“This program will not be a threat to them”: Ballistic Missile Defense and US relations with Russia and China

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“This program will not be a threat to them”¹: Ballistic Missile Defense and US relations with Russia and China

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Although the Obama Administration has differed from its predecessor in a number of respects, on the specific issue of Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD), there is a striking continuity. The Obama Administration has remained committed to the BMD project, even as it has modified the schedule of deployments and prioritized different systems from the Bush Administration. Significantly, this has led to Chinese and Russian balancing in the nuclear sphere. As a result, there is evidence of a security dilemma-type dynamics in US relations with China and Russia. At present, there is no study that analyzes Russian and Chinese hard internal balancing against the USA in the sphere of missile defense during the Obama Administration. This article fills this gap.

Keywords: US Ballistic Missile Defense; Obama Administration; China; Russia; internal balancing; security dilemma

Introduction

The election of Barack Obama in late 2008 was well-received internationally, in large part because it held out the promise of the USA playing a less unilateralist and more collaborative role in world affairs. A case can be made that clear, if qualified progress has been made in respect to the Administration’s overall foreign policy. However, as analysts have pointed out, on the specific issue of Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) there is a striking continuity between the Obama Administration and its predecessor.² Thus, the Obama Administration has remained committed to the BMD project, even as it has modified the schedule of deployments and prioritized different systems from the Bush Administration.³

This article contributes to this debate, focusing on the international reaction to US BMD policy. Specifically, the author’s contention is that by continuing long-standing US policy on BMD, the Obama Administration has contributed to balancing on the part of China and Russia. Conceptually, these states’ reactions are an instance of hard⁴ internal⁵ balancing. Chinese and Russian balancing against the USA has involved: (1) fielding new strategic nuclear and conventional weapons equipped with BMD countermeasures and (2) making changes in military doctrine. As a result, security dilemma dynamics are increasingly in evidence in US relations with China and Russia.

The article is divided into four main sections. The first section chronicles US moves to develop BMD during the Obama Administration. The second outlines Russia’s balancing...
against the USA in the realm of BMD. The third section explicates US BMD policy and its relationship to China. The fourth and final section outlines China’s response to BMD. At present, there is no study that analyzes Russian and Chinese hard internal balancing against the USA in the sphere of missile defense during the Obama Administration. This article is designed to fill this gap.

US BMD and Russia during the Obama Administration

In 2008, as a presidential candidate, Barak Obama suggested significant changes to America’s BMD system, pledging to “cut investment in unproven BMD systems” and “not weaponize space.” Given the much publicized problems highlighted in testing of US BMD systems during the Bush Administration, he appeared to be adopting a rigorous standard when he stated in December 2008 that as President he would “make sure any missile defense … has been proven to work and has our allies’ support before we deploy it.” Citing nuclear proliferation as a grave threat, he further stated that his Administration would seek the “active cooperation of Russia”, as US–Russian relations were “reset” in early 2009.

Once in office, Obama’s basic posture was arguably little different from Bush’s. In an interview in September 2009, he expressed the view that on BMD “Russia has always been paranoid about this, but George Bush was right. This was not a threat to them. And this program will not be a threat to them.” The Administration outlined its approach in a Ballistic BMD Review Report (BMDR) on 1 February 2010. Tactical adjustments were made and in canceling Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) systems slated for deployment in Poland, and the X-band radar in the Czech Republic, the Report cited changes in the USA’s assessment of the nature of the Iranian missile threat and concerns over the “Third Site” GMD systems’ technological capability. Alongside this, a number of experimental BMD systems were also canceled. The Report committed the USA to pursuing multinational and integrated BMD systems, rather than the Bush Administration’s preference for bilateral agreements. It also stated that the USA would not expand its national GMD systems in continental USA, at least for the time being.

