

## PREFACE

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Concern is growing about the spread of ballistic missiles in several areas of the world. Medium and long-range ballistic missiles can be used as delivery vehicles for various types of weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical, biological). The threat is changing in time; new problems arise, even though, due to the US-Russia disarmament process, the global ballistic missile threat is smaller than in the mid-1980s. Efforts to contain the spread of ballistic missiles are now limited to voluntary agreements such as the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which, so far, has a limited number of members and a limited effectiveness. What worries the US in particular is the missile capabilities of the so called *countries of concern*. How serious is the threat from ballistic missiles of these countries?

In the US large programs have been proposed to build Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) on a nation-wide level (NMD, National Missile Defense). The declared aim of NMD is exactly to counter the threat from ballistic missiles of the countries of concern. Very serious doubts exist about the effectiveness, the technical feasibility and the actual costs of these projects. Irrespectively of these doubts, there is a difficult problem of treaty-compliance. In order to build a NMD system, the US must either get Russian agreement to modify the Anti Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 or withdraw from it. Scrapping the ABM treaty, that has been reaffirmed to be a cornerstone of strategic stability by the recent 2000 NPT Review Conference, will have a heavy effect on the whole system of arms control.

This begs the next set of questions: is arms control still relevant for strategic stability, now that the cold war is over? Is it important to preserve the arms control treaties of the past and proceed to sign new ones? And what could be the effect of dismissing treaties in force? In particular what could be the specific effect of dismissing the ABM treaty? Alternatively: is it possible to have US and Russia to cooperate in amending the treaty?

Irrespectively of the actual effectiveness of the BMD systems, the US plans have so far succeeded in antagonizing China that feels that a US NMD may diminish the deterrent power of its limited intercontinental ballistic missile fleet. Moreover China

sees a possible deployment of tactical missile defenses in North East Asia (as in Japan or Taiwan) as something that will alter the regional equilibrium to its detriment. If China decides to increase the number of ballistic missiles as a response to BMD plans, Japan may be upset, India may feel the need to take action to face an increased Chinese strength of nuclear forces and Pakistan may in turn react to India's decisions.

In short a new arms race may follow BMD developments or deployments. Russia has been reassured by the US that the new NMD plans are not bound to protect the US against a large missile attack, but the chain of perceptions (and misperceptions) may very well in the future slow down sensibly Russian (and US) efforts towards nuclear disarmament.

Europe too will have to take some decisions. To cooperate actively with the US in the BMD efforts will be costly, may antagonize other countries and may be technically ineffective. The countries that have, or may have, in the future ballistic missiles able to reach the European soil are, in particular, all the countries in the Middle East and it is against these countries that any hypothetical European BMD system should work. If on the contrary the European countries decide not to cooperate with the US in the development of defensive systems, then some of the old doubts about "decoupling" may be resurrected, not to mention the problems that may result in the transatlantic alliance. Hence the new proposed BMD systems present the same old dilemmas: risks for strategic stability, risks of new arms races, new antagonisms and political tensions in the international arena. So the question of technical feasibility is more important than ever. It will not be wise to spend large amount of money to propose systems that will not be able to perform as hoped for, but that may nevertheless increase the political tension.

The main aim of the Rome Forum was to provide an opportunity for an informal discussion and a critical analysis among international experts on the above questions and points and on a variety of related subjects. We tried to have the most diverse participation possible. We had people from Western Europe, the US, Russia, China and other East Asia countries, parliamentarians, officials from Ministries of Foreign Affairs of various countries, experts. In order to have a fruitful and free discussion we made very clear that each participant was speaking in his/her personal capacity. This applies also to the papers collected here: they represent the points of view of the individual authors.

We hope that this volume of proceedings will be considered useful by those experts, officials and policy-makers of various countries who will deal with the thorny issues related to ballistic missile defense.

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