagan's proposal placed in jeopardy the agreement between the two superpowers. For many, the ABM Treaty was the cornerstone of U.S. arms control initiatives (such as SALT I and SALT II), and if President Reagan's SDI damaged the credibility of the treaty then arms control efforts would suffer as well. It was also feared that the SDI's dramatic change of course might threaten the peaceful coexistence which had marked the better part of the 1970s. For Europeans, America's Strategic Defense Initiative was an alternative approach with little appeal.

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<sup>39</sup> Yost, "European Anxieties about Ballistic Missile Defense," Washington Quarterly 7, no. 4 (Fall 1984): 117.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

Perhaps the most critical European concern about U.S. BMD research in the 1980s was the impact it would have on U.S. security guarantees to Europe. A worst-case scenario envisioned the United States withdrawing from European affairs, safe under a missile-proof BMD shield. Less threatening than a "Fortress America" was the possibility of a United States more willing to escalate East-West conflict to the nuclear level, if faced with Soviet aggression, with the knowledge that U.S. territory could be defended against Soviet missiles. For European NATO members, who for obvious reasons would prefer to keep regional conflict on the conventional level, the loss of commitment by the United States would be devastating. The fear of decoupling was heightened by the exorbitant estimated cost of SDI research, and the negative impact it would have on U.S. conventional forces in Europe.<sup>41</sup> Europeans who lauded the ABM Treaty for securing equal vulnerability for all members of the Atlantic Alliance saw the Strategic Defense Initiative as an American attempt to alter that situation.

The effect of the SDI on Europe's independent nuclear arsenals is examined more closely below in chapters III and IV, but any degradation of their effectiveness or credibility would affect all NATO members. Improved Soviet BMD in response to U.S. development would force Great Britain and France to spend more to guarantee the effectiveness of their arsenals. Defense budgets would need to be reconsidered, and Alliance partners were concerned that conventional support would suffer. Again, an

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<sup>41</sup> Trevor Taylor, "Europe and the SDI," Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies 130, no. 1 (March 1985): 42.



unfavorable balance of conventional NATO forces would increase the probability of nuclear weapons use in the event of Soviet or Warsaw Pact aggression.<sup>42</sup>

The technical feasibility of developing an effective missile defense was challenged throughout the lifetime of the SDI program. Many found the goal of making nuclear weapons "obsolete" to be sheer fantasy, and were convinced that the United States would never be willing to move in that direction, while relying solely on a defensive shield to prevent missile attacks. Nevertheless, President Reagan's approach to BMD represented a significant challenge to the status quo. The broad scope of his program, and the questions it raised about the ABM Treaty demonstrated the enduring debate about strategic defense, a debate which would not be solved even with the end of the Cold War.

## **E. POST-COLD WAR U.S. BMD EFFORTS: 1990 TO THE PRESENT**

### **1. President Bush and GPALS**

Upon his arrival in office in 1989, President Bush initiated a complete National Security Review. One portion of that review consisted of an independent examination of the SDI program, and upon completion in 1990 the shape of the U.S. BMD program began to change once again. The review endorsed the "Brilliant Pebbles" space-based interceptor as a replacement for previous systems. While the old system was comprised of a collection of interceptors stored collectively in one large carrier vehicle, the "Brilliant Pebbles" concept was to develop a:

constellation of thousands of individual interceptors, each with its own surveillance capability and enough computing power to operate autonomously, if necessary, within its field of vision.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Yost, "European Anxieties about Ballistic Missile Defense," 126.

<sup>43</sup> Ballistic Missile Defense: Evolution and Current Issues, 28.

The review recommended that the new type of interceptor should be deployed during SDI's initial phase.

By January 1991, however, the scope of SDI had diminished. During his State of the Union message, President Bush outlined his new vision of BMD. Rather than defending against a full-scale Soviet missile strike as President Reagan had envisioned with SDI, Bush emphasized a U.S. defense against limited attacks, from a variety of sources. Of specific concern was the growing awareness of the proliferation of WMD and ballistic missile technology in the Third World, and secondarily, the accidental or unauthorized launch of Russian or Chinese missiles.<sup>44</sup> Saddam Hussein's use of Scud missiles during the Gulf War and the instability which accompanied the dissolution of the Soviet Union each demonstrated the viability of this new focus.

The newly designed Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS) had three objectives: protection of U.S. territory, defense of deployed U.S. forces, and the protection of allied nations. To accomplish this, the system would be comprised of three components to be implemented incrementally. First, land-based systems would be deployed to meet a theater ballistic missile threat, primarily to support U.S. and allied forces, as well as overseas allies. Second, the threat to the United States would be met with interceptors deployed on U.S. territory, with early warning provided by space-based sensors. Third, the "Brilliant Pebbles" program would deploy space-based interceptors to address both strategic and theater missiles.<sup>45</sup> While emphasizing the more limited goals,

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<sup>44</sup> Charles L. Glaser, "Nuclear Policy Without an Adversary," International Security 16, no. 4 (Spring 1992): 62.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

however, President Bush did not rule out the possibility of increasing the scope of the U.S. BMD program to meet broader objectives.

In response to this initiative, Congress passed the 1991 Missile Defense Act to provide funding for the program. Congress also urged the President to begin discussions with the Russians to reexamine the possibility of modifying the ABM Treaty. The goal of these discussions was to increase “flexibility for technology development of advanced ballistic missile defenses” and to clarify the distinction between TMD and strategic defenses.<sup>46</sup>

## **2. President Clinton and a Redefined BMD Strategy**

The election of President Clinton in 1992 led to a dramatic departure from the direction in which missile defense programs had been proceeding in the previous two administrations. Although the Reagan and Bush administrations embraced the broad interpretation of the ABM Treaty, President Clinton adhered to the more narrow, or restrictive, interpretation. While recognizing the need for TMD to protect forward-deployed troops, airfields, and bases, the administration emphasized the importance of the ABM Treaty as the “bedrock of strategic stability” and the “cornerstone” of U.S.-Russian relations.<sup>47</sup> GPALS was eliminated as an administration objective, and a more fiscally restrained TMD program was implemented.

President Clinton’s adherence to the ABM Treaty, coupled with his desire to provide the military with effective TMD, led the administration, in November 1993, to

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<sup>46</sup> Guy Roberts, “An Elegant Irrelevance: The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in the New World Disorder,” *Strategic Review*, 23, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 25.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Joseph and Keith Payne, “Ballistic Missile Defense: The Need for a National Debate,” *Strategic Forum* no. 37 (July 1995), 1.

submit a proposal to the Standing Consultative Commission (SCC) in Geneva. The SCC, as established in Article XIII of the ABM Treaty, was designed to, among other things, “consider questions concerned with the obligations assumed and related situations which may be considered ambiguous,” and “consider...proposals for amendments in accordance with the provisions of this treaty.” President Clinton’s proposal was intended to clarify the distinction between TMD and strategic defenses to permit development, testing, and deployment of TMD systems, while remaining within the legal boundaries of the treaty; this proposal was similar in some respects to the one mandated in the 1991 Missile Defense Act.

### **3. ABM Treaty Negotiations**

Specifically, the President’s proposal recommended that the demarcation line be established as follows: missile interceptors developed and tested to engage missiles with a range of 3,500 km or less, or missiles traveling less than 5 km per second would be determined to be TMD. Any testing conducted on missiles above the 3,500 km range or above 5 km per second would be deemed an ABM system, and therefore, a violation of the ABM Treaty. The justification of the administration for the demarcation at 5 km per second was the need to effectively counter medium range missiles such as the Chinese CSS-2, which has a 3,000 km range and a 5 km per second reentry velocity.<sup>48</sup> These figures fall short of the vast majority of strategic ICBMs today, which possess a 10,000 km range and a reentry speed of 7 km per second.

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<sup>48</sup> Lisbeth Gronlund, George Lewis, Theodore Postol, and David Wright, “Highly Capable Theater Missile Defenses and the ABM Treaty,” Arms Control Today 24, no. 3 (April 1994): 4.

The immediate reaction by arms control advocates and treaty supporters was outrage at a Clinton proposal which they believed would destroy the intended purpose of the ABM Treaty, even while working to remain legally within its boundaries. The primary argument against the demarcation line is that it would allow the development and deployment of any number of BMD systems, by both sides, provided that they were never tested above 5 km per second. That is not to say that the systems would be incapable of effectively operating above the demarcation line, only that the ability to do so had never been *demonstrated*.

The core intention of the treaty, as discussed earlier, was to limit the development and deployment of systems in a NMD capacity with the capability to counteract a strategic missile. The limit remains at one site with one hundred launchers and missiles, as amended by the 1974 Treaty Protocol. Secondly, the risk of "breakout" by either side through rapid deployment of large numbers of defensive systems is reduced through the prohibition on developing a base for an extensive deployment of NMD. Arms control advocates suggested that, in both cases, the Clinton proposal would violate the treaty's intent. A system that was designed to handle confidently a threat against a missile traveling at 5 km per second might have a significant capability against a target traveling at 7 km per second. In fact, the Russian strategic inventory still contains a number of SS-18 SLBMs, with an estimated reentry velocity of 6.5 km per second, leaving a margin of 1.5 km per second as the only limitation between *demonstrated* and *actual* strategic capabilities.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Mendelsohn and Rhineland, 9.

Such a shift in treaty interpretation would have been a dramatic departure from the previous standards established and voluntarily followed with the "Foster Box."

Had the Russians accepted this proposal as it was presented, the result would have enabled the deployment of systems with potential strategic capabilities, under the name of TMD. Furthermore, it would have legitimized the future development and deployment of more technologically advanced systems with far greater capabilities against strategic targets, provided they were never tested against missiles with speeds greater than 5 km per second. Debate raged over whether this would constitute a "base" for a NMD system, and the Clinton administration argued that the *testing* was the crucial factor in the distinction between ABM and TMD. As Robert Bell, Special Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control, at the National Security Council said:

The theory here was quite simple. No rational military organization is going to deploy as an ABM defense, at the cost of billions of dollars, a system that has not been tested to show that it can be an ABM.<sup>50</sup>

While the logic of this statement is reasonable, the argument remained that the intent of the treaty was still being violated. In any case, a few months later, Russian negotiators accepted the proposal, but only under certain additional conditions.

The Russian counter-proposal at the SCC sought to limit the velocity of the interceptor, as well, to 3 km per second, indicating that an interceptor with a higher capability would be classified as an ABM. The Russian position was interesting, in that it allowed the Army's Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) program, the highest priority of the administration's entire BMD plan, to proceed with its development and

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Bell, "Ballistic Missile Defense: An Administrative Perspective," Strategic Forum no. 36 (July 1995), 3.

testing. THAAD's design gives it the ability to counter medium-range missiles, such as the Chinese CSS-2, and reaches a maximum intercept velocity of 2.7 km per second.<sup>51</sup> It was with THAAD in mind that the Clinton administration's initial proposal had been devised.

The Russian plan was initially rejected, but then became the source of a heated controversy. While the State Department and Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) recommended approval, and the Army backed the limits suggested, congressional objections mounted, with Navy and Air Force support. Critics of the Russian proposal were unwilling to trade an agreement which allowed THAAD testing for the future development of more advanced TMD systems. Both Air Force and Navy systems with faster intercept velocities were already in conceptual stages, and opposition to the cancellation of these programs was tremendous.

In June 1994 the administration offered yet another compromise proposal to the Russians. Limits on mobile ground-based systems would be capped at a 3 km per second interceptor speed, but air-based and sea-based TMD systems would not be covered by the same restrictions. Instead, a more permissive guideline would be worked out with higher interceptor velocity limits.<sup>52</sup> In effect, the administration was attempting to make future Navy and Air Force TMD systems treaty-compliant in an attempt to satisfy the services and Congress, while continuing to negotiate with the Russians.

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<sup>51</sup> Richard Falkenrath, "Theatre Missile Defence and the ABM Treaty," *Survival* 36, no. 4 (Winter 1994-95): 146.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

#### 4. Congressional Opposition

Congressional distaste for the negotiations began to increase, and by January of 1995 the SCC talks had failed to “clarify” the demarcation line between TMD and ABM systems. In an effort to comply with the increasing pressure of the Republican Congress, President Clinton announced that the THAAD system was, in fact, a treaty-compliant TMD system, and that testing would begin as soon as possible. At the same time, however, he continued to push for U.S.-Russian concurrence on treaty modifications through the SCC, which had failed to achieve anything in well over a year of negotiations.

Throughout February and March 1995, efforts by Republican senators and representatives became more pronounced, and Congress began to take a much more active role in the BMD issue. Their opposition to the administration’s negotiations was demonstrated in a letter sent by Republican leaders to the President. On March 8, 1995, this letter, which originated in Senator Dole’s office, questioned the “continued relevance of the ABM Treaty,” and indicated that “the cornerstone of U.S. security policy should not be a Cold War era treaty....” Moreover, the letter reaffirmed the Senate’s stance that self-imposed limitations should not be “codified” since TMD is not limited at all by the ABM Treaty.<sup>53</sup> The limitations being negotiated, according to the senators, placed severe restrictions on the ability to provide the best possible defense for American soldiers.

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<sup>53</sup> “Documentation,” *Comparative Strategy* 14, no. 3 (July-September 1995): 322.



This interpretation had been expressed legislatively in a bill (H.R. 7) introduced in January 1995. In Sec. 202, the Sense of Congress on TMD and the ABM Treaty was described as follows:

The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty was not intended to, and does not, apply to or limit research, development, testing, or deployment of missile defense systems, system upgrades, or system components that are designed to counter modern theater ballistic missiles, regardless of the capabilities of such missiles, unless those systems, system upgrades, or system components are tested against or have demonstrated capabilities to counter modern strategic ballistic missiles.<sup>54</sup>

This interpretation is vastly different than any previous one. Article VI of the treaty prohibits giving TMD missile systems "capabilities" to counter strategic missiles and testing them "in an ABM mode." The declaration in H.R. 7 emphasizes the testing criteria, while eliminating the "capabilities" clause.

Further resistance to the Clinton administration's policies by Senate Republicans was presented legislatively with the introduction of the bill (S. 383) on 10 February 1995, which was intended to establish policy on the deployment of ABM and TMD systems. If passed, the bill would have required that both TMD and ABM systems be deployed at the earliest possible date to defend elements of the Armed Forces and the territory of the United States. No reference to the ABM Treaty or limitations on ABM system is mentioned. An amendment in April 1995, entitled the Theater Missile Defense Act of 1995, did, however, clarify the Senate position on a TMD/ABM demarcation line: the system would be classified TMD if it was not tested against a target with a range of 3,500 km or more, or a velocity of 5 km per second or more.<sup>55</sup> This return to the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 328.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 324.

administration's initial proposal of November 1993 again suggested the Republicans' refusal to sacrifice development of technologically advanced systems, and their disapproval of President Clinton's position on the interpretation of the ABM Treaty.