Despite these adjustments, as far as Russia was concerned, there were strong elements of continuity in US policy in the Report that adversely affected them. The BMDR stressed the need for increased flexibility to address threats as they evolved and emphasized maneuverable BMD systems that could be rapidly “surged” to parts of the world in times of crisis. In place of the “Third Site”, the BMDR announced the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) that would be deployed in four main phases from 2011 to 2020 and which, if greatly expanded, could threaten Russia’s ability to overwhelm the system. Alongside this, BMD continued to reinforce the USA’s European alliances, as states once skeptical of America’s BMD plans signed on to the project through a number of bilateral deals and as part of NATO (with stage one of a European shield declared “provisionally operational” on 21 May 2012). Phase I of the EPAA involved the deployment of 23 Aegis BMD ships and 111 Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) Block IA missiles. The number of Aegis BMD ships will grow to 41 and SM-3 interceptors to 341 by 2016.

Both President Obama and former Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, stressed that although Russia played no role in the decision to modify its BMD systems, they also said if it was viewed favorably by Moscow that would be welcome. This was also consistent with a stipulation in the BMDR that “one of the benefits of the EPAA is that it allows for a Russian contribution, if political circumstances make that possible.” At the extreme, this suggested that significant co-operation on joint BMD systems could, in theory, eliminate the security dilemma dynamics.

Initially, Russian President Putin praised his American counterpart’s decision to eliminate the Third Site, calling it a “very right and brave decision.” But other officials, such as Russia’s...
Ambassador to the UN, Vitaly Churkin, were unimpressed, stating that the US BMD policy “shows to us that the US continues to be a rather difficult negotiating partner, a partner who is loaded in many wars by a Cold War mentality.”

Significantly, US BMD has continued to be a core point of contention as the Obama Administration has refused to place limits on future deployments. Russian officials have stated that nothing less than concrete guarantees that the new BMD systems would not be aimed against Russia’s nuclear arsenal is acceptable, and that Russia must be made a full-partner in a joint BMD system. Indeed, Putin’s initially favorable view of Obama’s BMD strategy appears to have changed over time because although the Bush-era GMD systems in Central Europe (in Poland and the Czech Republic) have been altered, phase II of the EPAA will still place ground-based SM-3 interceptors (dubbed “Aegis-ashore”) in Romania by 2015, followed by the deployment of more advanced IB SM-3 interceptor missiles in Poland and Romania by as early as 2018. Recent statements from the US government make clear that Turkey and Spain will also be involved. Russian (and some American) analysts believe that these latter interceptors will be capable of defending against Russian Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs).

The Obama Administration is also continuing research into improved GMD interceptors – the very systems that were at the heart of US–Russian discord during the Bush Administration. Additionally, the National Research Council recently released a Report (partly funded by the US BMD Agency) that called for decreasing investment in boost-phase technology and increasing investment in Aegis, Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) and Patriot system alongside deployment of a third GMD site on the US East Coast to supplement the Alaska- and California-based interceptors. This proposal is designed to counter Iranian moves to deploy an ICBM by 2015, although the Russians are concerned that any US missile defense system will also undermine Russia’s nuclear deterrent. Finally, the flexible and surge capability of the new systems also creates strategic ambiguity in Russia’s eyes. On the one hand, it is clearly preferable to the fixed GMD systems of the Bush Administration; while on the other hand it suggests that out-of-area naval BMD systems could rapidly be surged to Russia’s periphery during future crises.

Russia responds

Given the foregoing, it is not surprising that Russia has responded by engaging hard internal balancing. This is evident in: (1) fielding new strategic and conventional weapons equipped with BMD countermeasures and (2) changes Russia made to its military doctrine.

The first prong of Russia’s hard balancing response has involved fielding new strategic and conventional weapons equipped with BMD countermeasures. In this respect, Russia’s strategic forces were tasked with developing new strategic forces equipped with BMD countermeasures. A substantial missile upgrade program that was announced in 2008 has been intensified. In this upgrade, Russia is to replace half its nuclear arsenal by 2015 upgrade all nuclear systems by 2020 and initiate research into low-yield nuclear weapons.

