

The United States, Europe and the Perspectives for Arms Control

Beitrag von Götz Neuneck[?] für die Podiumsdiskussion des OST-WEST-Kollegs,
Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Brühl

Gesamteuropäische Sicherheit und transatlantisches Verhältnis: Kurz- und mittelfristige Perspektiven

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In the last decade *transatlantic relations* have proved to be very stable. NATO has survived the new tasks it has faced. Its troops together with Russian force constitute an important presence in the Balkans. The EU has expanded its mandate and its membership. It is negotiating with 12 more applicant states. The *transatlantic dialogue* works. European-American relations are embedded in a network of biennial summits and frequent ministerial meetings in which many problems can be discussed. Additionally the EU is building its own security relationship with Russia. The United States and Europe are converging culturally and economically.

Despite all these efforts there is also *growing criticism* from Europe concerning US domestic issues such as the death penalty or the gun culture. Europeans also make the charge that the US is losing interest in international norms and treaties. Examples are the global warming treaties, the global land-mine ban or the International Criminal Court (ICC).¹ There are diverging opinions on the issues of missile defense, the questions how to treat “states of concern” and the development of the Common European Security and Defense Identity. In particular, there is much concern that the United States is following an new course of selfish unilateralism and becoming increasingly an hegemonic power.

In the field of security policy the gap between the United States and Europe looks greater than it was 10 years ago. One has to ask: Is there really a gap between perception and reality or is this the beginning of a strategic divide?

At first one has to consider that both continents have *different priorities*: the US is concentrating itself on its role as a global superpower emphasizing military restructuring, missile defense and the “Revolution in military affairs”, whereas the Europeans are only just starting to create their own defense identity without directing many resources to this endeavor. European and Americans define burden sharing and cooperation differently. While the Americans emphasize the geopolitical and the military dimensions in particular in a search for new adversaries, the Europeans concentrate on economics and the integration of their continent.

[?] Götz Neuneck is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, Germany. He is also deputy chairman of the working group “Physics and Disarmament” of the German Physical Society (DPG). His current work focuses on missile defense, arms control and new military technologies.

¹ See in detail Anthony J. Blinken: The False Crisis Over the Atlantic, in: Foreign Affairs May/June 2001, p. 35-48.

Let me at first say some words about the planned European reaction forces, and then I shall switch to the Bush Administration, missile defense and the prospects for arms control.

1. The EU and its rapid reaction forces

The priorities of the EU are these days shifting towards creating its own European rapid reaction force to deal with regional conflicts and humanitarian crises. One reason for this is without doubt Europe's experience in the Balkan crises over the last decade. The EU, an entity with a total population of 376 million people², some two million soldiers and a collective annual military budget of \$148 billion, was not able to settle the conflict by itself, but instead had to rely on the military and diplomatic leadership of the US. The Europeans were also frustrated by the widening military technological gap between the US and Europe, especially in the fields of air power, communication, reconnaissance and equipment transportation.³ The "Defense Capability initiative" was created to close this gap between the US and the European NATO forces. Reception of this initiative in the USA was lukewarm although officially the key officials supported it.⁴ It is feared that the Europeans may duplicate NATO activities or may become a competitor or an alternative to NATO. Nevertheless one should not overestimate this undertaking. If Europe wants to become an independent political entity it must have the capacity to control its own territory and patrol its own backyard in the longer run.

2. The Bush-Administration

After the first three months in office, it is not yet clear in which direction the Bush administration will move. Most of the security issues such as nuclear reductions, military spending, force transformations and missile defense remain speculations. An open question is: "Will the Bush Administration decide on a unilateral or a multilateral approach?" The New York Daily News reported an unnamed Bush foreign policy adviser as having said: "The Clinton people got intoxicated with the idea of cooperation. Those days are over. It's time for us to cooperate when we can but to put our strategic interests first. No more romance".⁵

There are many indications that the Bush people favor the *unilateral approach*. The following events and rhetoric are worrisome:

- ?? The administration seems willing to overturn environmental regulations and the Kyoto protocol
- ?? The president declared that *Russia* is no longer an enemy but that it "may be a threat".⁶ Defense Secretary Rumsfeld challenged Russian arms exports to Iran and infuriated the Russian government by saying: "Russia is an active proliferator; they are part of the problem"⁷ without giving detailed evidence.
- ?? The key Bush officials consider *China* as a new threat to American policy in Asia. Secretary of State Colin Powell said at his confirmation hearing: "China is a competi-

2 See Ronald E. Powaski: An Army of its own, in: Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, May/June 2001, p.30-31, p. 25

3 EU members and other EU nations have indicated to offer more than 100.000 soldiers, 400 aircraft and 100 ships on a notice of 60 days to this new European corps. The target date for this procedure is 2003. The troops can be kept in the field for approximately one year. The Euro-corps with its 60.000 troops, will become the core of the new European army. Ibid. p.25

4 Ibid. P. 25

5 Quoted from: John Isaacs: Bush II or Reagan III? Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, May/June 2001, p.30-31, p. 31

6 Reuters March 15, 2001, quoted from Isaacs, p.30

7 February 14, 2001 interview on the NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, quoted from Isaacs 2001, p. 30.

tor and a potential regional rival"⁸, thus rejecting China's characterization of the Clinton administration as a "strategic partner".

?? **Nuclear force posture and Nuclear Deterrence** By reevaluating the US nuclear force posture, President Bush seems to favor further cuts in nuclear arsenals. In his May 1 speech the President said that the US "can and will change the size, and the character of our nuclear forces in a way that reflects the reality that the Cold War is over". Unilateral force reductions are possible but this will mean overcoming entrenched mindsets within bureaucracies. Reducing the stockpile to only 2,500 warheads does not call for significant reductions in the number of delivery systems. One consideration is also to develop new low-yield nuclear weapons for use against hard and deeply buried targets such as command bunkers and WMD facilities. Developing such mini-nukes could ruin efforts to stop the spread of WMD by diplomatic means and would undermine the pledge of the Non-proliferation treaty, whereby the five declared NWS promised not to attack non-nuclear states with nuclear weapons.

?? **The weaponization of space** During his confirmation hearing Rumsfeld also argued that the US needs more space capabilities: "We must develop the capabilities to defend against missiles, terrorism and newer threats against our space assets and information systems." A Commission under his chairmanship believes that the vast array of space assets - communication, navigation, intelligence - is more and more vulnerable to "state and non-state actors hostile to the United States and its interests. Although the United States is without a real rival among space-faring nations, it warns of a "Pearl Harbour in Space". The direction of the Commission's recommendations are clear. The U.S. military must invest more to establish a space force and must be willing to weaponize space to protect the U.S. economy as well the economy of its allies and friends. The president should "have the option to deploy weapons in space to deter threats to, and if necessary, defend against attacks on U.S. interests."⁹ The report also examines the barriers which could come from international arms restriction regimes:¹⁰

3. Missile Defense

The president and the three top security advisers, Rumsfeld, Powell and Rice agree in moving expeditiously toward deploying a NMD system. Rumsfeld argued for expanding the more limited Clinton NMD approach to a "phased and layered deployment scheme that could be based on land, sea or space-borne systems." Such an expanded "missile defense" (MD) system will certainly lead to more delays in deployment. The first step toward a NMD-System, the construction of a radar site on Shemya island in Alaska was postponed until next year. Rumsfeld and Powell agreed that the 1972 ABM treaty should be altered or canceled, but it is no longer relevant" (Powell) or "ancient history" (Rumsfeld).

The *ABM Treaty* permits deployment of up to 100 interceptors, but it unequivocally imposes the obligation "not to deploy ABM systems for a defense of the territory of its country and not to provide a base for such a defense.". The treaty also prohibits space-based or mobile systems which have the capability to intercept "strategic missiles". Indeed, nuclear disarmament as undertaken in the START framework is inconceivable without ABM restrictions. Strategic weapons could only be reduced when all parties involved are certain that even a small number of nuclear warheads would suffice to effectively counteract a massive attack. As soon as

8 January 17, 2000, quoted from Isaacs 2001, p. 31.

9 "There is no blanket prohibition in international law on placing or using weapons in space, applying force from space to earth, or conducting military operations in and through space Ibid. P. 18

10 Michael Moore: Non-aggressive Weapons? In: : Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, March/April 2001, p.17-19

one party protects itself against the retaliatory strike by means of a missile defense system, this stability is threatened. Fundamental nuclear arms control would be seriously complicated and might even break down.