Still resisting this pressure, President Clinton continued in his effort to reach an understanding on the interpretation of the treaty. On 10 May 1995, he and President Yeltsin issued a joint statement on the missile threat as a basis for further discussion on an eventual solution to the demarcation line disagreement. The statement suggested that 1.) TMD deployments should not pose a threat to strategic opposition, 2.) they should not be tested against strategic systems, and 3.) the scale of deployment, in number and geographic scope, should be consistent with identified threats.<sup>56</sup> While non-binding and largely symbolic, the statement signified the administration's continued adherence to the principles behind the treaty. Negotiations would continue.

U.S. negotiators presented a new proposal on 22 June 1995, which made significant concessions to Russian concerns. First, the proposal recommended the definition of a TMD system as an interceptor with a velocity of 3 km or less operating against a target with a range of 3,500 km or less, or traveling 5 km per second or less. Second, interceptors traveling above 3 km would be subject to review by the other side. Finally, a series of confidence-building measures, including observers at TMD test sites, would be developed. Nonetheless, the Russians rejected this latest proposal, and protested that the THAAD testing already underway was a direct violation of the ABM Treaty.

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<sup>56</sup> Joint Statement of President Clinton and President Yeltsin on 10 May 1995.

Senate reaction to this latest proposal was even more intense, as demonstrated in June's FY 96 defense authorization bill. The bill called for a multi-site NMD deployment by 2003, and a TMD deployment at the earliest possible date. Additionally, it called for a review of the "continuing value and validity" of the ABM Treaty, and the prohibition of further attempts by the administration to place limits on BMD systems or to continue negotiations in the SCC.<sup>57</sup> Heated opposition by Senate Democrats and the Administration led to compromise language which modified the NMD plan to be "developed for deployment" by 2003, and sanctioned negotiations in the SCC to legally deploy this system. This new version was reviewed in September.

By November 1995, a draft framework on a demarcation between ABM and TMD systems was prepared, in response to May's joint statement. The previous U.S. proposal of a 3,500 km range and 5 km per second target, with interceptor speed less than 3 km per second was incorporated into this framework, along with a series of confidence-building measures designed to provide continuing security guarantees to both sides that strategic arsenals remained unthreatened. To date, the SCC has been unable to achieve consensus on this framework, and after thirty-one months, the demarcation question remains unsettled.<sup>58</sup>

The negative attitudes toward BMD have, for the most part, disappeared in Europe, and for the Europeans the demarcation talks are of tremendous interest. Europeans favor Clinton's support for the ABM Treaty, but the outcome of the

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<sup>57</sup> Jack Mendelsohn, "ABM Treaty Remains Threatened By Continuing U.S. Push for TMD," Arms Control Today 25, no. 7 (September 1995): 33.

<sup>58</sup> Jim Mannion, "Russia Balks at Partial ABM Pact," Agence France Presse, 31 October 1996.

demarcation talks could potentially have a greater impact on their defense than that of the United States. Theater systems offer national coverage capabilities for Europe, and possibly coverage for the entire continent. The outcome of the talks in Geneva could reduce or enhance the options available to those governments considering BMD deployment. Negotiations could result in the determination that certain systems are constrained by the ABM Treaty, and therefore unavailable for technology transfer. Concern exists that U.S. political motivations might result in concessions that inhibit the defensive options of NATO partners.<sup>59</sup>

Most recently, the conflict between the Republican Senate and the Clinton administration, and their severe ideological differences, has become even more evident. On 6 February, 1996, Senator Helms introduced the Strategic Anti-Missile Revitalization and Security Act of 1996 (S. R. 1562) which, if passed, would require the complete withdrawal of the United States from the ABM Treaty. Citing both the future threat of missile attack from rogue nations, as well as the existent arsenals of Russia and China, Senator Helms indicated that the ABM Treaty had outlived its usefulness and that it was now only an obstacle to the necessary defense of the territory and citizens of the United States.<sup>60</sup> While this bill is extreme in nature, it typifies the attitude of the staunch defenders of BMD development, who see the ABM Treaty as an impediment to the security of the nation. In their view, the strategic relevance of the treaty has been overshadowed by the newly developing threat of Third World missile proliferation.

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<sup>59</sup> Correspondence with Jo Vaughan, Bradford University, 15 November 1996.

<sup>60</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Strategic Anti-Missile Revitalization and Security Act of 1996, 104th Cong., S. R. 1562, Congressional Record (6 February 1996), S 917-919.

## **5. The New Direction of BMD Research**

On 16 February 1996, Secretary of Defense William Perry outlined the direction in which the Department of Defense's Ballistic Missile Defense program is proceeding. Emphasis has been placed on the development of systems to meet short to medium range threats, taking advantage of systems currently in the BMD infrastructure, while THAAD funding for the next six years has been cut by approximately thirty five percent. NMD research has been modified to a "deployment readiness" approach which will conduct three years of NMD system development, in compliance with the ABM Treaty, *without* making a decision to deploy. If, after the three years, a decision to deploy is made, then it would be ready in an additional three years.<sup>61</sup>

This readjustment of the BMD program is consistent with administration policy. Placing emphasis on short and medium range systems underlines President Clinton's attempt to maintain positive strategic relations with the Russians and ensure U.S. efforts to remain treaty-compliant. However, this approach has been unsatisfactory both to arms control advocates, who see his program as proceeding beyond the limits of the treaty, and to those who believe his restrictions have reduced the ability of the United States to defend itself.

## **6. Strategic Considerations**

As American policy makers continue to debate the future of BMD, concern for the defense of troops, allies, and U.S. territory continues to supersede discussion of the strategic implications of abandoning or modifying the ABM Treaty. In an attempt to

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<sup>61</sup> Secretary of Defense William Perry Ballistic Missile Defense Program Briefing, 16 February 1996.

address the emerging North-South security threat, concern over East-West security has dwindled, even though "Russian strategic forces continue to have the ability to destroy American society."<sup>62</sup> There are still certain strategic factors to be considered, however, before rejecting this twenty-four year old international agreement.

Advocates of the ABM Treaty argue that it has been extremely effective in achieving its intended purpose. By ensuring the security of strategic offensive missiles through the limitation of defenses, it created an environment in which the arms race was slowed, and negotiations of START I and START II reductions were successfully concluded. Today, with the Duma ratification of the START II Treaty in peril, further tension over the ABM Treaty can only increase the likelihood that it will not be ratified.

Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin indicated in October 1995 that:

The START II ratification process will undoubtedly be influenced by the state of affairs concerning the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. We proceed from the need to keep the Treaty intact and strictly observe it, for cuts in strategic offensive arms are impossible to effect without that.<sup>63</sup>

Critics disagree that START II ratification should be linked to the treaty; but if the ABM Treaty was an important aspect in the reduction negotiations, then its removal or alteration must be considered during the ratification process as well.

Likewise, while further reductions in strategic missiles may not seem likely at this point in time, the future of Russia is extremely uncertain. To disrupt the current environment by departing from the ABM Treaty would virtually ensure that any future

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<sup>62</sup> John Pike, cited at the Arms Control Association News Conference held on December 8, 1993. Arms Control Today 24, no. 1 (January/February 1994): 13.

<sup>63</sup> Nikolay Setunskiy, "Chernomyrdin Interviewed By Canadian Newspaper," Itar-Tass, FBIS-SOV-95-190, October 1, 1995.

arms reductions would be impossible. A permanent freeze in arms reductions between the United States and Russia also would have a negative impact on the international nonproliferation regime. The United States would convey a mixed message: while striving to prevent the emergence of new nuclear weapon states, the United States would appear to be acting to maintain its enormous nuclear arsenal.

Supporters of an aggressive NMD and TMD deployment plan make very few remarks regarding the Russian ability to develop similar systems. They point to "Russia's massive nuclear threat"<sup>64</sup> as justification for U.S. defensive build-up, and also suggest that "under their current economic circumstances the Russians are ill-equipped to compete with the United States in developing sophisticated, technologically advanced ballistic missile defenses."<sup>65</sup> Looking beyond today's economic circumstances, however, both administration efforts and congressional legislation provide authority to *both* sides to deploy or sell TMD systems, which possess theoretical strategic capabilities. Considering current Russian sales of ballistic missiles for civilian space programs, the possibility of Russian sales of TMD technology for much-needed hard currency is not implausible.

Even though Russian deployment of TMD systems on a limited scale would have a minimum effect on the U.S. strategic forces, the reliability of British and French arsenals could be put into jeopardy. By depriving Britain and France of their independent deterrents, the European security environment could face a period of destabilization and uncertainty. These concerns are addressed in greater detail in Chapters III and IV. China,

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<sup>64</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Strategic Anti-Missile Revitalization Act of 1996.

<sup>65</sup> Roberts, 21.

as well, would be affected, as its limited strategic deterrent is comprised primarily of the medium range CSS-2.<sup>66</sup>

One of the primary arguments of those pushing hardest for the deployment of missile defenses is that the size of the NMD currently envisaged would be insignificant against a Russian strategic attack of thousands of ICBMs. The NMD is being designed to handle a limited number of incoming missiles from rogue nations or the accidental or unauthorized launch from Russia, and should not, therefore, be of any concern to Russian leaders. The logic behind this may be relatively sound, but it fails to consider the Russian perspective. As the Russian armed forces continue to crumble, as seen in the Chechnya conflict, the security of Russian territory is being provided primarily through its nuclear deterrent. As the only remaining show of force, Russian planners are believed to be relying heavily on that arsenal, and *any* threat to their strategic capability is a grave concern.

The instability that currently exists in Russia does not mean that it should be ignored as a potential threat. Strategic considerations must have as great a role in decisions concerning the ABM Treaty as potential adversaries in other parts of the world. It would be wise to consider that "the menace from the South is not so pressing, or the potential threat from the East so remote, that institutions that have served so well for so long should be lightly discarded."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Spurgeon Keeney, Jr., "The Theater Missile Defense Threat to U.S. Security," Arms Control Today 24, no. 7 (September 1994): 6.

<sup>67</sup> John Pike and Marcus Corbin, "Taking Aim at the ABM Treaty: THAAD and U.S. Security," Arms Control Today 25, no. 4 (May 1995): 4.



## F. SUMMARY

After nearly forty years of debate, the military and political utility of ballistic missile defense remains difficult to determine. Technological advances and the end of the Cold War have done little to alter the fundamental questions. The present U.S. BMD debate and the 1967 debate surrounding deployment of the Sentinel BMD system, for example, have a remarkable number of similarities. Thirty years ago, the threat was an unknown, emerging Chinese adversary which might or might not be deterred by the U.S. policy of mutual deterrence. Today, fears of a burgeoning Third World threat rise from similar concerns. In both cases, BMD advocates insist that deployment would not be directed against and would not affect the Soviet (now Russian) offensive capability. Critics claim that deployment would adversely affect arms control efforts, and lead to increased tension between East and West, regardless of its intended focus.

It may be true that the advances in BMD technology would allow a defense of the United States against a missile attack by a rogue state, or an accidental or unauthorized launch by China or Russia. It is also true, however, that establishing such a defense might have more far-reaching effects than intended, including effects on the security concerns of our allies. To assess the benefits and consequences of BMD for U.S. and Alliance security remains the primary challenge to U.S. policy makers, as they work to provide the best possible defense for the United States.



### III. BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE AND GREAT BRITAIN

#### A. INTRODUCTION

Great Britain has long been the closest ally of the United States. Maintaining positive relations with Great Britain should be one of the highest priorities of the U.S. government, yet security issues in Washington often cause friction with Britain. Missile defense has been such an issue and has at times resulted in strained relations between the governments. The utility of BMD has been debated in the United States since the 1960s, but it became a serious issue for Great Britain only following President Reagan's SDI speech in 1983. Prior to that, the Sentinel program generated little discussion, and the U.S. commitment to the ABM Treaty and MAD received British support throughout the 1970s.

Assessing the implications of the SDI for British security interests took British officials considerable time and involved four long-term issues. While concern about Britain's independent nuclear arsenal surfaced early, political, economic, and technological considerations clouded the ability of the government to formulate a clear policy on the U.S. program. Additionally, concern over Alliance cohesion, conventional force posture, arms control, and relations with the Soviet Union and Europe only added to the sense of confusion. The British government was caught between a desire to enhance the transatlantic "special relationship" while promoting its own strategic and political goals. The resulting British policy regarding the Strategic Defense Initiative was ambiguous, hedged by criticism and skepticism, and offered only qualified support. Such limited

support was indicative of the tension between the two governments generated by the missile defense issue.

Since the end of the Cold War, the British government has revised its opinion on BMD and has acknowledged the need to consider missile defense as a way to stop aggressive "rogue states." Support for NATO missile defenses and systems designed to protect deployed troops is evident in the dialogue of British policy makers. The post-Cold War actions of the government, however, suggest that Great Britain and the United States still have vastly different opinions on the utility of missile defense. Faced with a shrinking defense budget, the British government has been unable to determine the role of its strategic nuclear deterrent force in the post-Cold War environment. Still firm in its belief that deterring missile threats requires political and diplomatic action, the British government has demonstrated an inconsistency between words and actions, and has been unable to define clearly a policy on BMD. As a result, the United States and Great Britain will continue to have difficulties defining common strategies and security goals. Until common policies on BMD can be developed, the "special relationship" between the two countries will suffer along with the cohesion necessary to sustain NATO's collective defense requirements.

## **B. BRITISH RESPONSE TO THE STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE**

Little public debate emerged in the year following President Reagan's speech. While the implications were being processed, the government developed a "wait and see" attitude to determine the extent of the U.S. initiative and observe how much U.S. policy

actually shifted. Also, there was little sense of urgency due to the extremely long timeframe for actual SDI deployment. If it were ever to reach the deployment stage--and many experts doubted the technology could ever be developed--it would be at least 15-20 years before BMD systems would be deployed to protect key military installations and ICBM silos. A more thorough defense, to include population centers, would not be achievable for a minimum of 20-30 years.<sup>68</sup>

### 1. Early British Reactions

The reelection of Ronald Reagan forced the government to acknowledge that U.S. political and financial commitment to the SDI would be present for at least another four years, and that a more formal British policy would be required. The first public reference to the U.S. BMD program emerged in July 1984, in a speech given by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, as she suggested some of the reservations held by the British government. While emphasizing the strength of the British-American relationship, the prime minister stated the need to "address ourselves to the new and urgent challenge of arms control in outer space. Otherwise we may see our own peaceful use of space endangered. We may see space turned into a new and terrible theatre of war."<sup>69</sup> The prime minister's concerns about an arms race expanded to the depths of space, however, were balanced by an understanding that direct opposition to the Reagan proposal would be impossible. Such a stance would put the British in the unenviable position of arguing

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<sup>68</sup> Paul Stares, "The Implications of BMD for Britain's Nuclear Deterrent," in Hans Brauch, ed., *Star Wars and European Defence* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 333.