These increases have been complemented with the development and deployment of new strategic and conventional weapons. One of the most significant new missiles deployed was the road-mobile Topol-M (SS-27) IBCM. It represented a qualitative advance over its predecessors, adding a Maneuverable Re-entry Vehicle (MARV) capability, increasing its capacity to evade US BMD systems. It was first tested on 29 May 2007 and entered service in 2010. A MARV Sea-Launched Ballistic Missile, the Bulava, equipped with BMD countermeasures was deployed into service in June 2012. A more advanced version of the Bulava, equipped with Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle (MIRV) missiles and electronic BMD jammers, known as the Liner, was also successfully tested in 2011 and is set to be deployed in the near future.
Other notable missile developments included the announcement in 2011 that a new MIRV ICBM was in development and slated for deployment by 2016,30 and an unnamed “fifth-generation” liquid-fuel heavy MIRVed ICBM (10–15 warheads) slated for deployment in 2018.31 This latter missile represents a technological upgrade from the Topol-M missile and was tested in May 2012. The test was highly symbolic, occurring just days after NATO announced that the first leg of its BMD system had been activated. Thus, former strategic forces director Viktor Yesin stated that, “this is one of the … measures being developed by Russia’s military and political leadership in response to the US deployment of a global anti-missile system.”32 These developments and deployments have been buttressed by investments in a new nuclear bomber, upgrades to Russia’s current TU-160 and TU-95 MS bombers, deployment of a new long-range nuclear cruise missile and development of a “fourth generation” command and control system.33

Increases in resources to strategic weaponry designed to hard balance the US BMD have also been evident in Russia’s reinvigoration of its own BMD program. First, Putin chose to improve Moscow’s already established BMD (the A135) surrounding Moscow, comprising 68 53T6 nuclear-tipped short-range missile interceptors. Funding for this system increased in 2007. It is now being modernized with a new system (A235) set to be built by 2015 that will be armed with conventional warheads.34 Second, Russia announced that the Army will acquire new maneuverable S-500 systems in 2013, two years ahead of schedule.35 Specific details of this system are scarce, with some independent analysts suggesting it will not be a significant advance upon Russia’s S-400 systems. Others, however, claim that it is a game-changing transition from an “air defense system” to an “air/space defense system”, as its capabilities will allow it to intercept medium-range missiles and ICBMs at speeds of seven kilometers per second, and have an anti-satellite (ASAT) function.36 Finally, Russia has started developing sea-based BMD interceptors, similar to the US naval Aegis system.

As part of Russia’s first comprehensive military plan since 2000, the State Armament Program 2020 was announced in 2010. It outlines plans for an additional US $770 billion to be spent over the next decade on Russia’s armed forces, in addition to the current level of proposed defense spending.37 Clearly reflecting the priority of maintaining and enhancing Russia’s nuclear deterrent, approximately 42% (US $242 billion) of this will be spent on Russia’s strategic missile troops and aerospace defense forces.38 Signaling his intention to continue hard balancing against American BMD with strategic weaponry, in March 2012 Russia’s then Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, declared that “our number one priorities are nuclear forces [and] aerospace defence” and that Russia would “under no circumstances surrender our strategic deterrent capability, and indeed, will in fact strengthen it.”39 Putin directly linked these moves to BMD, claiming that Russia was being “pushed into action by the US and NATO BMD policies”, requiring Russia to invest in measures to “overcome any BMD system and protect Russia’s retaliation potential.”40 Putin also added: “Whatever you call it, this has some elements of an arms race”,41 maintaining that in Russia’s strategic calculations there is an “inseparable link between BMD and strategic offensive weapons.”42