Currently, US missile defense research also concentrates on Theater Missile Defense (TMD) intended to safeguard against tactical missiles. Some of these systems, however, are designed with capabilities which might in theory give them significant strategic capabilities.¹¹

On September 1, 2000, President Clinton announced that he would leave the decision to deploy the planned National Missile Defense System (NMD) to his successor. He also said that "The technology of the system is promising, the system as a whole is not yet proven".¹² He also made clear that the technology was not yet ready, that a deployment would undermine U.S. security and that the U.S. is pursuing diplomatic efforts to reduce the threats from the so-called "state of concerns".¹³

The Threat

It is open doubt that erecting a missile shield can be justified by the so called emerging missile states such as North Korea and Iran.¹⁴

If one is to summarize the missile threat globally, one can state that:¹⁵

- ?? Roughly 25 countries have developed and purchased ballistic missiles, most of which are US allies. Only five are considered potential threats to US interests: Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea and Syria.
- ?? These five developing countries have not the resources and the know-how to build long-range ballistic missiles (5.000 – 10.000 km) in a short time. If they would decide to build ICBMs, there would be enough warning time of any threatening missile development
- ?? Additionally, there would be enough time to use other efforts to avoid such a move: active diplomacy, inspections, sanctions and also as a last resort, "military means".
- ?? ballistic missiles are the least likely method to attack the US or their troops abroad. Other means such as terrorist attacks with WMD delivered by cruise missiles, ship-based missiles, truck bombs are more likely and are not covered by NMD

In the view of most European countries, the threat of ballistic missiles is not increasing significantly. This situation might change, but so far there are no indications of this. The threat by 'rogue states' cannot be completely eliminated by implementation of a missile defense..

There is also much doubt about the Readiness of the Technology

A crucial question is also how effective a future NMD system would be. Intercepting high-speed warheads which travel at a speed of 5.000 m per second or more with a missile is an

¹¹ See: Tom Bielefeld/Götz Neuneck: US-Raketenabwehr: Zurück zum globalen Raketenschild? In Wissenschaft und Frieden, 1/2001, S. 7-11.

¹² Remarks by The President On National Missile Defense, September 1, 2000, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, September 1, www.whitehouse.gov/library/hot_releases/September_1_2000_2.html

¹³ The terminology changed from „rogue states“ to „states of concern“. The criterion for a „rogue state“ status shifted in the last years from internal to external behavior. The key criteria for the US usage of a „rogue state“ are now related to traditional national security concerns: the pursuit of WMD programs, the use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy, and the perceived threat to Western interests in key regions“ See. Robert S. Litwak: Rogue States and U.S. Foreign Policy - Containment after the Cold War, Washington D.C. 2000“, p. 7

¹⁴ See for details: Götz Neuneck :Ballistic Missile Defense – a Farewell to Arms Control? Contribution to the Conference "RETHINKING Nuclear Disarmament" organized by the Heinrich-Böll-Foundation, September 24-26, 2000

¹⁵ See for details: J. Cirincione: Assessing the Ballistic Missile Threat, Statement im Subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation and Federal Services, Committee on Governmental Affairs, US Senate, 9.2.2000.

enormous technical challenge. So far, the recent test program experienced a number of delays and failures. Experts doubt that the NMD system can work at all. Technical analysis shows that the current technology cannot distinguish between enemy warheads and decoys.¹⁶ The key factor in determining the effectiveness of NMD will be the ability to overcome efforts to counter the system. The current system will be ineffective against the threat because of feasible countermeasures to the “hit-to-kill” interceptors.¹⁷ *Countermeasures* are designed to overwhelm or deceive a defense system and have been a fundamental problem for any ballistic missile defense from the beginning of the missile age. These countermeasures require technology much less sophisticated than is needed to build a long-range missile in the first place.