<sup>69</sup> Margaret Thatcher, cited in Ivo Daalder, *The SDI Challenge to Europe* (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing, 1987), 12-13.

against a U.S. right to defend its citizens, and would align Great Britain with the Soviets, who sought to end U.S. SDI plans.

In November 1984, internal assessments of the implications of the SDI were conducted by the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. From these studies, the government provided Prime Minister Thatcher a list of issues which included the difficulty of maintaining U.S.-Soviet stability in a BMD-enhanced environment, the impact the program would have on developing strategic doctrine within NATO, fear that U.S. commitment to the SDI would come at the cost of conventional military commitment to European defense, and apprehension that arms control efforts would suffer almost immediately.<sup>70</sup> With these security issues in mind, Prime Minister Thatcher arrived in Washington to discuss British commitment to the SDI with President Reagan.

## **2. The Camp David Meeting**

The 22 December 1984 meeting at Camp David, produced four points agreed to by both leaders as the underlying conditions of future SDI research and development. As the prime minister later reported to the House of Commons, they were:

1. the United States (and Western) aim is not to achieve superiority, but to maintain balance, taking account of Soviet developments
2. SDI-related developments would, in view of treaty obligations, have to be a matter of negotiation
3. the overall aim is to enhance, not undercut, deterrence
4. East-West negotiation should aim to achieve security with reduced levels of offensive systems on both sides.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Stares, 333.

<sup>71</sup> Daalder, 13.

Providing that these conditions were adhered to, Prime Minister Thatcher was willing to express qualified support for the U.S. SDI research program, demonstrating the continuing bond between the two nations.

The first point reiterates the British view that technology alone cannot determine strategic Western security and that political dialogue between East and West is an essential condition for continued stability. The British maintained that consideration of the perceptions and responses of the Soviet Union was crucial throughout each developmental stage of the SDI research program. Brash action by the United States could instigate the Soviet Union to expand or accelerate its own BMD research and development. Such an outcome could ultimately have an impact on Britain's independent arsenal.

The implicit reference to the ABM Treaty in the second point emphasizes the strong British support for the 1972 agreement. Cited by British officials as "the legal foundation for our present structure of deterrence, on which rest our hopes for peace,"<sup>72</sup> and "a real achievement in an agreed approach to ensuring a stable and peaceful world,"<sup>73</sup> obtaining a U.S. commitment to adhere to the twelve-year-old treaty was deemed an essential condition to any British support for the SDI. The ABM Treaty had guaranteed the viability of Britain's limited strategic arsenal and any SDI deployment decision would seriously jeopardize the continued existence of the treaty.

Enhancing deterrence, rather than replacing it as outlined in the third point, represented a shift in U.S. rhetoric away from past statements which emphasized the goal

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<sup>72</sup> Margaret Thatcher, cited in David Yost, "Western Europe and the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative," *Journal of International Affairs* 41, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 296.

<sup>73</sup> British Defense Minister George Younger, cited in Yost, "Western Europe...", 296.

of eliminating the deterrent situation of Mutually Assured Destruction. While interpretation of the point left open the question of whether deterrence had to involve *nuclear* weapons, British opinion was firmly rooted in the belief that eliminating the nuclear deterrent policy was both unrealistic and unwanted for three primary reasons. First, the general consensus of British scientists and policy makers was that the creation of a "perfect" shield which could destroy all incoming ballistic missiles without a shadow of a doubt was an unrealistic assumption. Reliance on such a system would be uncertain, as there could be no way to test its capabilities to guarantee success if it were actually needed. Second, development of offensive weapons by both the United States and the Soviet Union would have to continue to prevent a breakthrough by either side in offensive technology using other delivery systems or improved ballistic missile capability. Third, British concern for the conventional military balance in Europe stressed the need for nuclear deterrence to counter a Warsaw Pact conventional superiority which could never be matched by NATO forces. An end to nuclear deterrence, created by impermeable shields over the superpowers, would make Europe "safe for conventional war."<sup>74</sup>

The fourth point agreed to by Thatcher and Reagan reiterated British support for arms control measures as the best possible means to ease tensions and enhance security. Linked to the reliance on political dialogue and to Thatcher's July 1984 statement, it appears that the British plan to avoid an arms race in space amounted to arms control

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<sup>74</sup> Trevor Taylor, "Britain's Response to the Strategic Defense Initiative," International Affairs 62, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 220-221.



efforts, which would include negotiating away SDI in conjunction with large-scale reductions in offensive weapons.<sup>75</sup>

The Reagan administration's acceptance of the four points was questionable from the start. Nothing agreed to in December 1984 represented a formal commitment by the United States. While not legally binding in any way, the agreement attempted to establish a framework under which British support for, and participation in, the Strategic Defense Initiative could be established. The agreement contained a number of ambiguities which left it open for interpretation by each side, yet it was these ambiguities that made it possible to reach any agreement at all. The U.S. government touted the Reagan-Thatcher agreement as representing the solid backing by its closest ally, while in reality it had merely established Britain's qualified support for the research phase of the U.S. BMD program.

### **3. The Transition From Skepticism to Commitment**

Perhaps to emphasize the limited nature of British support, the next formal statement of British policy came in Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe's speech at the Royal United Services Institute on 15 March 1985. Largely a reiteration of the four points agreed upon at Camp David, the Howe speech raised a number of questions concerning the cost of SDI, its impact on U.S. commitment to the defense of Europe, the development of alternative offensive weapons it might provoke, and its impact on Soviet perceptions.<sup>76</sup> Howe warned that "there would be no advantage in creating a new Maginot Line of the 21st century, liable to be outflanked by relatively simpler and

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<sup>75</sup> Taylor, "Britain's Response to the Strategic Defence Initiative," 220.

<sup>76</sup> Taylor, "The British Response," in Hans Brauch, Star Wars and European Defence, 133.

demonstrably cheaper countermeasures.”<sup>77</sup> Even more descriptive of British governmental opinion, Howe stated that:

deterrence has worked; and it will continue to work. It may be enhanced by active defences. Or their development may set us on a road that diminishes security....Unfortunately we have to face the harsh realities of a world in which nuclear weapons exist and cannot be disinvented.<sup>78</sup>

The Howe speech became one of the primary British policy statements on the Strategic Defense Initiative and demonstrated the less than enthusiastic support the British gave it.

Although U.S. officials were outraged by Howe’s comments, the speech was the last critical statement to emerge from the British government. There were two factors which quelled British public skepticism. First, the debate quickly shifted away from strategic and political issues to a determination of the extent of Britain’s involvement. Ongoing criticism was hardly appropriate for a partner desiring inclusion in research contracts. Second, further criticism was deemed inappropriate, providing the research program continued to abide by the conditions of the four points outlined above.<sup>79</sup> By summer of 1985, economic considerations began to play a more significant role in British policy towards the SDI.

#### **4. British Participation**

A number of factors influenced the participation considerations of the British government. First, the commitment by the Reagan administration to invest huge sums of money into research virtually guaranteed the development of significant technology with

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<sup>77</sup> Geoffrey Howe, lecture given at Royal United Services Institute on 15 March 1985, printed in *Journal of the RUSI* 130, no. 2 (June 1985): 6.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>79</sup> Daalder, 16.

applications in other fields unrelated to missile defense. Britain hoped to gain access to such technology, and participation would prevent a widening transatlantic technology gap. Additionally, U.S. SDI representatives had spent months in Great Britain trying to determine what British research would be of interest to the United States, and trying to develop support within the British scientific community. As a result, several fields of research, including rail gun technology, battery power systems, software and battle management systems, optical computers and conventional missiles<sup>80</sup> became potential contributions to the U.S. effort, and British officials realized that they could not prevent British firms from bidding for contracts. Instead, it was deemed to be wiser to participate on a governmental level in order to protect the interests of British firms and provide oversight for the entire program. Another motivating concern was the fear that research funding in the United States would draw British scientists away, and that such a "brain drain" would further damage the technological capabilities of the nation.<sup>81</sup>

In December 1985, a formal participation agreement was signed between the United States and Great Britain. Although exact terms were kept secret, provisions were made to ensure technology transfer rights benefited British interests, and eighteen areas of research participation were delineated. No preset funding was established (British officials had initially sought \$1.5 billion out of the \$26 billion SDI total<sup>82</sup>), but U.S. officials emphasized that the agreement would lead to a significant number of British contracts. The United States was now able to claim support within the Atlantic Alliance. In turn,

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<sup>80</sup> Taylor, "The British Response," 135.

<sup>81</sup> Yost, "Western Europe and the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative," 297-298.

<sup>82</sup> Taylor, "Britain's Response to the Strategic Defense Initiative," 223.

Great Britain was able to reaffirm, according to David Yost, "solidarity with the U.S. president in order to help maintain the unique U.S.-British programs of cooperation in various areas of security policy, notably intelligence and nuclear weapons matters."<sup>83</sup> By emphasizing the research and technological aspects of the SDI, British government officials were able to participate without directly addressing the weightier issues associated with the BMD program.

Within the British government itself, opposition parties were opposed to the entire SDI program, and even the Conservative Party was split. The Labour Party's position was provided by its leader, Neil Kinnock, who described the SDI as "deluded, destabilizing and dangerous," and "the biggest single block to nuclear arms reduction."<sup>84</sup> A more formal Labour Party statement emerged in July 1985 and condemned SDI as damaging to the deterrent capabilities of second-strike facilities and harmful to arms control efforts, and Labour proposed a Europe-wide rejection of SDI participation. Similarly, the Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance issued a statement outlining its primary criticisms of the Reagan proposal. Disruption of the Atlantic Alliance, an accelerating arms race, increasing Third World nuclear proliferation, and East-West destabilization were just a few of the main arguments.<sup>85</sup> Finally, a number of prominent Conservative Party members, including former Prime Minister Edward Heath, expressed disapproval of the program. With two political parties openly opposed to advanced BMD research, and the ruling Conservative Party divided as well, it becomes clear that the economic and

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<sup>83</sup> Yost, "Western Europe and the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative," 297.

<sup>84</sup> Neil Kinnock, cited in Yost, "Western Europe and the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative," 298.

<sup>85</sup> Taylor, "The British Response," 139-140.

technological factors played an important role in British participation in the SDI research program.

Most of the debate within the British government and defense community addressed issues not directly related to the British strategic arsenal. One possible reason for this is that the British government had made major decisions prior to the SDI debate which extended the effectiveness of the submarine-launched arsenal. The costly Chevaline program, which modified and improved the penetration ability of the Polaris warhead against existing and future Soviet BMD development, demonstrated the British recognition that improvements in BMD technology, beyond the limitations of the ABM Treaty, might occur.<sup>86</sup> The decision to transition to the Trident D-5 missile system was also a precautionary step to ensure the survivability of the British deterrent force. While preserving the ABM Treaty provided the best opportunity to safeguard their arsenal, British planners had taken steps to operate in less optimistic conditions. British strategic planners felt secure that if SDI research spawned Soviet competition, a comfortable margin of several years existed to take additional steps necessary to secure the effectiveness of their deterrent.<sup>87</sup>

In summary, British policy towards the Strategic Defense Initiative reflected the daunting task of balancing transatlantic relations with economic and technological concerns, Alliance cohesion, and promoting the continuance of security based on deterrence and the conditions established by the ABM Treaty. By participating in SDI research, British officials hoped to be able to influence U.S. decisions on deployment

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<sup>86</sup> Yost, "Ballistic Missile Defense and the Atlantic Alliance," 149-150.

<sup>87</sup> Stares, 332.

through adherence to Thatcher's four points, benefit from the technological spin-offs of the research, and demonstrate solidarity which might shore up confidence in a U.S. commitment to European defense. Whatever the influence of Great Britain, the Atlantic Alliance remained strong, arms control talks resumed with the Soviets, and deterrence survived as the fundamental security policy of the Western world. The collapse of the Soviet Union, which some would say was hastened by the SDI spending, has shifted the balance of power, and opened the door to new threats. Addressing those threats provides a new challenge to British-American relations.

### **C. GREAT BRITAIN AND BMD IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA**

There is no question that the security environment of 1996 is dramatically different from that of 1986. The conventional threat to Western Europe has disappeared, as former Warsaw Pact members vie for admittance into the North Atlantic Alliance. U.S. and Russian missiles target open ocean and nuclear weapons dismantlement accounts for considerable resources. At the same time, the Gulf War apparently ushered in a return to a multi-polar world and awakened the potential for new enemies with dangerous WMD capabilities. Bridging the gap between the Cold War and post-Cold War environment has been a challenge for planners around the globe, as old policies now fail to meet new threats, and untested strategies must take their place.

#### **1. A New Perspective**

Perhaps one of the best examples of the "*old meeting the new*" involves former Prime Minister Thatcher. The Thatcher of 1986 believed the Strategic Defense Initiative to be a threat to the deterrence policy which had provided so much for East-West stability.

Arms control, political dialogue, and mutual cooperation were the routes to greater security, buoyed by the 1972 ABM Treaty and its limitations on BMD deployment. However, on 9 March 1996, exactly fifty years after Winston Churchill's prophetic "Iron Curtain" speech, former Prime Minister Thatcher delivered a speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri espousing some dramatically different views. Her new message emphasized the "potential contribution of ballistic missile defense to peace and security," and stressed the urgency of action to avoid the risk that "thousands of people may be killed by an attack which forethought and wise preparation might have prevented."<sup>88</sup>

Lady Thatcher suggested five reasons why she now fully supports U.S. Republican-led efforts to proceed directly with BMD development. First, BMD would offer protection against limited or unauthorized missile attack, or in the event that deterrence fails. Second, it would enable the United States and other Western powers to project power overseas by protecting deployed troops and civilian populations at home. Third, BMD would provide regional stability by limiting a state's ability to upset the balance of power through the use of ballistic missiles. Fourth, BMD would strengthen, rather than weaken, retaliatory deterrent capability against a hostile nuclear weapons state. Fifth, by reducing the utility of offensive ballistic missiles, BMD would strengthen diplomatic efforts.<sup>89</sup> The contrast between Lady Thatcher's old and new arguments could not be more stark. Her support for Jesse Helms and other conservatives "who argue that the

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<sup>88</sup> Margaret Thatcher, speech delivered on March 9, 1996 at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

ABM Treaty is a Cold War relic with no relevance to an age when up to 20 countries have, or will soon acquire long range missiles,"<sup>90</sup> is a prime demonstration of the different challenges policy makers face in the post-Cold War world.