The second prong of Russia’s hard balancing involved changes to its military doctrine. Alongside the changes described above, they provide the broader context to view Russia’s response to US BMD. In 2008, Russia announced that it would no longer be reporting its missile launches under the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation.43 This was part of a broader assertion by Russia that continued into the Obama Administration. On 5 February 2010, President Dmitry Medvedev formalized Russia’s new military doctrine, which was reflected in its National Security Strategy.44 Although earlier wordings of the document reportedly included the option of preventive use of nuclear weapons in a conflict scenario,45 its final incarnation suggested Russia had become more confident in its relative military position.
The doctrine raised the threshold for using nuclear weapons; outlined a proactive agenda that emphasized the role of international law; rejected unipolarity and American primacy; and emphasized Russia’s right to intervene regionally on behalf of Russian peoples and Russian interests. Although the doctrine declared nuclear and large-scale conventional war unlikely, US BMD was again identified as a vital threat to Russia. Indicating its ongoing balancing efforts, Russia activated its S-400 strategic air defense system in Kaliningrad on 6 April 2012 and has threatened to deploy new short-range “Iskander” mobile missiles to Belarus and Kaliningrad by the end of 2012. Furthermore, although the 2010 doctrine eschewed nuclear pre-emption, Russian General Nikolai Makarov has suggested the deployment of BMD systems in Romania and Bulgaria could alter this, stating in May 2012 that “a decision to use destructive force preemptively will be taken if the situation worsens.”

US BMD and China during the Obama Administration

The Obama Administration’s policy on BMD has extended to China and, more specifically, its sphere of influence, the Asia-Pacific. Here, a serious complicating factor in the USA–China relationship has been US BMD assistance to its allies in Asia. Although the USA has sought to reassure China that BMD will pose no threat to its security, its actions suggest otherwise to the Chinese. These include expanding and deepening BMD in its incarnation as Theater Missile Defense (TMD) cooperation with its East Asian allies Japan and South Korea, and discussion of integrating these systems into America’s global system.

These developments are not entirely new, and were highlighted as early as China’s 2000 Defense White Paper. Since the August 1999 USA–Japan agreement to conduct joint research on TMD, Japan has fielded three destroyers with Aegis BMD and a number of Lockheed Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) systems. An X-band early-warning radar was stationed in Aomori Prefecture in Northern Japan in 2006. Washington and Tokyo agreed in August 2012 to station a second X-band radar in Japan. These capabilities will inherently have the capability to counter Chinese missiles and monitor Chinese territory. The aforementioned BMDR also identified South Korea as a priority for increased BMD cooperation, and Seoul deployed its second Aegis destroyer in June 2012 to buttress its PAC-2 capabilities, creating a two-tier system. In the same month, Seoul and Washington committed a bilateral Korean Air and BMD system which Seoul has stated is solely intended to cover the Korean Peninsula.

China is invariably concerned that this co-operation can be incorporated into a region-wide system. Luo Zhaohui, Director-General of the Department of Asian Affairs in the Chinese Foreign Ministry, commented in April 2012 that US efforts in building a regional missile defense system “will have negative effects on global and regional stability.” Recent comments by US officials also suggest this to be the case. Even if the current US strategy is not intended to target China, China simply cannot assume that this situation will not change in the future. China would be myopic not to believe that these developments cannot be targeted at it.

As Steven Hildreth of the US Congressional Research Service has explained: “The focus of our rhetoric is North Korea. The reality is that we’re also looking longer-term at the elephant in the room, which is China.” He commented that these efforts were “laying the foundations” for a region-wide BMD system that will incorporate Japan, South Korea, Australia and Taiwan. Putting it succinctly, one senior US official stated that “physics is physics … You’re either blocking North Korea and China or you’re not blocking either of them.” A number of Chinese experts and official news outlets have criticized this growing cooperation, arguing that it has already emboldened Japan in its territorial disputes with China. Indeed Shi Yinhong, Professor of International Studies at Renmin University in Beijing, has stated that “the joint missile system objectively encourages Japan to keep an aggressive position in the Diaoyu Islands dispute, which sends
China a very negative message. Japan would not have been so aggressive without the support and actions of the US.  

Of concern from a Chinese perspective, BMD cooperation between Washington and its East Asian allies can be expected to increase, as part of the Obama Administration’s rebalancing policy. A 2012 report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, commissioned by the Defense Department, makes clear that America and its allies “must demonstrate a readiness and capacity to fight and win, even under more challenging circumstances associated with Anti-Access Area-Denial (A2AD).” The report noted that China’s capabilities in “areas such as the East, Philippines, and South China seas” could soon “pose a significant potential military threat to the United States and allies and partners.” Towards this end, it states that “US forward deployed forces and allied forces could benefit from additional missile defense capabilities – both batteries and reloads.”