Over the past decade, the United States has spent more than US\$ 100 billion in its attempt to create an effective protection shield against incoming ballistic missiles. Since 1983, 17 tests have been conducted, of which only three were reported to be successful.¹⁸ And even after this latest test there is good reason for considerable doubt as to whether the result is worth the effort: technologically, it is not feasible to achieve 100% protection against the nuclear threat, which is not necessarily a ballistic missile threat.

NMD and the implications for European security¹⁹

If the US proceeds in developing its various NMD and TMD systems, this will have four dimensions with different implications for Europe:²⁰

First is the **global dimension**. START II implementation is currently blocked by the Russian Duma’s insistence that its implementation must be coupled with a preservation of the ABM Treaty. Future progress in the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) is dependent on Chinese cooperation, which in turn is blocked by the refusal of the United States, unilaterally, to agree to start negotiations on outer space. Abrogation of the ABM Treaty and NMD deployment could lead to a new arms race between the US, Russia and China, which could also affect India and Pakistan.

Second is the **transatlantic dimension**, where a breakdown of the ABM Treaty could have serious repercussions for the NATO alliance. As noted by the annual IISS *Strategic Survey*, allied disagreements over the ABM Treaty are part of a wider phenomenon in which “the bridge of communication [between the EU and the US] seems to have broken down and, unless some way is found to reconstruct it, the loss of trust could have a profound impact on the alliance’s cohesion.”

Third is the **intra-European dimension** and the ramifications of US unilateralism in withdrawing from the ABM Treaty and deploying NMD for both the nuclear arsenals of France and Britain and independent European defense efforts. An unraveling of nuclear weapons arms control could pressure Paris and London to increase their nuclear arsenals, while additional expenditures on missile defense could undermine efforts to develop a robust and autonomous European security policy.

Finally, there is the **regional dimension** of missile threats emanating from such countries as Iran, Iraq, Libya or Syria. While most Europeans do not yet see specific ballistic missile threats from these countries, it is also true that serious analysis on future threats and adequate responses is only just beginning in Europe. The Europeans need to develop joint posi-

¹⁶ See: The New York Times, June 9, 2000

¹⁷ Richard Garwin: The Wrong Plan, in: The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, March/April 2000, p. 36-41.

¹⁸ See: George N. Lewis, Theodore A. Postol, John Pike: *Why National Missile Defense Won't Work*, in: Scientific American, August 1999, p.36-41

¹⁹ Götz Neuneck: Missile Defense, Germany and Europe, Contribution for the Pugwash Meeting no.257, Pugwash Workshop on Nuclear Stability and Missile Defense, 26-28 October, Sigtuna, Sweden siehe Jeffrey Boutwell (ed.): Report Pugwash Meeting no.257, Pugwash Workshop on Nuclear Stability and Missile Defense, 26-28 October, Sigtuna, Sweden, Pugwash Occasional Papers, Vol. 2(2), March 2001, S. 85-91

²⁰ Bernd Kubbjig: Ballistic Missile Defense and Arms Control: Positioning Europe as a Credible Actor in the „BMD Game“. Remarks for Discussion in Session III at Western European Union, Institute for Security Studies, Paris, June 9, 2000

tions on future missile threats, taking into account specific European factors [different notions of vulnerability from the US, constrained defense budgets, fewer global military commitments] that can produce positive policies for dealing with proliferating missiles and WMDs. So far, a common threat analysis does not exist. To understand this, one should also stress some European characteristics which could explain some *differences* between the US and the European position. *Firstly*, vulnerability is a normal condition for Europe, as it has been a continuous reality over the last fifty years. Especially during the Cold War, Germany was a designated nuclear battlefield. *Secondly*, the Europeans have shrinking defense budgets and have not yet found their proposed “European Security and Defense Identity” (ESDI). *Thirdly*, they have fewer military responsibility and commitments around the world than the Americans. These points together create a different conception of interests in respect to the assessment of future threats. Additionally, one should have bear in mind that the geography, the dense traffic and multi-ethnic population in Europe could create many threat scenarios with WMDs.