## 2. British Conservatism

While former Prime Minister Thatcher has shifted gears, in response to her shifting perception of the security environment, the current British government has been more conservative in changing security policy. On the most general level, the British view of strategic deterrence remains intact. In 1994 Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind expressed his belief that Russia remained a major military power in Europe, and that the British deterrent force continues to play as important a role as it did during the Cold War.<sup>91</sup> According to the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1996, "the four boat Trident fleet will ensure that we can maintain continuous strategic deterrent patrols and a continuously available sub-strategic capability throughout the life of the Trident force."<sup>92</sup> Even as it reduces the size and variety of its nuclear force, the British government maintains the belief in the contribution that its nuclear forces makes to maintaining peace and stability in Europe. For this reason, the ABM Treaty remains an important boundary which limits Russian capabilities. U.S. efforts to withdraw from or adjust the treaty could force Great Britain to expend scarce defense resources upgrading offensive missile systems in the future if Russia were to improve BMD. British concerns have reportedly

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<sup>90</sup> Bruce Clark, "Lady Thatcher Unleashes Star Wars Broadside in U.S.," Financial Times, 11 March 1996, p. 2.

<sup>91</sup> Nicholas Witney, "British Nuclear Policy After the Cold War," Survival 36, no. 4 (Winter 1994-95): 101.

<sup>92</sup> Statement on the Defence Estimates 1996, Chapter 2, Section 201.



been expressed to U.S. officials in response to U.S. negotiations with the Russians to effect treaty clarification.<sup>93</sup>

As the Statement on the Defence Estimates indicates, the Trident fleet has also assumed the task of maintaining a "continuously available sub-strategic capability." This role was first examined in 1993 during the annual government review of the Trident program, at which time the necessity of proceeding with the four-boat construction program was questioned. The government discussed placing a number of small, tactical nuclear warheads on a portion of the U.S. built Trident D-5 missiles on each submarine, in place of the maximum eight warheads designed for more traditional strategic use. The tactical warheads would provide the sub-strategic capability, and provide a justifiable reason for the continued development of the submarine deterrent force.<sup>94</sup> The use of a tactical nuclear warhead would serve as a deterrent to a nuclear armed aggressor, or possibly an adversary armed with other forms of WMD.

The majority of British BMD debate revolves around the reluctant acceptance that a legitimate missile threat may exist to the United Kingdom within ten years, and the acknowledgment that the threat already exists to British troops deployed abroad. For this reason, it is in Great Britain's interest to support ongoing research efforts in the United States, as such research would most likely benefit U.S. allies in the future. Also, reductions in defense budgets leave very little to support indigenous BMD research. Still, the solutions are far from clear, and there is no consensus yet on a British BMD policy.

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<sup>93</sup> Jack Mendelsohn and Dunbar Lockwood, "U.S., Russia Set New 'Principles' To Address ABM-TMD Dispute," Arms Control Today 25, no. 5 (June 1995): 23.

<sup>94</sup> Severin Carrell, "Submerged in a Murky Future," The Scotsman, 7 July 1993, downloaded from Lexis-Nexis server.

### 3. Conflicting Approaches

In May 1994, the House of Commons Defence Committee advised the Ministry of Defence to proceed with missile defense research in the belief that some form of missile defense could be available by the turn of the century.<sup>95</sup> More specifically, in a June 1995 interview, Defence Procurement Minister Roger Freeman indicated that "Club Mad" nations in North Africa and the Middle East would have the capability to reach the United Kingdom within a ten year window, and that some defense must be sought.<sup>96</sup>

Freeman also indicated London's commitment to support a theater-wide missile defense for Europe, under the NATO umbrella. Any such program, according to Freeman should involve both short-range systems, like the Patriot missile, and longer-range systems which provide a wider area of coverage. If a threat to the British Isles was ten years away, Freeman maintained that deployed British troops could today find themselves within range of a ballistic missile threat.<sup>97</sup> With the increasing likelihood of British involvement in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, relying on the United States for TMD protection could place undue restriction on policy decision making. Freeman emphasized the need for both national and European discussion of the problem.

In 1995 a British computer company unveiled the world's most advanced ballistic missile attack simulator. The U.K. Extended Air Defence Test Bed (UKEADTB) is a computer modeling system capable of generating simulated attack by aircraft, cruise

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<sup>95</sup> Steven Hildreth and Jason Ellis, "Allied Support for Theater Missile Defense," *Orbis* 40, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 106.

<sup>96</sup> Michael Evans, "Britain Must Build Defences Against Club Mad Missiles," *Times* (London), 12 June 1995, p. 7.

<sup>97</sup> Charles Miller, "Britain Endorses NATO Missile Defense Effort," *Defense News*, 12-18 June 1995, p. 8.

missiles, or ballistic missiles in order to develop BMD technology. The system was funded primarily by the United States as a result of the cooperation agreements established during the SDI research phase in the mid-1980s, and is generating high interest in other European countries concerned with a potential missile threat.<sup>98</sup>

Although Roger Freeman's vocal support for a NATO-led European program, and the development of the UKEADTB suggest movement in the direction of BMD, British government action has been more hesitant. Great Britain remained uninterested as the United States, France, Germany, and Italy established an unprecedented multilateral organization to develop the Medium Extended Air Defense System (MEADS). Freeman stated that "that deals with only part of the problem," and was wary of MEADS, due to its range limitations and intended use to protect small, mobile forces.<sup>99</sup> It is unclear why Great Britain would not want to be involved in addressing even "part of the problem."

Yet in light of such developments, a March 1995 House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee report reopened the debate on the wisdom of BMD. The report, entitled *The UK Policy on Weapons Proliferation and Arms Control in the Post-Cold War Era*, determined that proliferation is a political situation, only effectively countered by political solutions, and that "an emphasis on military answers is short term at best."<sup>100</sup> Reminiscent of the debate of the 1980s, the report indicates that support for the ABM Treaty and political dialogue remains in some government circles, and that consensus within the British government may not be coming soon.

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<sup>98</sup> Christopher Bellamy, "Britain Builds 'Star Wars' Missile Attack Model," The Independent, 2 July 1995, 11.

<sup>99</sup> Miller, 8.

<sup>100</sup> Stanley Orman, "Defense Binds U.S., British," Defense News, 29 May -4 June 1995, p. 23.

In an attempt to clarify and resolve some of the British debate on BMD, the Defense Ministry contracted a team led by British Aerospace to conduct a "Pre-Feasibility Study" (PFS) on missile defense. According to the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995, the purpose of the PFS was to:

identify practical defensive architectures against a range of scenarios, taking account of costs, risks, and timescales as well as technical and industrial considerations...also to take account of current and past American and British research in this area.<sup>101</sup>

In general terms, the PFS was a needs assessment to, first, determine the needs of the nation, and second, provide recommendations as to the best course to pursue. The study was completed in spring 1996 and remains under review at the Ministry of Defense. Sources indicate that the PFS may be made public in December 1996, and that a more comprehensive government policy may soon follow.<sup>102</sup>

One of the possible reasons that the British government has been hesitant to commit to the technical development of BMD technology may be the political questions which remain unanswered. It is generally believed that London would be a more likely target than some of the other European capitals, and that geography plays an important role in intercepting an incoming missile. A March 1996 House of Commons Defence Committee Report, entitled "NATO's Southern Flank," hints at the problem. Referring to Iraq's Scud attacks during the Gulf War, the report states that:

incoming missiles which were shot down were intercepted towards the end of their flight with the consequence that their remains fell on friendly territory. Had they contained chemical warheads with mass destructive

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<sup>101</sup> correspondence with David Bosdet, 5 November 1996.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

capability they could have inflicted great damage, despite being intercepted.<sup>103</sup>

Transposed to a European theater, a defense similar to the Patriot system could still result in terrible tragedy if a chemical warhead were intercepted over London. Ideally, then, interception would occur earlier in the missile's flight, with the unfortunate result that WMD debris could possibly fall on the territory of another country, most likely France or Italy. The possibility emerges that an action of Great Britain could incite a retaliatory missile attack, with tragic results for a third country.<sup>104</sup> Clarifying the political implications of a European, or wide area British, missile defense may be an important consideration that is holding Great Britain back from a more aggressive program.

#### **D. SUMMARY**

For British policy makers during the Cold War, and primarily during the debate surrounding the Strategic Defense Initiative, adherence to the status quo was desirable as a means to maintain stability. The limited nature of their strategic deterrence was safeguarded by the ABM Treaty, and the desire to nurture peace in Europe encouraged dialogue with the Soviets rather than confrontation. SDI, and its possible implications to the ABM Treaty represented an upheaval that challenged the policy goals of the British government. By walking the tightrope between cooperation with, and disapproval of, the United States, the British policy was able to meet domestic needs (economic, technological, and political), while promoting British opinion in the international debate.

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<sup>103</sup> "NATO's Southern Flank," House of Commons Defence Committee Third Report, 13 March 1996, downloaded from [www.cdiss.org](http://www.cdiss.org).

<sup>104</sup> Bosdet.

In the post-Cold War world, BMD development by the United States also challenges the British government to walk the narrow path between alliance commitment and domestic policy. The recognized need for TMD to support deployed troops, the growing awareness of the need to think seriously about defending British territory, and the need to support NATO missile defense efforts must all be weighed against shrinking military budgets, and an underlying British belief that political means, backed by a nuclear arsenal, are the best approach to deterring offensive missile threats. Until Great Britain is able to distinguish clearly what its BMD requirements are, it will continue to be caught between cooperation and isolation. The inability of the British government to define a BMD policy consistent with the United States did not disappear with the end of the Cold War, and U.S. policy makers must consider that this inconsistency will continue to interfere with the development of NATO planning.

## IV. BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE AND FRANCE

### A. INTRODUCTION

The Strategic Defense Initiative posed problems for France which at first appeared similar to those facing Great Britain: the effectiveness of the independent strategic arsenal was placed in jeopardy by potential Soviet BMD enhancements instigated by the U.S. initiative. The security that the ABM Treaty provided was threatened, and the SDI was the first BMD initiative which caused significant concern in France. While the British eventually shifted to limited cooperation with the United States program, the French government steadfastly rejected the U.S. offer to participate in the SDI research effort. For France, the challenge posed by the SDI went beyond strategic issues, to the economic and political realms. More fundamentally, the SDI challenged the *grandeur* of France and its place on the world stage by its potential threat to nuclear deterrence, a key component of French national security policy. In response, the Socialist government of François Mitterand chose open criticism, arms control initiatives, and substitute European programs to counter the U.S. defense plan.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, France has reconsidered its role in the defense of Europe, the shape of its military force, and its relationship to NATO. Additionally, WMD and ballistic missile proliferation in the Middle East and the Mediterranean region has forced a reappraisal of missile defense as one component of a wider nonproliferation agenda. However, recent French actions have demonstrated the difficulty in defining a BMD policy consistent with that of its allies, and

the autonomous French perspective remains. The apparent continued reliance on its independent nuclear arsenal to deter a "rogue state" missile attack, and its withdrawal from a multinational BMD program indicate that France and the United States still have little in common regarding missile defense. Until these differences are narrowed or eliminated, the degree of cooperation between France and the other NATO governments on this and other security policies will be restricted.

#### **B. FRENCH REACTION TO THE STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE**

There was no immediate French response to President Reagan's March 1983 SDI speech, as officials waited to see whether the rhetoric would be translated into action. By September 1983 the first hints of French opinion emerged during a speech given by President Mitterand to the General Assembly of the United Nations. In an address devoted mainly to disarmament, President Mitterand proposed that the five declared nuclear powers gather to discuss reductions in existing arsenals, providing that three conditions were met. First, the United States and Soviet Union had to commit to substantial cuts in their own nuclear arsenals. Second, the conventional force capabilities of Europe had to be fortified to reduce the imbalance which favored the Soviet Union, while, at the same time, chemical and biological weapons stockpiling had to be outlawed. Third, President Mitterand warned that "space is in its very essence the common heritage of humanity" and demanded an end to the further development of anti-missile, anti-submarine, and anti-satellite weapons.<sup>105</sup> The implicit reference to the development of

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<sup>105</sup> John Fenske, "France and the Strategic Defence Initiative: Speeding Up or Putting on the Brakes?" International Affairs 62, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 232.



“Star Wars” weapons suggested that President Reagan’s proposal was not warmly received by the French government or President Mitterand.

### **1. The Emergence of French Opposition**

On 7 February 1984, President Mitterand introduced his preference for European autonomy by proposing the creation of a “European space community” which would work cooperatively to launch a manned space station “to observe, transmit, and counter any threat.”<sup>106</sup> The speech came only days after President Reagan invited European cooperation on a very similar project. By emphasizing the desire to act apart from American initiatives, the proposal was the first attempt to demonstrate French unwillingness to cooperate with the United States. Instead, French intentions were to foster European self-sufficiency in technological and industrial areas and to ensure that Europe was not left behind in the development of space.

It was in June 1984 at the United Nations Disarmament Conference in Geneva that France formally introduced a draft proposal of what President Mitterand had suggested in September of the previous year. The French representative, François de la Gorce, argued that both Soviet and U.S. BMD programs risked destabilizing political relations between East and West. He also reiterated the French government’s support for the 1972 ABM Treaty and for the effectiveness of deterrence. The proposal, which resembled past Soviet efforts, suggested the limitation of BMD development before irreversible results occurred. Specifically, the French plan proposed banning the testing and deployment of directed energy weapons systems capable of destroying ballistic missiles or satellites for an initial

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<sup>106</sup> Hans Gunter Brauch, “Europe and Strategic Defense: From SDI to TDI,” in Daniel Papp and John McIntyre, eds. International Space Policy, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1987), 292.

five year interval, and placing further restrictions on anti-satellite weapons.<sup>107</sup> The Soviet Union responded positively to this proposal, while the United States was displeased.

The French effort in Geneva was designed to bring the United States and Soviet Union back to the negotiating table, while also demonstrating France's commitment to the ABM Treaty and the value of deterrence. It also raised French concerns that if BMD development continued, a superpower arms race in non-ballistic weapons, including cruise missiles, might break out. Additionally, French officials began expressing fears that a growing distinction between those countries that possessed BMD capabilities and those that did not but which nonetheless faced a ballistic missile threat, would weaken relations between allies.<sup>108</sup> While these arguments were not unique to the French position, the attempt to impede the SDI through the Geneva proposal demonstrated that French opposition was more decisive than that of the other allies.

French criticism continued to mount in the following months, and peaked during the winter of 1984-1985. In two separate forums French government officials were extremely outspoken on SDI. During a television interview on 14 December 1984 Mitterand spoke directly about the SDI for the first time, remarking that:

President Reagan's proposal...amounts to overarmament. It is not in this direction we should be heading, but rather towards disarmament....As for militarizing space, by all the means which we have mentioned and many others, I oppose that.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Yost, "European Anxieties about Ballistic Missile Defense," 125.

<sup>108</sup> Alain Carton, "French Political Reaction to SDI--The Debate on the Nature of Deterrence," in Hans Gunter Brauch, ed., *Star Wars and European Defence*, 152.

<sup>109</sup> Brauch, "Europe and Strategic Defense," 293.