Specifically, it notes that increasing investments in THAAD and PAC-3 systems are essential to hedge “against uncertainties regarding longer-term Chinese intentions.” The report also recommends that both Japan and South Korea increase their BMD investments. It further observes that Japan is “eager for greater dialogue with the United States on the emerging US AirSea Battle concept,” and that increasing US–Japanese inter-operability, which has been “driven by BMD requirements,” has “essentially created a joint command relationship between the United States and Japan from the perspective of any possible adversary.” Rounding out its BMD recommendations, the report calls for “full Australian participation in US theater BMD, including an Australian decision to equip its new air warfare destroyers with Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) missiles.”

China responds

The task of all military planners is to plan for worse-case scenarios, and like Russia a key Chinese fear is US military encirclement. BMD is viewed by the Chinese as a critical aspect of any such US strategy. For example, Chinese Air force Colonel Dai Xu stated that BMD was becoming the “technological glue” for ensuring US pre-eminence, forming a “missile blockade” in East Asia, underpinning what he views as a neo-containment strategy of China. A China Daily opinion piece posited that “the ring begins in Japan, stretches through nations in the South China Sea to India, and ends in Afghanistan. Washington’s deployment of anti-missile systems around China’s periphery forms a crescent-shaped encirclement.”

Looking around the region, the Chinese could be excused for making such an interpretation. In the context of the Obama Administration’s late 2011 “pivot” (later re-branded as a “rebalance”) even moderate voices in China such as that of Professor Zhu Feng of Peking University see US policy as targeting China.

It can be argued that this is a misperception on China’s part, even while seeing how the Chinese might think this way. Given the foregoing, the Chinese reaction to the Obama Administration’s BMD program and its regional incarnation was, therefore, predictable. They began to adopt a posture of hard internal balancing against US BMD. Like the Russians, they did so in two ways. This included: (1) the fielding of new strategic and conventional weapons equipped with BMD countermeasures and (2) changes made to China’s military doctrine.

In terms of new strategic and conventional weapons, as early as February 2009, the second month of Obama’s Administration, Qing Zhiyuan, Commander of China’s Strategic Missile Force, called for further improvements and expansion of China’s nuclear deterrent. He stated that the arsenal “is now at a new historical starting point” and “will evolve onto much higher levels.”

The subsequent 2009 Perry–Schlesinger Strategic Posture Commission stated that “China may already be increasing the size of its ICBM force in response to its assessment of the US BMD program,” and was being accompanied by a shift to sea-based and land-based...
As the research of a variety of specialists has argued, US BMD has now become China’s central referent point for its own nuclear weapons program.71 China’s People’s Liberation Army clearly desires to maintain a capability to penetrate US BMD systems following a US first strike, and is determined to strengthen its second strike forces, effectively balancing the USA in the nuclear realm. In fact, a major study of China’s nuclear capabilities has found that Chinese strategists are confident that they can overwhelm US BMD systems.72 In any case, a shift in Chinese strategy has been underway for some time, from a posture of minimal deterrence, which only provided assured retaliation, to one that that would allow assured destruction.74 The 2010 Annual Report to Congress, Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China recognized this, stating that “China is also currently working on a range of technologies to attempt to counter US and other militaries’ ballistic BMD systems, including maneuvering re-entry vehicles [MIRVs], decoys, chaff, jamming, thermal shielding, and anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons.”75 As noted in its 2012 report, this trend has continued.76

More recently, reports estimate that the number of Chinese ICBM missiles capable of hitting the US mainland is less than 50 but will probably double by 2025.77 However, this projection is conservative in light of Qing Zhiyuan’s statement above and the trajectory of China’s nuclear efforts outlined in subsequent paragraphs. Indeed, China is making strides on various fronts. It successfully conducted a missile interception test on January 2010 and tested a stealth aircraft in January 2011.78