It is readily acknowledged by most Europeans that they have limited leverage when it comes to influencing a US NMD decision. Apart from giving consent to the upgrading of US early warning radars in the UK and Greenland, the main point of leverage will be in pushing for the preservation of the ABM Treaty and the continued involvement of Russia in the global disarmament process.

If there were be an official European **position** one could resume it as follows: The Europeans would welcome an agreement on the subject between Russia and the US. Russia should be included in any future agreement and future steps should be accompanied by further arms control and disarmament steps. The greatest fear is that Russia could withdraw in its own military fortress by leaving arms control treaties such as the CFE- or the INF-Treaty.²¹

In sum, among various *concrete steps* that could be taken are the following: (1) the sharing of information on missile-related activities and capabilities; (2) the creation of a “global early warning system” to monitor and share information on civilian and military missile launches; (3) making available satellite-launch capabilities; (4) increased financial contributions to the control and destruction of Russian fissile material; (5) investing more in preventive diplomacy in troubled regions where the ballistic missile threat is the greatest, such as the Middle East; and (6) working to establish a new ballistic missile arms control regime.

4. Arms Control and Cooperation

The Republican Platform followed a typical anti-arms control course by stating that the CTBT “is another anachronism of obsolete strategic thinking. This treaty is not verifiable, not enforceable, and would not enable the United States to ensure the reliability of the U.S. nuclear deterrent.”²² Many appointees and top officials in the Bush-Administration have been opposing arms control for decades.²³

Nuclear disarmament positive and negative developments:

A decade after the end of the Cold War the danger of a massive use of nuclear weapons by the United States and Russia against one other has now greatly diminished. Compared with the stockpiles of the Soviet Union in 1982 (45,000 nuclear weapons) and the United States (33,000 nuclear weapons in 1967) some progress has been made in reaching the present level of holdings. Each side still deploys some 6,000 strategic nuclear warheads, each of which is

²¹ The problem with ten thousands of tactical nuclear weapons in Russia is still unsolved and too much nuclear weapons are still deployed on the European continent.

²² Republican Platform 2000: Renewing America’s Purpose. Together”, 2000

²³ Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who testified against the Comprehensive treaty (CTBT) in 1999, repeated his concerns about the safety and verification of the U.S. nuclear stockpile. Secretary of State Colin Powell labeled the treaty as “flawed”.

roughly ten times more destructive than the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima in 1945. Twenty of these warheads targeted on cities would kill 25 million Americans or Russians.²⁴ Additionally, the US retains nuclear components to deploy another 5,000 warheads. These enormous destruction capabilities increase the risk of unauthorized or erroneous use or theft of nuclear weapons and the fear of a rapid breakout from treaty restrictions.

But the remaining dangers are “many and diverse”.²⁵ The dangers of a regional nuclear war has increased especially in South Asia where a regional nuclear and missile arms race continues. Due to the fragmented Russian Early Warning System, the high alert status of both nuclear forces and the risk of miscalculations, the danger of an unauthorized, erroneous or accidental use of nuclear weapons has risen. It is believed that the dangers of proliferation are increasing due to the proliferation of relevant material and knowledge. The economic situation in Russia also raised the specter that nuclear warheads or material might be stolen.

Nevertheless in the last ten years there have also been *positive developments* in the field of nuclear arms control:²⁶ *START I* has now been implemented, Russian and American deployed strategic warheads have been reduced from 11.000-13.0000 on each side to 7.000-8.000 each. Deployed non-strategic warheads were withdrawn in 1992, the Lisbon Protocol brought all four nuclear-armed USSR successor states Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine under the roof of *START I*. The last three countries joined the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon states. From 1992 onwards Russia and the United continued their *voluntary dismantlement of warheads* withdrawn from deployment, at a rate of 1500-2000 warheads per year on each side. In 1992, *the Cooperative Threat-Reduction Program* initiated unprecedented cooperation between US and RUS dismantling delivery systems and protection of nuclear materials.