Shortly after, on 10 February 1985, at the annual Munich conference organized by *Wehrkunde*, the German journal of defense and military issues, French Defense Minister Charles Hernu argued that pursuing the SDI could result in tacit complicity between the United States and the Soviet union to create invulnerable homelands while settling differences elsewhere--namely in Europe.<sup>110</sup>

The United States became concerned that continued French opposition might damage U.S. attempts to garner political support from other Alliance members, and also that fractures in Alliance ideology could weaken the U.S. position at the Intermediate Nuclear Force (INF) bargaining table with the Soviets. Following a preliminary arms control meeting between U.S. and Soviet representatives to discuss the potential for future talks, Paul Nitze and Robert McFarlane traveled to Paris to try to reassure the French. According to Nitze and McFarlane, the United States maintained strong support for the independent French nuclear arsenal, reaffirmed the importance of nuclear deterrence "until at least the end of this century," and vowed to resist Soviet attempts to discuss the British and French strategic forces in future disarmament meetings.<sup>111</sup>

French officials were aware of the tenuous course they were trying to pursue, and were pleased with the American position. It would be difficult to appear to side with the Soviet Union in terms of the Strategic Defense Initiative and still expect U.S. support on the INF issue. The result was a slight respite from the harsh criticism aimed at all phases of the SDI, and even a limited amount of support. In late February 1985 French Foreign

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<sup>110</sup> George Wilson, "French Minister Warns Against 'Star Wars' Plan," *Washington Post*, 10 February 1985, p. A17.

<sup>111</sup> Fenske, 234.

Minister Roland Dumas stated that the U.S. plan was attractive because it offered the possibility of replacing an “aggressive” policy founded on the principles of nuclear retaliation with a “defensive” philosophy based on a shield against nuclear weapons.<sup>112</sup> While not a full endorsement of SDI, it was probably the zenith of French support throughout the SDI debate.

## **2. The EUREKA Counterproposal**

Even as criticism diminished, counterproposals continued to emerge. Within a month of Secretary of Defense Weinberger’s 25 March 1985 invitation to allies to participate in the research portion of the SDI, President Mitterand responded with the proposal for a European Research Coordination Agency. EUREKA, as it came to be known, was proposed as a research program for Europe which would place greater emphasis on the civilian application of technological developments. The EUREKA program was designed to research virtually all of the areas that participation in the SDI program would have offered, including information science, robot technology, artificial intelligence, communications, biotechnology, and the development of new materials.<sup>113</sup>

EUREKA’s advantages, as the French seemed to see them, included the development of technology, in a way that would emphasize European autonomy. Additionally, the problems associated with technology transfer rights from the United States would be averted, and the scientific community would remain involved in research for Europe, diminishing any “brain drain” resulting from the SDI program. The primary disadvantage remained economic. While the United States invited participation from

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<sup>112</sup> “France is Warming to ‘Star Wars’ Idea,” New York Times, 27 February 1985, p. A3.

<sup>113</sup> Alain Carton, “The Implications of SDI for French Defense Policy,” in Brauch, 346.

Allies, encouraging foreign companies to bid on SDI contracts paid for by U.S. dollars, EUREKA would have to be budgeted by European participants. In the coming months, Great Britain and West Germany offered verbal support for the concept of a European research effort, but both countries were non-committal when it came to financing the venture. EUREKA was one of the most concrete examples of the French effort to derail the SDI, or at least to coordinate a European rejection and send a strong message to Washington.

### **3. French Refusal To Participate**

The official French policy on the SDI finally developed during the Western economic summit in Bonn, in May 1985. At the close of the summit, President Mitterand publicly announced, following an eighty minute private meeting with President Reagan, that he had firmly rejected government-to-government cooperation on the SDI. Mitterand expressed skepticism that the United States would allow Allies to benefit fully from the technological developments of SDI research, and also stated that the program could potentially jeopardize the peace which nuclear deterrence had produced in Europe. An additional aspect which led to his refusal was a belief that European partners would share little control over future decisions on development and deployment, and would otherwise not be treated as equals. During the press conference Mitterand stated, "Subcontractors. That's the word I heard. The word was said in English. It confirmed my intuitions."<sup>114</sup> In place of cooperation, President Mitterand again pushed the EUREKA program as the more effective course for Europeans, rather than "wasting their talent" on a non-European

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<sup>114</sup> William Drodziak, "France Blocks Agreement on Start of Trade Talks," Washington Post, 5 May 1985, pp. A1 & A24.

undertaking.<sup>115</sup> With this press conference, France became the first major West European ally to reject participation in SDI.

#### **4. Major Issues Behind French Policy**

President Mitterand's rejection sent a clear message about the issues vital to France. Preserving deterrence, maintaining the "great nation" status of France in the international arena, and strengthening French and European autonomy were three inter-related issues which led to the French response. To the French government, the SDI threatened each of these interests, and a refusal to participate was the proper course of action.

At the root of the entire French position is the commitment to nuclear deterrence, framed in a historical perspective. Hubert Vedrine, President Mitterand's diplomatic counselor, presented this point of view:

Let us have a little historical clear-sightedness: periods of long peace are not that numerous. Let us properly appreciate this period of peace in which we still are and which results from this balance of deterrence. This is why France is extremely attached to maintaining this balance and if possible therefore preventing developments that would be likely to upset it. It is not that we have a kind of immoderate and incomprehensible love of nuclear arms itself...But we have this system that guarantees peace which, we think, should be maintained and preserved.<sup>116</sup>

The SDI seemed to substitute the deterrent threat of nuclear war with a return to a conventional war-fighting strategy, something unacceptable to the French. For this reason, continued adherence to the ABM Treaty and steadfast support for a strategy of deterrence were key.

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<sup>115</sup> Bernard Weinraub, "France Blocks Trade Talks as Summit Conference Ends; Reagan Presses 'Star Wars'," *New York Times*, 5 May 1985, p. 17.

<sup>116</sup> Vedrine, cited in Daalder, 22.

Even if the ultimate goal of leakproof defenses were never achieved, the SDI would pose a considerable threat to the continued reliability of France's strategic nuclear deterrent force, and therefore to France's importance in the international arena. Although it was estimated that the effectiveness of the French deterrent would not be reduced before 2015 or 2020 at the earliest,<sup>117</sup> French officials believed the SDI would erode France's ability to offer a quasi-autonomous defense of Europe. Outside of the NATO integrated military structure since 1966, France's nuclear forces provide France with a sense of "greatness," derived from an ability to make military decisions on its own. In the French view, the diminishment of importance of its nuclear forces would reduce France's stature in the eyes of the rest of the world.<sup>118</sup> Additionally, the cost of maintaining the deterrent force had been at the expense of France's conventional forces, leaving it little to offer in the way of an independent defense of Europe.

Closely linked to maintaining its stature was France's desire to strengthen its own autonomy, and that of Europe. President Mitterand's focus on the use of the word "subcontractor" typifies that Gaullist response. French sovereignty and the avoidance of subordination had led to France's withdrawal from NATO's integrated military command nearly twenty years before, and the refusal to participate in the SDI stemmed from a "self definition as an independent state with a special rank to uphold."<sup>119</sup> The "European space community" and EUREKA were both proposals designed to free Europe from U.S.

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<sup>117</sup> Pierre Lellouche, "SDI and European Security: A View From France," in Sanford Lakoff and Randy Willoughby, eds., Strategic Defense and the Western Alliance (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1987), 130.

<sup>118</sup> Richard Bernstein, "Americans at a Forum in France, Put Forward Case for 'Star Wars'," New York Times, 21 October 1985, p. B10.

<sup>119</sup> Yost, "Western Europe and the Strategic Defense Initiative," 306.

technological hegemony. The French were also concerned that European security would be placed in the hands of the Americans, with the long-term plans of the SDI to integrate European radars and command and control infrastructures. This only increased the desire to push for autonomous action.<sup>120</sup>

### **5. Political and Economic Considerations**

Political and economic factors influenced President Mitterand's rejection of SDI at the Bonn Summit. French national elections were scheduled for March 1986, and the Socialists may have been using a strong stand against the U.S. program to improve their position. This theory is strengthened by the fact that the French government was encouraging French companies to pursue SDI research contracts, even while it was declaring its decision not to participate in the SDI. President Mitterand's statement at the Summit that "French businesses can sell what they want to whomever will buy from them. I am not there like a bogeyman to prevent French business from working,"<sup>121</sup> captures the inconsistency of the French position. By encouraging French companies, including nationalized ones, to compete, while flatly condemning the entire concept of the Strategic Defense Initiative, Mitterand appeared to want the economic benefits of the SDI without paying any political costs associated with it.

The March 1986 elections shifted power away from the Socialists and introduced the *cohabitation* government of Socialist President Mitterand and Gaullist Prime Minister Jacques Chirac. Many speculated that the introduction of right-wing forces might lead to a new government position more amenable towards the SDI, but the result was less

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 308.

<sup>121</sup> Daalder, 81.



significant. While the tone of outright aggression became more subdued, no change in policy developed.<sup>122</sup> French autonomy and a reliance on deterrence supported by the ABM Treaty remained the cornerstones of the French position.

### **C. FRANCE AND BMD IN THE POST-COLD WAR ENVIRONMENT**

Since the Gulf War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, France has questioned the validity of a number of its Cold War security policies. As a result, the country has reexamined its role in NATO, the structure of its own military, shifting security concerns, and, perhaps most significantly, its nuclear deterrence policy. As 1996 draws to a close, France remains a nation in transition, searching for its new position in the multipolar world, in which the Soviet threat has vanished, replaced by potential adversaries in the Mediterranean theater and the Middle East. Missile defenses have slowly entered the political dialogue in France, as one aspect of its search for identity within the alliance and one possible defense against the proliferation of WMD and ballistic missiles. Where BMD fits in France's future, however, remains a difficult question to answer.

#### **1. France and Nonproliferation**

Like other Western nations, France was stunned to learn of the advanced condition of Iraq's chemical and biological programs, and gravely concerned about the Iraqi nuclear development effort. The prospect of several nations in the Mediterranean theater obtaining WMD capability and the necessary delivery systems seemed to be only a matter of time, and France's geographic proximity to the region increased the sense of urgency in

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<sup>122</sup> Yost, "Western Europe and the Strategic Defense Initiative," 310.

addressing the problem. Jacques Chirac, then mayor of Paris, wrote an article in 1992, entitled "Proliferation--Non-Proliferation--Deterrence," in which he focused on the developing awareness in the French government of proliferation issues. In this article, Chirac stated that:

Proliferation is no longer a theoretical problem. It represents, from now on, a major strategic reality of the post-Cold War period. It brings to light new problems, to which we need to find new responses by reinforcing the existing structures and creating new ones if need be.<sup>123</sup>

While vague in his prescription, Chirac suggested that France, along with the rest of NATO, would have to refocus attention on this growing problem.

French officials began to support increased discussion about and involvement in multiple approaches to nonproliferation. Political efforts would continue to be the primary means of encouraging nonproliferation. The role of France's nuclear arsenal in deterring the use of nuclear weapons or other forms of WMD against Europe, however, was uncertain. Because of this uncertainty, it became apparent that alternative defense options, including counterproliferation and ballistic missile defenses should be considered.<sup>124</sup> Missile defenses, if implemented, would be only one aspect of a wider French nonproliferation policy.

## **2. Missile Defense as a Component of Nonproliferation**

One of the most outspoken advocates of the need to discuss French policy on BMD has been Henri Conze, former Director of France's Defense Procurement Agency.

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<sup>123</sup> Chirac cited in Henri Conze, "Transatlantic Cooperation on Missile Defense: A French Perspective," *Comparative Strategy* 14, no. 4 (October-December 1995): 433.

<sup>124</sup> Pierre Lellouche, "France in Search of Security," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 2 (March-April 1993): 127.

In 1993 Conze outlined a series of political concerns related to BMD which would have to be considered before the direction of French policy could be determined. Several of the issues suggested the difficulty of adopting a clearly defined policy.

First, the distrustful French attitude towards missile defense would have to change. The negative effects of the SDI debate of the previous decade continued to linger in the government offices of Paris, as did the continued fear of a new offensive arms race. Years of open criticism of the U.S. initiative made it difficult to simply switch course and approve the need for active missile defense capabilities. Distinguishing between the expansive "Star Wars" objectives and a limited defense against rogue states was an essential precursor to developing a new attitude towards BMD in France.<sup>125</sup>

France also would have to reexamine its autonomous role in relation to its European partners and the United States. For one, development of a comprehensive defense would require greater integration of early warning systems and response capabilities, a factor which had fueled French opposition to the SDI. More importantly, however, European governments, and ideally the United States, would have to reach some consensus on the nature of the threat to develop an appropriate collective response. Then Defense Minister Leotard supported this position, stating that the effort "can only be Western....It is necessary to work on it, but we will not be able to do it alone."<sup>126</sup> An inability to reach a consensus became a factor in the problems surrounding the multilateral

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<sup>125</sup> Henri Conze, "Ballistic Missile Defense: A French View," Comparative Strategy, 12, no. 1 (January-March 1993): 85.

<sup>126</sup> Yost, "Nuclear Debates in France," Survival 36, no. 4 (Winter 1994-95): 131-32.

Medium Extended Air Defense System (MEADS), a successor to the Patriot missile system.

Third, the continued French involvement and influence in Africa could pose diplomatic difficulties if deployment of a BMD system appeared to be directed entirely to the South. Relations with former colonies could suffer as a result of deployment, affecting the position of importance which France has historically held in the region. As a result, any decision to proceed with BMD would require the formulation of a realistic "*tous azimuts*" doctrine to reinforce positive relations between France and those to the South.<sup>127</sup>

Fourth, the relationship between the responsibilities of NATO and individual nations would have to be reexamined. During the Cold War, the responsibility was on a joint command structure which would identify a Soviet attack and initiate the activation of national assets to mount a defense. In the post-Cold War world, however, a threat of attack would most likely involve an opposite occurrence. Rather than an attack on the Alliance, a threat would most likely be made against a specific country, which in this case, would activate collective defense assets. Redefining this relationship would be essential to the establishment of an effective defense.<sup>128</sup>

Finally, Conze emphasized the diversity of threats facing Europe, due to its geographical location. In addition to ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, aircraft, and terrorist action are concerns which would have to be addressed. The fact that the SDI would meet only ballistic missile threats was viewed as a limitation during the 1980s, and additional French requirements continued to exist in the 1990s. For France, then, effective

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<sup>127</sup> Conze, "Ballistic Missile Defense: A French View," 85.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

defenses would have to exceed BMD, and would have to include broader extended air defense capabilities.<sup>129</sup>

The French attitude toward BMD in the first few years of discussion can best be described as reluctant acceptance. The growing awareness of the threat, balanced by the political difficulties of developing a policy, left the French government uncertain as to how to proceed, and cautious in its development plans. To further complicate the issue, French policy makers were reevaluating their deterrence strategy to determine the role France's nuclear deterrent would play in the new security environment.

