The P-5, Ballistic Missile Defense, and the Future of Global Strategic Stability

Frank A. Rose

Senior Fellow, The Atlantic Council
May 17, 2017
FAS Workshop on Strategic BMD
Outline

• Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) and the “Security Trilemma”

• The United States, Russia, China, and BMD

• The UK, France, Russia, and BMD

• The P-5 Process and Strategic Stability

• Recommendations
“The Security Trilemma”

• “A central feature of the second nuclear age is that most nuclear weapon states face threats from two or more potential adversaries…This gives rise to a security trilemma where actions take by a state to defend against another state have the effect of making a third state feel insecure.”
  • Greg Koblentz, Strategic Stability in the Second Nuclear Age, November 2014.

• U.S. homeland ballistic missile defense (BMD) is a prime example of the “security trilemma”
  • U.S. defenses designed against “limited” regional threats (e.g., Iran, DPRK)
  • Russia and China see BMD a potential threat to their strategic deterrents
  • How does U.S. reassure both Russia and China?
“The Security Trilemma”

• Russian and Chinese BMD Systems
  • Not as widely reported as U.S. BMD deployments
  • However, both countries are developing and/or modernizing their BMD capabilities
  • What impact will this have on British and French strategic forces?

• Questions to Explore
  • What can be done at a bilateral level to address the “security trilemma” that BMD presents?
  • Can the P-5 process initiated in 2009 make a contribution to addressing the trilemma and enhancing global strategic stability?
U.S. Homeland BMD, Russia, and China

• U.S. Homeland Ballistic Missile Defense
  • Over the last 20 years, U.S. BMD has been focused against “limited” threats from regional states such as Iran and the DPRK
  • Missile Defense Act of 1999
  • Ballistic Missile Defense Review (2010)
  • United States deploying 44 long-range interceptors to Alaska and California by the end of 2017

• Despite clear political statements and “limited” deployments, Russia remains concerned about impact of BMD on its strategic deterrent
  • Key concerns not current systems, but the development of “game changing” technologies in the future
  • Russia has demanded “legally-binding” limitations on U.S. BMD capabilities
U.S. Homeland BMD, Russia, and China

• U.S. approach to reassuring Russia about BMD has included:
  • BMD cooperation (e.g., exercises, joint centers)
  • Missile early warning cooperation (e.g., RAMOS, JDEC)
  • Transparency on U.S. missile policy and programs (e.g., briefings, site visits, declarations)
  • Political statements and assurances (e.g., BMDR, joint statements)
  • Sizing homeland BMD deployments specifically to the threat from DPRK and Iran

• None of these proposals have satisfied Russian concerns
  • Russian Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov: “We’re not going to take the rope to hang ourselves with.”

• Legally-binding guarantees
  • Russia continues to demand such guarantees
  • U.S. unlikely to provide for a variety of reasons (e.g., dynamic nature of ballistic missile threat from DPRK, opposition in the U.S. Senate)
U.S. Homeland BMD, Russia, and China

• U.S. approach to reassuring China has included:
  • Far less robust than engagements with Russia
  • Policy statements (e.g., BMDR)
  • Transparency on U.S. missile defense policy and programs (e.g., briefings)

• Wildcards/Unkowns
  • Congressional amendments to the Missile Defense Act of 1999?
    • Will the Trump Administration embrace this approach?
  • What if the DPRK begins deploying larger numbers of ICBMs?
  • How will the United States respond with regard to BMD deployments?
  • What implications will that have for strategic stability with Russia and China?
Russian and Chinese BMD Capabilities

• Russia and China have been modernizing/developing their own BMD capabilities

• Russia BMD systems
  • A-135 currently operational around Moscow
  • A–235 ABM system currently under development
  • S-400 and S-500 TMD interceptors

• Russia BMD focused on limited defense of Moscow and theater air and missile defense

• Doesn’t appear Russia seeking a “national” missile defense system

• What impact will slowing of Russia economy have on its BMD programs?
Russian and Chinese BMD Capabilities

• China conducted Strategic BMD tests in 2010, 2013, 2014

• Lack of transparency into Chinese BMD systems and capabilities
  • “Purely defensive, not directed against any country.”

• BMD program appears closely linked to its anti-satellite program
  • July 2014 test: “The United States has high confidence in its assessment, that this event was an ASAT test.”

• It unclear at this point how far China will proceed with development of Strategic BMD

• What impact could a Chinese decision to proceed with a Strategic BMD have on the U.S. and Russia?
  • U.S. and Russia likely will have sufficient strategic capabilities to penetrate any Chinese BMD system in the near- to mid-term
The UK, France, Russia, and BMD

**United Kingdom**
- Currently maintains 225 warheads deployed on four Vanguard-class SSBNs
- In 2016, UK decided to replace existing SSBNs with four new SSBNs
- UK force will decline to about 180 warheads by mid-2020s

**France**
- Currently maintains 300 warheads based on aircraft and four Triomphant-class SSBNs
- UK and French deterrents primarily directed against Russia
- Absent major change in priorities, current Russian BMD program unlikely to result in major changes to UK and French strategic posture
P-5 Process and Global Strategic Stability

• P-5 process began in 2009, primarily focused preparing for 2010 Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference
• Since 2009, the process has made incremental progress:
  • Agreed to a P-5 glossary
  • Agreed to revised NPT reporting mechanisms
  • Held six P-5 conferences
• Efforts underway to begin discussion on global strategic stability
  • October 2016 P-5 seminar on nuclear policy and doctrine
• Is there a role for the P-5 on BMD?
Key Observations

• The U.S. has done a reasonable job balancing the need to deploy BMD to deter regional states, while at the same time maintaining strategic stability with Russia and China
  • DPRK’s likely deployments of larger numbers of long-range missiles could upset that balance
  • However, even the deployment of larger numbers of U.S. interceptors would have limited, if any, capability against advanced Russia and Chinese systems

• Russia’s current BMD deployments unlikely to change British and French strategic posture

• Unlikely that Chinese BMD capabilities will result in major changes in U.S. and Russia strategic postures in the near-term

• As I noted in February 2015:
  • “Developing a comprehensive system to cope with a full-scale attack from another nuclear-armed great power would be expensive and ultimately unsuccessful.”
Recommendations

• United States should:
  • Reaffirm the “limited” nature of its Homeland BMD programs in NPR, BMDR, and other policy statements
  • Tailor actual Homeland BMD deployments to DPRK and Iranian threats
  • Continue BMD transparency measures with Russia and China (e.g., briefings)
  • No longer pursue BMD cooperation with Russia; it’s an idea who’s time has passed
  • Resume strategic stability talks with Russia on full range of strategic policy issues (e.g., BMD, nuclear, space, conventional strike)
  • Press China to begin a more robust strategic policy dialogue
  • Encourage China to be more transparent about the scope and purpose of its BMD program
  • Include BMD in future P-5 discussions on global strategic stability