This list of positive news is overshadowed by *negative developments*. On the political side NATO expansion and the use of NATO air-strikes in the Balkans deepened the adversarial stance toward Russia. Russia has renounced its long-standing No-First-Use Pledge. Relying more in its new defense doctrine on nuclear forces is justified by its weak conventional forces, a standard NATO argument during the Cold War. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff refused to endorse *START III* levels below 2000-25000 deployed strategic warheads, despite the desire of Russian military and political leadership to go to 1000-1500. The Nuclear Posture Review” of the Clinton Administration in 1993/1994 only managed minor adjustments of the US nuclear arsenals and failed to address the question of the revocation of the first use of nuclear weapons, which was later suggested by Germany and Canada within NATO.²⁷ India and Pakistan tested nuclear weapons in 1998, raising the danger of a regional nuclear war and fueling hawks’ argument that nonproliferation policies have failed. Alleged nuclear programs in North Korea or Iran were accompanied by missile tests.

In the field of *arms control and international security* much momentum was lost by the lacking will to reduce the nuclear stockpile further. The five nuclear weapon states failed to commit to any timetable for the elimination of nuclear weapons at the 1995 and 2000 NPT review conferences. The Clinton administration lost a Senate vote on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the US Senate fails to ratify it in October 1999. Some commentators say that the US Congress completely lost interest further in improving and developing existing

²⁴ The bombs which destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki had a yield of 15.000 to 20.000 ton TNT equivalent. See: Richard Garwin: Perspectives of Nuclear Disarmament, Talk presented at the Spring meeting of the Deutsche Physikalische Gesellschaft, March 23, 2000 in Dresden

²⁵ See: John P. Holdren: The Impasse in Nuclear Disarmament, in: Pugwash Newsletter Vol. 37 (2) December 2000, p.72-76. (see also www.pugwash.org)

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Committee on International Security and Arms Control: The Future of U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy, National Academy of Sciences, Washington D.C. 1997.

and future arms control agreements further. The Entry into Force of START II remains in doubt even after the ratification of START II in April 2000 by the Russian Duma, because the implementation is coupled with the preservation of the ABM-treaty, which is not acceptable to the US-Senate.

Concerning their capabilities, further “**sins of omission**” can be stated:²⁸

- ?? USA and Russia failed to remove all their strategic nuclear forces from short-reaction-time alert
- ?? Reserve strategic warheads, all tactical warheads and stocks of bomb-usable materials remain outside formal controls and would remain so even with START II forces
- ?? Both the US and Russia are retaining enough plutonium and highly enriched uranium (HEU) in military reserve to permit a rapid return to Cold War levels of nuclear armament

At least 100 tons of military plutonium and 1000 tons of highly enriched uranium (HEU) are surplus to the Russian and American weapon programs. In this situation the US moves toward a unilateral renunciation of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty imperiling the foundation of nuclear arms control to pursue an unworkable defense.

In the last decade, which is often labeled as a “disarmament period” due to the overloaded stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, both nuclear superpowers, the US and Russia, failed to proceed with more drastic nuclear arms reduction, greater transparency in the nuclear sector and a far-reaching dismantlement process. To put it bluntly: “They [the superpowers, GN] failed, in short, to seize the opportunity to devalue the currency of nuclear weapons in international relations. They had the chance to devalue that currency, but didn't do it.”²⁹

This list outlines the challenge ahead, which can only be met through arms control and disarmament steps. Non Proliferation and arms control should be the first priority by reducing the threat not unworkable defenses.

As William Wallace in a recent issue of Foreign Affairs explained: Unilateral approaches carry costs: “Even if they are successfully imposed on foreign states, they build up resistance to cooperation in other areas where U.S. interests are at stake”.³⁰

The multilateral approach, on the other hand, “requires negotiations and compromise with partners who respect American leadership and whose contributions American policymakers respect.”³¹ One should not forget that many of the mentioned initiatives such as the test ban or the arms control idea were American inventions or were launched by the US. Hopefully American society will remember that and will not take the wrong course toward a selfish and autistic unilateralism.

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²⁸

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Wallace 2001:16

³¹

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