### **3. Defining a New Position on BMD**

In 1994 France issued its Defense White Paper, the first in twenty-two years, to clarify its position on the new strategic realities of the post-Cold War period. The white paper discussed both the dangers of proliferation to France and the role of nuclear deterrence, but did little to set a course for future French policy on either issue. On proliferation, the paper stated that:

arms of mass destruction (nuclear, biological, and chemical) associated or not with ballistic missiles, will pose a new problem to our defense apparatus. This problem is posed both for the defense of our territory and for those French forces deployed abroad.... Given the diversity of forms which these threats can take, principally by diversified launchers, missiles and especially ballistic missiles priority will be given in this domain to the study of a concept and the means for an enlarged air defense.<sup>130</sup>

As a formal declaration, the white paper confirmed the desire to defend deployed troops and home territory, yet emphasized that any defense must handle threats beyond ballistic

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>130</sup> Robbin Laird, French Security Policy in Transition (Washington, D.C.: National University Press, 1995), 39.

missiles. One possible alternative explanation for France's emphasis on extended air defense is the extensive cost and technical difficulties associated with effective BMD development.<sup>131</sup>

Regarding deterrence, the white paper indicated that "the principle that deterrence must by no means be discarded is, of course, maintained, but it will come second to the capability of participating in the settlement of regional crises."<sup>132</sup> This reference to participation in regional crises indicates a greater role for conventional forces and a less significant reliance on the "non-war" nuclear deterrent force. The white paper, however, failed to define under what circumstances the nuclear deterrent force would be used instead of conventional forces. While the white paper is not a strategic blueprint for case-by-case responses, the ambiguity suggests that defense policy makers were unclear how the two choices, nuclear deterrence or conventional power, would be applied in the future.

If the white paper failed to clarify French policy, a report published by the National Assembly shortly before the white paper was issued only added to the confusion. Proliferation was raised as an important issue, yet this report differed in regards to deterrence and BMD. While the white paper had indicated a French desire to pursue defensive measures, the National Assembly report stated that such defenses could only provide limited defense, that costs were prohibitive, and that "defense systems would...hurt the credibility of nuclear deterrence."<sup>133</sup> The differences in the two documents belies the uncertainty of the government.

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<sup>131</sup> Yost, "Nuclear Debates in France," 132.

<sup>132</sup> Laird, 42.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 41.

An additional factor in France's ambivalence to BMD in recent years has been budgetary constraints placed on France's armed forces. Fortifying conventional forces which had suffered during the Cold War is consuming a greater portion of a shrinking budget, and as a result, the level of weapons spending devoted to nuclear weapons has declined to 19.1 billion francs, a forty percent decrease from the 1990 budget of 35.8 billion francs.<sup>134</sup> The loss of defense spending power places severe limitations on the number of defense projects in which France is able to participate.

#### 4. MEADS

One of the most visible examples of France's financial constraints is its withdrawal from the multinational MEADS program. What began as a bilateral U.S.-German program to develop a mobile anti-missile system designed to provide 360 degree protection for deployed troops, became a multilateral program when, on 20 February 1995, the United States, Germany, France, and Italy signed a letter of intent to cooperate on the project. France and Italy, the late-comers were interested in the system's intended capability to address both tactical ballistic missiles and air-breathing threats (cruise missiles and aircraft) to a range of up to sixty miles. For the French, the versatility of the system seemed to meet the extended air defense need that were frequently cited by defense officials. Other sources suggest that French interest stemmed for a desire to prevent the formation of an exclusive partnership between Germany and the United States.<sup>135</sup> The initial agreement stated that the United States would contribute fifty percent, while France

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<sup>134</sup> Giovanni de Briganti, "France Continues to Pare Down Nuclear Forces," Defense News, 14-20 October 1996, p. 40.

<sup>135</sup> de Briganti, "France May Pull Out of MEADS Program," Defense News, 15-21 April 1996, p. 26.

and Germany would provide twenty percent each, with Italy providing the final ten percent.

By spring 1996, however, it became apparent that France was reconsidering its commitment to the project. Germany and Italy had committed to the joint effort, and a ceremony to sign the Memorandum of Understanding was scheduled for 28 March 1996. Pentagon officials were forced to notify their German and Italian counterparts that the signing would be postponed when the French government requested an extension.<sup>136</sup> President Chirac's comprehensive review of France's defense department, which resulted in large-scale reductions in troop strength, plans to end conscription, and increased efforts to reduce equipment spending, had temporarily paralyzed the French decision making process. Jean-Yves Helmer, Henri Cone's replacement as Director of the Defense Procurement Agency, indicated that new budget restrictions prevented France from funding the program all the way through to its conclusion, and policy makers were therefore reluctant to spend any money at all.<sup>137</sup>

In addition to the cost of the MEADS program, a second reason France was hesitant to sign the MOU was its previous commitment to the bilateral Franco-Italian Sol-Air Moyenne-Portee/Terre (SAMP/T), a ground-launched, medium-range air defense missile under design to replace the aging Hawk air defense system. The cost of participating in both programs was beyond France's capability, and French designers were considering the possibility of adding a limited capability to defend against tactical ballistic

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<sup>136</sup> "Kaminski to French: Fish or Cut Bait on MEADS," Defense Week, 25 March 1996, downloaded from Lexis-Nexis server..

<sup>137</sup> de Briganti, "France May Pull Out of MEADS Program," 26.



missiles to the Franco-Italian system.<sup>138</sup> Finally, on 16 April 1996, France notified its partners that it would be withdrawing its support, citing financial inability to commit to the entire program.

### **5. Deterrence or Defense?**

After several years of increasing support, France's involvement in a BMD program that appeared to meet its strategic requirements fell victim to monetary constraints. What followed the announcement was a puzzling reversal of opinion regarding French attitudes towards BMD and deterrence. To begin with, Henri Conze had frequently described the "common operational requirements" with Germany that MEADS satisfied, and emphasized that MEADS was the first step in addressing the nonproliferation challenge facing the Alliance. In a recent interview, however, French Defense Minister Charles Millon simply stated that "the MEADS project does not meet our strategic requirements..."<sup>139</sup> Millon failed to expand on how France's strategic requirements had changed within the last six months.

Other officials went further to defend the withdrawal from MEADS. Jean-Paul Gillyboeuf, Director of Strategy at the Ministry of Defense's Procurement Agency, indicated that France's best defense for deployed troops and French territory remained the nuclear arsenal, and that truly effective missile defense would cost France money it could not afford to spend and take too many years. "The nuclear deterrent is always a good

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> "One on One," Defense News, 14-20 October 1996, p. 110.

solution and it costs less,” stated Gillyboeuf, who also believes “there does not exist a system able to fight a very effective missile.”<sup>140</sup>

French actions seem to support this view. While strategic nuclear forces are being substantially reduced in number, France has committed itself to improving the capabilities of its tactical nuclear forces. Officials indicate that short-range tactical weapons will now act as a deterrent for rogue regimes tempted to launch a missile attack against French territory or other vital interests. Other officials suggest that fighter aircraft, armed with either nuclear or conventional long-range missiles are a more effective deterrent to rogue states than a BMD system.<sup>141</sup> Both options demonstrate that France may once again be moving away from pursuing missile defenses and returning to a reliance on nuclear weapons for deterrence.

#### **D. SUMMARY**

With its refusal to participate in the Strategic Defense Initiative, France demonstrated its unique view of alliance relations, cooperation, and the defense of Europe. Adherence to a deterrence strategy is not solely a French belief, but its linkage to French autonomy and “Great Nation” status makes the argument particularly unique. Through its open criticism of the SDI, alternative European proposals, and BMD-related arms control procedures, France tried to derail the U.S. program to maintain the credibility of its deterrent, shore up European autonomy, and demonstrate its continued importance on the world stage.

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<sup>140</sup> Vago Muradian, “France Does Not Rule Out Rejoining MEADS,” *Defense Daily*, 1 July 1996, p. 6.

<sup>141</sup> de Briganti, “France Continues to Pare Down Nuclear Forces,” 40.

Since the end of the Cold War, French government officials have realized the growing need to address the proliferation of WMD and ballistic missiles. They have also shown a willingness to foster greater cooperation with European and transatlantic allies to advance nonproliferation efforts. Budgetary constraints, unclear strategic requirements, and an inability to reconcile the role of its independent nuclear deterrent are making it difficult for France to develop a coherent policy regarding ballistic missile defense. The concerns which dominated the debate during the 1980s are mostly gone, and have been replaced by uncertainty and confusion. However, this confusion continues to hinder improved Alliance relations, and the result is largely the same as it was during the SDI debate. Divergent BMD policies will divide the United States, France, and NATO, and make it difficult to enhance relations and cooperative efforts.



## V. BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE AND GERMANY

### A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines Germany's involvement with the United States and its ballistic missile defense efforts. As a non-nuclear power, and the front-line nation in a potential East-West conflict, Germany was reliant on the United States for its commitment to extended deterrence. For this reason the 1972 ABM Treaty, and the acceptance of MAD, reassured the German government that the United States would choose deterrence over strategic missile defense. This chapter addresses Germany's reaction to the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative, the first major challenge to the deterrence structure and the first U.S. BMD program that directly affected NATO's deterrent strategy. The SDI debate demonstrated the strategic inconsistencies between the United States and Germany and caused significant tension between these two allies. The pursuit of improved relations with its eastern neighbors was offset by Germany's desire to enhance the bond with the Alliance, and the result was an ambiguous German policy which achieved little.

The end of the Cold War left Germany with the daunting task of integrating East Germany into the unified state. Additional attention has been devoted to the task of addressing the security vacuum immediately to the east of Germany's borders. The strategic concerns of the "Star Wars" period have dissipated in the face of new realities, such as German "out of area" deployments, and the weakness of extended deterrence guarantees. As a result, missile defense has quietly become an accepted policy in the government, while the focus remains on reunification and NATO expansion. Active

involvement in the MEADS program and the planned purchase of other TMD systems indicate that Germany is currently pursuing a policy that shares common goals with the United States. However, resources devoted to other issues which the German government deems more important, shrinking defense budgets, and a general lack of enthusiasm for BMD may lead to a reduced commitment in the future.

#### **B. WEST GERMAN REACTION TO THE STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE**

For the Federal Republic of Germany, President Reagan's speech introducing the Strategic Defense Initiative was the stimulus for another controversy within the government and for another foreign policy challenge. As in other nations in Europe, reactions developed slowly in West Germany, and attention in 1983 remained focused on the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) debate. The West German commitment to deploy American Pershing and cruise missiles in the face of domestic opposition and intense Soviet disapproval was viewed by West German leaders as a demonstration of Alliance loyalty. More importantly, the INF issue was illustrative of West German fears of American withdrawal or U.S. hesitation to commit fully to the defense of Europe. The introduction of U.S. intermediate range missiles into the European theater helped allay West German concerns that the U. S. would fail to escalate to nuclear warfare, if necessary, in response to a Soviet or Warsaw Pact advance.<sup>142</sup> Additionally, the deployment suggested a U.S. willingness to strengthen deterrence in the European theater. With Reagan's speech, however, the proposed shift from deterrence to defense once again

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<sup>142</sup> Jonathan Dean, "Will NATO Survive Ballistic Missile Defense?" Journal of International Affairs 39, no. 1 (Summer 1985): 103.

raised the question of U.S. commitment to Europe. Particularly unsettling was Reagan's attack on the "morality" of the deterrence policy.

### **1. Early West German Concerns**

Initial West German response, while minimal, was almost entirely negative. Minister of Defense, Manfred Wörner dismissed Reagan's "Krieg der Sterne" as insignificant and irrelevant to security issues before the 21st century, but suggested that the introduction of such a system might be beneficial to East-West relations by demonstrating the defensive nature of the NATO Alliance. West German government spokesman Jurgen Sudhoff made similar comments and emphasized that a shift from deterrence to defense would result in uncertainty within the Alliance. While the ruling coalition parties, which included the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Christian Socialist Union (CSU), and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) were cautiously negative, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) was openly opposed to the SDI. SPD arms control expert Egon Bahr argued that proceeding with the SDI would drive a wedge between the United States and Europe by creating a "Fortress America."<sup>143</sup>

Throughout the next year, West German opposition to the Strategic Defense Initiative increased, most obviously through the statements of Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher (FDP) and Defense Minister Wörner (CDU). Genscher's main concerns were the possible harmful effects on East-West relations and the impact on arms control efforts. Following an SDI briefing by U.S. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger in April 1984, Wörner was openly critical of the technological feasibility of

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<sup>143</sup>Christoph Bluth, "SDI: the Challenge to West Germany," *International Affairs* 62, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 247-248.

the program, and argued that achieving perfect ballistic missile defense was an impossibility. The result, according to Wörner, of partially effective missile defenses deployed by both sides would be an increase in tension, accompanied by an accelerating arms race. As BMD technology developed, the United States and Soviet Union would experience an increase in security, while Europe would become less secure. For Wörner, the sharing of risk through equal insecurity was one of the strongest bonds of the NATO Alliance and the removal of that equality placed in jeopardy the cohesion of the Alliance.<sup>144</sup> Instead, Wörner advocated a U.S.-Soviet agreement to ban weapons from space.

Additionally, in April 1984 all five parties in the Bundestag openly opposed Washington's SDI plans. As Elizabeth Pond noted in the Christian Science Monitor:

what brings these otherwise divergent politicians together is a conviction that the Reagan administration's plans for space-based weapons would harm the West more than the Soviet Union -- and fatally decouple West European from American defense.<sup>145</sup>

As happened in Great Britain, however, political and economic factors began to take hold in West Germany and the unanimous opposition to the SDI began to crumble.

## **2. A New German Approach**

By the Summer of 1984, outright criticism and opposition to the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative had ceased, and the German Federal Security Council discussed the U.S. program in greater detail. The result was a recommendation that shifted the West German government to a more cooperative, less hostile, approach to the SDI. Two

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>145</sup> Elizabeth Pond, "Europe Fears 'Star Wars' May Destroy, Not Defend West," Christian Science Monitor, 12 April, 1984, p. 30.



factors may have influenced this shift in policy. First, the strong U.S. commitment to the research program suggested that further negative rhetoric could weaken the U.S.-German relationship. In contrast, support for the SDI would reinforce the bond between the two allies which had been enhanced by the recent INF deployment. Second, West German realization of the U.S. financial commitment to the SDI research program may have tempted the government with the possibility of technological and economic benefits.<sup>146</sup>

Defense Minister Wörner first relayed this new position during a press conference in Washington, D. C. on 12 July 1984. At this time he offered qualified support to U.S. SDI research, but emphasized the conditions of that support. If effective missile defenses became technologically feasible, the defensive shield would have to protect the European allies, in addition to U.S. territory. Just as the U.S. nuclear deterrent had extended over Europe, any replacement system had to ensure the equality of security in order to prevent the "decoupling" of American and European defense.<sup>147</sup>

### **3. The German Position Defined**

A more detailed foundation of the West German position emerged in October 1984 in a paper on ballistic missile defense issued by the Bundestag Caucus of Chancellor Helmut Kohl's ruling Christian Democratic party. While more cooperative in nature than previous statements, the position paper suggested six main concerns of the CDU. The points addressed were:

- 1.) American research into ballistic missile defense was necessary because of heavy Soviet research efforts in this field;
- 2.) This research should be regarded, not as a prelude to future U.S.--

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<sup>146</sup> David Yost, "Western Europe and the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative," 300.

<sup>147</sup> Brauch, "Europe and Strategic Defense," 295.

Soviet competition in testing and deployment of space weapons, but rather as a positive contribution to arms control (i.e., an inducement for Soviet reductions of nuclear weapons);

3.) The Caucus said it was skeptical that deployment of defensive systems would end the arms race between the United States and Soviet Union, and therefore that research as such could not replace nuclear deterrence;

4.) However, if effective defenses appeared feasible in the future, Europeans must have equal protection with the United States if the Alliance was not to suffer. There should be no differences in vulnerability between alliance partners. Any defense must also deal with shorter-range Soviet systems and must take into account the conventional imbalance in favor of the Soviets;

5.) The United States must consult with the Western Europeans at each step of development and the Western Europeans must participate fully in research, and;

6.) The effects of the research program on the ABM Treaty must be carefully considered.<sup>148</sup>

These principles served as the framework for West German policy over the next few years and the themes resurfaced repeatedly in the policy statements of German officials.

Defense Minister Wörner frequently addressed the first point in interviews, lectures, and articles. Describing the U.S. SDI research program as “the necessary and legitimate response to Soviet endeavours in the field of offensive and defensive systems,”<sup>149</sup> and reiterating that “the Soviets have continued energetic work on anti-missile defenses,”<sup>150</sup> Wörner attempted to justify any West German involvement to both domestic critics of the SDI, and to the Soviet Union itself. Links to the West and its policies of cooperation with the East placed West Germany in a position in which support

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<sup>148</sup> Dean, 103-104.

<sup>149</sup> Manfred Wörner, lecture given at Royal United Services Institute on 27 November 1985, printed in *Journal of the RUSI* 131, no. 1 (March 1986): 19.

<sup>150</sup> Wörner, “A Missile Defense For NATO Europe,” *Strategic Review* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1986):

for the U.S. research initiative had to be couched in terms which were justifiable to the Soviet Union. Hans Rühle, head of the planning staff in the Ministry of Defense, echoed these arguments. For Rühle, Soviet research efforts were the stimulus for the American program, although his support for the SDI stopped short of the objectives sought by the Americans. Rather than eliminating the effectiveness of nuclear weapons, Rühle believed SDI could improve strategic stability by discouraging a Soviet first strike.<sup>151</sup> The originality of this position is emphasized by the fact that U.S. statements never discussed Soviet programs until *after* West Germany used this argument. At no point in 1983 or 1984 were Soviet developments used as a rationale for the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative.

Arms control efforts had always been an important component of West German policy, and the second point raised by the Caucus framed SDI in exactly those terms. Chancellor Kohl, in a February 1985 speech in Munich, cautiously introduced the West German position by defending the research-oriented nature of the program and by suggesting that it was a powerful incentive for the Soviets to negotiate arms control agreements.<sup>152</sup> By April 1985, arms control talks between the United States and Soviet Union were proceeding in Geneva, and Horst Teltschik, director for security and international relations in the Office of the Chancellor of West Germany, credited the SDI for achieving political results, even in its developmental form.<sup>153</sup> There was not unanimous agreement on this point, however, and Foreign Minister Genscher (FDP) firmly

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<sup>151</sup> Bluth, 254.

<sup>152</sup> Dean, 104.

<sup>153</sup> "Germans Insist on Technology Gains as Part of SDI Cooperation," Aviation Week & Space Technology, 8 April 1985, p. 21.

believed that the SDI would erode the stability between East and West, while damaging any chances for arms control. Throughout 1985, the main consensus of the West German government remained one of support for the SDI program, providing it remained in the research phase and was ultimately aimed at improving arms control conditions, rather than deployment.

The third point insisted on the maintenance of a deterrence strategy and was predicated on a general European assumption that developing defenses would not lead to the abandonment of offensive research. Rather, it was believed that a U.S.-Soviet offensive arms race would be the direct result of deploying defensive capabilities, as each side attempted to overwhelm enhanced capabilities. For this reason the nuclear deterrence strategy had to remain intact. This argument appeared to oppose the founding objective of the SDI, replacing deterrence with defense, yet at roughly the same time, the United States was revising its goals. The SDI would *strengthen* the U.S. deterrent policy in the short and medium terms, while population defense would be a long-term goal (see chapter II for greater detail). This shift in U.S. policy was entirely consistent with the goals of the West German government.

The fourth point of the CDU Caucus represented the two core concerns of the West German government: the potential “decoupling” of U.S. and European defense and the Soviet Union’s overwhelming conventional superiority. Even while moving towards approval of the U.S. research program, the anxieties expressed during the earlier period of disapproval were still evident in December 1984. Support for the SDI remained contingent on the ability to guarantee a common defense which would maintain Alliance

cohesion. West German political and military leaders were particularly sensitive to the fact that the SDI would provide no defense against nuclear artillery, cruise missiles, or other delivery methods. The ability of the Soviet Union to wage a nuclear war on Western Europe, and West Germany in particular, would remain, even as technological developments led to a fool-proof shield over the United States.

If the time ever arrived when nuclear deterrence was replaced by effective defenses, it was apparent that conventional force structure would become an even greater concern. The Social Democrats offered this as one of their prime arguments against the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative, in terms of funding for the research program. In a statement by the SDP's Parliamentary Group, the opposition party suggested that:

even now it can be foreseen that the funds for SDI cannot be made available from new sources, but will largely be diverted from current items in the defense budget.... The resources needed for strengthening NATO's conventional defence posture--the Alliance's declared target in the years ahead--will then no longer be available. However, if SDI is implemented it is precisely NATO's conventional capabilities that acquire particular significance. The elimination of the central strategic nuclear threat would result in the conventional imbalance against NATO making itself fully felt.<sup>154</sup>

The opposition party was more explicit, but the ruling coalition shared similar concerns.

West German realization of the U.S. commitment to the SDI made European cooperation essential if Europe hoped to influence the U.S. program. The Caucus expressed the importance of U.S. consultation with West European leaders due to a belief that the SDI could have a profound effect on the security of NATO as a whole. Alliance partners, according to the Caucus, should share responsibility in future decision-making on

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<sup>154</sup> Bluth, 259.

testing and deployment. Participating in the research portion of SDI was important for two reasons. First, like the need to avoid “decoupling” of U.S. and European defense, Chancellor Kohl pointed out in his February 1985 Munich speech that Europe should avoid being “technologically decoupled.”<sup>155</sup> U.S. research without European participation would widen an already noticeable technological gap within the Alliance, and participation was crucial to ensure Europe’s technological advancement. Second, U.S. funding for research could have positive effects on West Germany’s technological business sector. A Ministry of Defense report had identified eleven areas of research in which West German companies could potentially compete for contract dollars, and West German industry had a competitive advantage in five of those.<sup>156</sup>

The final point of the Caucus emphasized the continuing, strong West German support for the ABM Treaty. Nearly every public comment, or governmental policy statement throughout 1985 made it clear that the ABM Treaty was more valuable than the SDI research program. On 28 February 1985, the coalition ruling parties issued a joint statement that stressed that “the ABM Treaty should be fully maintained.” On 27 March 1985, the federal government stressed “that the ABM Treaty should be strengthened as long as no other common agreement can be reached.” Additionally, the German Defense White Paper of June 1985 stated that, “in the short and medium term the observance of the ABM Treaty would take precedence” over alternative proposals.<sup>157</sup> Commitment to the principles of the treaty was consistent with West Germany’s tendency to favor arms

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<sup>155</sup> Wilson, A27.

<sup>156</sup> Bluth, 262.

<sup>157</sup> Brauch, 175-177.

control efforts. The possibility that the SDI could destabilize East-West relations by challenging the ABM Treaty remained a major concern of the West German government.

The two clearest expressions of West German policy towards ballistic missile defense and the Strategic Defense Initiative emerged in March and April 1985. On 27 March 1985, the West German government issued a statement which outlined the conditions for support of the U.S. initiative. The statement encouraged the need to work towards the development of a more stable relationship between the superpowers, recommended strengthening the ABM Treaty, and warned against an arms race in space. Flexible response had to be maintained as an Alliance strategy, and political and military risk-sharing had to remain an essential component of Alliance cohesion. Finally, the statement suggested that Europe should strive to reach a common position on the SDI.<sup>158</sup> On 18 April 1985 Chancellor Kohl presented the government's position in the Bundestag. Describing the SDI program as "justified, politically necessary, and in the interest of overall Western security," Kohl reiterated the need to maintain a deterrence strategy, West German support for arms control and the ABM Treaty, and the need for participation in research "to preserve and increase their influence on the future evolution of the SDI."<sup>159</sup>

Debate within the government delayed a decision on West German participation in research until December 1985. Foreign Minister Genscher and the FDP reportedly played a role in limiting the government's involvement to lessen the damage to relations with the East. These conditions reportedly included: technology transfer guarantees, no direct government involvement in research with no involvement beyond research, and no

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>159</sup> Yost, "Western Europe and ...", 300-301.

financial support for research.<sup>160</sup> Economics Minister Martin Bangemann (FDP) was appointed chief negotiator to reach an agreement between the two governments, and his appointment emphasized the technological and economic aspects of German involvement in SDI, while downplaying its strategic significance. A formal agreement was reached in March 1986, and West Germany became the second ally, behind Great Britain, to accept participation in SDI research.

### **C. GERMANY AND BMD IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA**

While the British and French governmental policies towards BMD in the 1990s remain difficult to define, German attitudes towards missile defense are clearer. At the same time, the issue itself appears as only a minor aspect of German security policy, and BMD has generated an insignificant amount of debate in the last six years. Compared to the political opposition and difficulties experienced during the SDI period, missile defense in Germany, at least theater missile defense, has become a quietly accepted policy, allowing greater attention, energy, and financial resources to be focused on matters of greater importance. Security to the east of Germany and reunification occupy the majority of the government's attention, leaving BMD a topic of little interest.

#### **1. Significant German Preoccupations**

The growing Mediterranean threat has not developed in a similar context within Germany, as it has within other NATO countries such as France. The threat from that region has been identified, but the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact left German attention focused on Central Europe rather than Middle East or

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 302.



Mediterranean. Security policy, as a component of foreign policy, involves German efforts to drive the potential of conflict eastward, away from their own border. U.S.- and German-led efforts to push for NATO expansion are a concrete demonstration of this desire. Germany no longer wishes to be the front-line state in any potential East-West conflict, and the cultivation of improved security and economic relations with eastern neighbors remains today the main focus of German security policy.

Germany's primary preoccupation remains the reconstruction of the unified nation. The contrast between East and West Germany at the time of reunification was stark, and it was clear that vast resources would be needed to ensure the successful transformation. By emphasizing domestic needs, foreign policy concerns have assumed a lesser role for Germany. Hans Rühle noted that "unless something extraordinary happens, Germany for the next ten to fifteen years will focus almost its entire attention on completing the 'inner unity' of the nation."<sup>161</sup> Ballistic missile defenses do not amount to an "extraordinary" occurrence in Germany, and have not been an issue that would draw attention away from domestic reconstruction.

## **2. Factors Leading to BMD Support**

What little discussion that has arisen concerning missile defense is founded on three security policy issues: the validity and relevance of extended deterrence in the post-Cold War period, the constitutional approval of German "out of area" operations, and the need to replace the outdated Hawk air defense system with one capable of meeting a variety of airborne threats, including tactical ballistic missiles. In each case, it has been

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<sup>161</sup> Hans Rühle, "Ballistic Missile Defense: A German View," *Comparative Strategy* 12, no. 1 (January-March 1993): 83.

less a debate about BMD, than a general acceptance of the principle of defense and a question of how best to proceed given increasingly stringent budget restrictions.

Extended deterrence became an issue in Germany as early as 1990, following NATO's London Declaration. During that meeting, NATO ministers agreed to a fundamental shift in NATO nuclear policy, by stating that it was changing its strategy of flexible response and that "by reducing its reliance on nuclear weapons, NATO in the new Europe will adopt a new strategy making its nuclear forces truly weapons of last resort."<sup>162</sup> By removing nuclear weapons as an integral aspect of NATO's strategy and declaring their use to be one of "last resort," the extended deterrence which had protected non-nuclear Germany was seemingly removed.<sup>163</sup> If that were the case, Germany would need to consider an alternative means of defense.

More directly relevant to German interests is the perception that extended deterrence from the United States has eroded since the end of the Cold War. Historically, the reality of extended deterrence and American willingness to commit to a nuclear exchange in the defense of Germany has always been difficult to prove. The INF debate, for example, was largely an attempt to reemphasize U.S. commitment to nuclear deterrence in defense of Europe, and particularly Germany. Now, a strategy of deterrence based on strategic nuclear weapons has become even more difficult to demonstrate effectively. In 1992, three German observers indicated that the strategy of the Cold War:

cannot be in Germany's security interest. Such a strategy would not only require an entirely unrealistic and undesirable degree of U.S. self-

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<sup>162</sup> "NATO Transformed: The London Declaration," Selected Document No. 38, Department of State, Washington D.C., 6 July 1990, 1.

<sup>163</sup> Holger Mey and Andrew Denison, "View From Germany: France's Nuclear Tests and Germany's Nuclear Interests," *Comparative Strategy* 15, no. 2 (April-June 1996): 171.

commitment, but would also narrow the range of U.S. military, and hence, political freedom of action in a way which is incompatible with maintaining alliances worldwide.<sup>164</sup>

The new security environment and the diversity of threats to Germany have negatively affected the credibility of extended deterrence and forced the German government to reconsider how it will defend military forces, citizens, and territory. Missile defenses are believed to be one possible replacement.

The second reason that missile defenses, particularly theater missile defenses, were gradually accepted by the German government was the increasing use of German defense forces beyond the boundaries of the German state. Since the end of the Cold War Germany has recognized that its size and importance in the world require its participation in sharing responsibility for crisis management around the globe. German minesweepers were deployed to the Persian Gulf in 1991, and aircraft were provided to assist humanitarian aid efforts to the Kurds in northern Iraq. In 1992, 1,500 medics were in place in Cambodia in support of U.N. operations, soon followed by 1,700 armed soldiers in Somalia. From 1993 to 1995 Germany incrementally increased its role in the ex-Yugoslavia crisis, and it was in 1994 that the German constitutional court ruled that the Bundeswehr could legally be sent abroad, provided the Bundestag approved of the deployment.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Thomas Enders, Holger Mey, and Michael Rühle, "The New Germany and Nuclear Weapons," in Nuclear Weapons in the Changing World: Perspectives from Europe, Asia, and North America, (New York: Plenum Press, 1992), 134-135.

<sup>165</sup> Elizabeth Pond, "Germany Finds Its Niche as a Regional Power," Washington Quarterly 19, no. 1 (Winter 1996): downloaded from Lexis Nexis server.

As the army reorganized, it developed the Krisenreaktionskrafte (KRK), a 37,000-strong crisis reaction force designed specifically to meet the growing emphasis of "out of area" operations.<sup>166</sup> In support of NATO and Western European Union (WEU) operations, or in connection with U.N. peacekeeping and humanitarian relief operations, German forces could find themselves deployed within reach of short range ballistic missiles. In light of such deployments, it became increasingly important to provide a defensive capability to defend those forces. Additionally, the variety of missions and governing authorities (NATO, WEU, U.N.) makes it uncertain that U.S. TMD capabilities would always be present to provide that defense. Therefore, the German government recognized the need to develop or purchase a TMD system to protect deployed troops.

To emphasize this growing requirement, the 1994 German defense white paper indicated that:

the increasing proliferation in crisis areas of long-range missiles that can also be equipped with weapons of mass destruction and the emerging capability of foreign forces to use them as a threat to parts of Europe and Germany or Allied forces during operations call for the build-up of a tactical missile defense capability.<sup>167</sup>

One course that Germany is pursuing in this field is the planned purchase of the upgraded Patriot, PAC-3 missile, as soon as U.S. forces are equipped. The current five-year defense plan includes funding for the upgraded missiles and the purchase would be an extension of the twelve year relationship between Germany and the Patriot.<sup>168</sup> Originally purchased as

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<sup>166</sup> Kathleen Bunten, "From Conscripts to Crisis Reaction Forces," Jane's Defence Weekly, 20 March 1996, p. 24.

<sup>167</sup> 1994 German Defense White Paper, para. 577.

<sup>168</sup> "Germany Plans Buy of PAC-3 Missiles," Aerospace Daily, 16 October 1996, p. 82.

an air defense system, the German government pursued the Patriot upgrade, partially in response to the TMD capabilities displayed during the Gulf War.

The second major German undertaking is the program to replace the obsolete Hawk air defense system. Early discussions on the replacement system led to a decision that any Hawk successor would need to possess the capability to defend against short- and medium-range ballistic missiles in addition to aircraft and other air-breathing threats. The initial German concept, named Taktisches Luftverteidigungssystem (TLVS),<sup>169</sup> soon merged with the U.S. Army's Corps-SAM TMD program and became the MEADS program. After bilateral negotiations France and Italy expressed interest in MEADS and the program became a multinational venture, with the intent to split project funding between the four participants. Negotiations continued until spring 1996 when France indicated it would be unable to participate due to budget constraints, forcing a reexamination of program expenses by the remaining three partners. To date, MEADS continues to move forward and represents a substantial commitment by the German government to TMD development and support for U.S. BMD research.

### **3. Budget Constraints**

Like other Western European nations, Germany is facing pressure to cut, rather than increase, defense spending. France's budget difficulties forced its withdrawal from MEADS, while Great Britain has been hesitant to commit scarce resources to BMD programs before clearly defining its national requirements. In July 1996 the German cabinet reduced the 1997 defense budget to 46.6 billion Deutsche marks (\$30.4 billion), a

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<sup>169</sup> Holger Mey, "View From Germany: Extended Air Defense--Germany Between European and Transatlantic Orientations," *Comparative Strategy*, 14, no. 1 (January-March 1995): 82.

500 million mark reduction from the 1996 budget, and a 1.5 billion mark reduction from the original 1997 forecast.<sup>170</sup> While German missile defense programs faced no immediate cuts, the budget reduction portends that future limitations may not be out of the question. Hans Rühle, in 1993, warned of this trend, by predicting that “military threats, of whatever kind, are being replaced by finances as the only remaining determinant for basic decisions on security policy.”<sup>171</sup> Whether or not budget considerations override security concerns and missile defense requirements remains to be seen in the coming years.

#### **D. SUMMARY**

In the three years between President Reagan’s March 1983 speech and the signing of a participation agreement, the West German government grappled with a number of major political and strategic issues. Its vulnerable geographic position between East and West and its reliance on the U.S. strategic arsenal for deterrence were challenged with the U.S. decision to pursue strategic missile defenses. Efforts to maintain smooth relations with the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries while supporting its U.S. partner led the West German government to produce an understandably ambiguous policy on the Strategic Defense Initiative. The conditional nature of its support allowed West Germany to maintain, according to Christoph Bluth, “an intrinsically skeptical, almost hostile attitude to President Reagan’s approach...but allowed itself enough room for manoeuvre to participate in the research process and reap whatever economic and technological benefits might come its way.”<sup>172</sup> Political fears of increased East-West tensions and

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<sup>170</sup> de Briganti, “Bonn Trims Defense Budget,” Defense News, 15-21 July 1996, p. 2.

<sup>171</sup> Rühle, 82.

<sup>172</sup> Bluth, 250.

strategic fears of "decoupling" blended with economic desires and Alliance pressures to produce a West German policy which never fully endorsed the fundamental objectives of the SDI, but never fully disavowed them either.

Since reunification, Germany has been preoccupied with reconstructing a unified nation and establishing greater security on its eastern border. At the same time, it has taken an important step in exercising global influence through its use of the Bundeswehr beyond its own borders. The increased threat to deployed forces and its own territory and the perceived weakness of the U.S. extended deterrence guarantee have resulted in a general acceptance of the need for missile defenses, at least on a limited scale. The opposition present during the "Star Wars" debate has evaporated, but has been replaced with minimal support, indicative of the energy devoted to other issues. While the German government's actions with the MEADS program and Patriot upgrades suggest commitment in this area of defense, the unenthusiastic support and possible budgetary constraints may lead to a reduction in future German BMD development. BMD cooperation between the United States and Germany currently exists, but the bond is not extremely strong and may weaken if the United States fails to nurture the relationship.





## VI. CONCLUSION

### A. THESIS SUMMARY

This thesis examines ballistic missile defense and how it affects the relationship between the United States and other members of the Atlantic Alliance. The central argument is that the development of missile defense has been, and continues to be, a major source of friction among NATO members. This friction has the potential to weaken Alliance relations; it might erode the level of transatlantic cooperation. Interestingly, the end of the Cold War did little to reduce the difficulty of developing a common NATO policy that member states can uniformly support. The major strategic differences that fueled the debate during the Cold War are gone, however, and the nature of the problem has changed. Economic constraints and difficulty in adapting Cold War assets and policies to the new security environment are the new impediments to a unified BMD strategy.

To demonstrate how divisive an issue BMD was within the Alliance during the Cold War this thesis assesses the interaction between the United States and three NATO partners during the Strategic Defense Initiative debate in the 1980s. To determine the nature of the relationship in the post-Cold War era the opinions, statements, and BMD policies of each country over the last six years were surveyed. The discussion of the two periods makes it apparent that efforts by the United States to pursue missile defense development contributed to the increased level of tension between the allies, placing strains on NATO cohesion.

## **B. THESIS FINDINGS**

During the Cold War, the United States made a number of major policy decisions regarding ballistic missile defense without consulting its allies, or considering the possible effects on the security of those allies. The 1967 Sentinel announcement was the first major U.S. decision to deploy a BMD system to protect U.S. urban-industrial centers, reportedly against a growing Chinese threat. The administration argued that it would have no impact on the strategic balance with the Soviet Union, but others argued that any BMD would adversely affect the U.S.-Soviet stability. European partners remained quiet following this announcement, offering little overt criticism, and even less open support for the U.S. initiative. The Sentinel system posed problems, though, for European allies attempting to promote better relations with the Soviet Union.

A U.S. policy more acceptable to the Europeans was the 1972 ABM Treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union. The treaty limited BMD capabilities to guarantee the integrity of U.S. and Soviet nuclear arsenals. The intention of the treaty was to remove the need for continued offensive force expansion by maintaining strategic effectiveness and a policy of mutually assured destruction. Ideally, the treaty would enable both sides to negotiate offensive arms reductions while ensuring the vulnerability provided by the limitation of defensive systems. European support was linked to the adherence to the MAD model and the preservation of a nuclear deterrence strategy to ensure peace in Europe. As well, European allies welcomed arms control initiatives and led efforts to foster continued open dialogue with Soviet counterparts.

The U.S. policy built on the ABM Treaty was challenged by President Reagan's announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative in 1983. His decision to make nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete" threatened the stability achieved under the nuclear deterrence strategy of the previous thirty years, and signaled a renewal of confrontation with the Soviet Union. The program also signaled an increase in unease between the United States and its three most important NATO partners, particularly when the United States sought not only their approval, but cooperation. Great Britain, France, and Germany each spent the next three years struggling to define policies related to the SDI which would minimize damage to Alliance cohesion, while protecting the stability of the previous decade.

The British government had three primary concerns which made cooperation with the United States difficult. First, SDI threatened the ABM Treaty, which guaranteed the viability of the British independent strategic arsenal. For the British, nuclear deterrence, and their contribution to it, offered stability in Europe and deterred the possibility of conventional Soviet aggression. Second, British policy makers had more faith in political dialogue than in the development of technological defenses to improve stability between East and West. Third, the British supported continued arms control efforts, and feared that SDI would remove that option and instead lead to an offensive arms race. Eventually, the British government agreed to participate in the research in order to reap the economic benefits, prevent a widening technological gap, and as a means to demonstrate Alliance loyalty. Its support for the program was always extremely limited, though, and the British

government never agreed with the strategic goals of the United States. For the British, SDI was a reckless U.S. decision, made without consideration of the impact on allies.

The French opposed the Strategic Defense Initiative from the outset and never altered that opposition. The heart of the matter for France was the threat SDI posed to the deterrence strategy, a key component of French national security policy. By negating deterrence, the U.S. initiative would threaten the unique position of France, which perceived itself as offering its own autonomous European defense. With the value of its independent nuclear arsenal diminished, the weakness of the French conventional force would become evident, resulting in a lesser position for France in European politics. The overt French criticism of the U.S. program and the efforts to unify Europe against the United States further damaged the cohesion of the Alliance and forced other members to choose between France's call for European solidarity and transatlantic cooperation. Either choice had an adverse effect on relations between the allies.

Without a strategic deterrent of its own, West Germany had relied on an extended deterrence guarantee by the United States to prevent Soviet nuclear or conventional aggression. SDI placed that guarantee in jeopardy, and the West German government feared the instability that the U.S. program would cause. Additionally, West Germany was concerned that SDI would mean the decoupling of U.S. and European security interests through the creation of a "Fortress America," secure in the knowledge that it could survive a Soviet missile strike. More than any other European country, West Germany sought to improve relations with the Soviet bloc, and SDI promised to disrupt efforts to enhance that dialogue. Like the British, the German government eventually

offered limited support to the U.S. program, but never endorsed SDI's fundamental objectives.

For all three countries the Strategic Defense Initiative was troubling in its apparent impact on nuclear deterrence, a strategy with which the Europeans were comfortable. In the minds of the Europeans, nuclear deterrence had provided stability in the region, had deterred conventional conflict, and had made up for the conventional force imbalance of NATO. Arms control was possible, and improved relations with the Soviet Union suggested that peaceful coexistence in the European theater was a genuine possibility. With its unilateral policy, the United States failed to consider the response of its allies or the impact SDI would have on NATO strategic planning. As a result, allied support was weak, cooperation was minimal, and Alliance cohesion suffered.

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has refined its BMD program to meet an emerging, more limited, threat, in response to the proliferation of WMD and ballistic missiles. Current administration goals emphasize TMD while restraining the more robust NMD systems. The Clinton administration promotes adherence to the ABM Treaty, although efforts continue to formally define a demarcation line between TMD and BMD systems. (An effort some suggest undermines the essence of the treaty.) Compared to the ambitious objectives of SDI, the missile defense goals of the United States in the post-Cold War period are minimal, and the lack of a Soviet threat suggests that European allies might be more amenable to the concept of BMD. While it is true that NATO has moved forward in accepting the basic principles of TMD, the actions of its member states indicate that no cooperative policy will be reached soon.

Great Britain has acknowledged that missile defense may be an answer to a growing threat from "rogue states." As one of the most important capitals in Europe, London is sure to figure high on the list of targets for a potential adversary. In addition, the British remain one of the most likely allies to deploy troops in support of NATO- or U.N.-sanctioned missions. For these reasons, possessing TMD capabilities should be a high priority for the British government to guarantee that it remains free to act and does not become paralyzed due to vulnerability. Yet the British government has been slow to commit to the development of any type of missile defense, and instead initiated a two year study to clarify its needs. In the meantime, the British government has indicated that it relies on its Trident submarine force to provide a nuclear deterrent against potential aggression. When the results of the BMD study define the needs of Great Britain, the next significant hurdle will be for the government to find the budget resources to pay for development and deployment.

Similarly, France is wary of the missile threat from the Middle East and Mediterranean regions, and has indicated that missile defense may provide security. At the same time, France has undertaken a review of several major policies, and fewer weapons platforms will be developed due to reductions in defense spending. France's withdrawal from the MEADS project, perhaps the most positive symbol of Alliance cooperation on BMD, is illustrative of the difficult choices France must make. Like Great Britain, France has returned to its independent nuclear arsenal as a means to deter a missile attack against deployed French troops of French territory.

Of the three allies discussed in this thesis, Germany has demonstrated the most cooperation with the United States in the post-Cold War period. The need to protect "out of area" troops, the update of the Hawk air defense system, and the weakness of U.S. extended deterrence guarantees were all important factors in Germany's decision to pursue more advanced BMD capabilities. Still, the overall lack of interest in the subject suggests that the German commitment may go only so far and that reunification and NATO expansion continue to be issues of far greater importance. Missile defense escaped a recent round of defense budget cuts, but its security in years to come is difficult to determine.

In the post-Cold War period, then, the United States and its NATO allies continue to have difficulty pursuing common BMD policies that support the overall goals of NATO. The very limited sanction by NATO to develop TMD only for deployed troops is indicative of the problems which still exist. These problems will continue to divide the Alliance in other areas. If Europeans are unable to commit resources to develop TMD systems, they are likely to have a more difficult time deploying forces to a region within range of an aggressor equipped with ballistic missiles or WMD. Or, if an aggressor is capable of attacking a defenseless Paris or Bonn, for example, France or Germany may be more hesitant to support U.S. or NATO military action. In either case, the inability of the United States and its allies to reach a consensus on BMD threatens to weaken the ability of NATO to operate effectively. To strengthen cohesion of the Alliance, the United States must express greater consideration for the needs of its allies, and European member states must demonstrate a greater commitment to meeting NATO goals.





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