There is further evidence that hard internal balancing is occurring against USA’ BMD. China is developing a new nuclear bomber.79 Meanwhile, research has intensified on improvements to China’s long-standing road-mobile ICBM, the DF-41, which can contain up to 10 warheads, giving China the ability to increase the annual growth rate of missiles capable of hitting America from double to triple digits.80 The DF-41 is China’s first MIRV-capable missile and equipped with improved countermeasures to penetrate US BMD systems.81 In August 2012, China reportedly tested a fourth new MIRVed submarine-launched ICBM, the JL-2.82 Major General Zhu Chenghu of China’s National Defense University tied the above developments to American BMD, stating that BMD “reduce[d] the credibility of its [Beijing’s] nuclear deterrence.”83 Deployment of BMD countermeasures has become a significant element of China’s nuclear balancing effort, as every new ICBM is equipped with this capability.

The recent announcement by the Obama Administration of a new strategic concept known as Air Sea Battle (ASB)84 appears to confirm Chinese fears, even if it is also a US response to China’s deployment of A2/AD capabilities. ASB is intended to maintain US freedom of action in A2/AD environments. For example, a recent Department of Defense report titled Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense includes “improving BMDs” under the heading “Project Power Despite Anti-Access/Area Denial Challenges.”85 Tellingly, a senior Obama Administration official confirmed with Bill Gertz of The Washington Times that: “Air Sea Battle is to China what the maritime strategy was to the Soviet Union … It is a very forward-deployed, assertive strategy that says we will not sit back and be punished… We will initiate.”86 ASB foresees a future US–Chinese conflict fought with long-range precision weaponry over vast distances in which Navy Aegis ships supplement other BMD assets across the Pacific. Escalation pressures would easily arise in such a conflict in which intra-war deterrence and BMD would play a pivotal role. Viewing all this activity, the Chinese have to assume the worst. Thus, with an air of inevitability, as Professor Sun Zhe of Tsinghua University recently noted, “We have again and again said that we will not be the first country to use nuclear force… We need to be able to defend ourselves, and our main threat, I’m afraid, comes from the United States.”87
The second prong of China’s hard balancing response to US BMD has involved changes to its military doctrine. While China’s basic view of nuclear weapons since 1964 has been consistent with nuclear deterrence, the fact remains that it was not until 2006 that it formally accepted deterrence as a doctrine. In its 2006 Defense White Paper, it was explicitly stated that the “fundamental goal” of the Second Artillery (which is the designated unit in charge of China’s nuclear forces) is “to deter other countries from using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against China ... it endeavours to ensure the security and reliability of its nuclear weapons and maintains a credible nuclear deterrent.” At the same time, while China has held a policy of No First Use (NFU) since its acquisition of a nuclear capability in 1964, its endorsement no longer appears to be unqualified. Recent research has documented instances of Chinese officials signaling that China’s long-held NFU policy could be altered and/or the threshold for a nuclear response lowered during a regional crisis.

A second change in military doctrine relates to the increasingly problematic intertwining of conventional and nuclear forces in China’s view of deterrence. A strong strand in Chinese strategic thinking has been an emphasis on conventional weapons in bolstering nuclear deterrence. As China’s nuclear doctrine evolved, China’s leader at the time, Jiang Zemin (1989–2002), viewed conventional and nuclear weapons as “combining multiple means” to strengthen deterrence. Under Hu Jintao (2002–2012), the doctrine was further adjusted to reflect a streamlining of China’s nuclear and conventional capabilities. The so-called “three doubles” concept was developed. Accordingly, China sought to achieve “double (nuclear and conventional) deterrence, double (nuclear and conventional) operations, and double (nuclear and conventional) command.”

A more recent component was Hu’s March 2012 emphasis on “systems confrontation” with potential enemies. However, it is the “third double” command that raises troubling questions in a crisis scenario. As Lewis and Xue note:

> the basic dilemma stems from the deployment of two types of missiles on the same Second Artillery bases with fundamentally different capabilities and purposes. In the practice of double deterrence and double operations, the nuclear missiles’ essential mission is to deter a nuclear first strike on China, and they are only to be used in extremis. However, at the same time, the conventional weapons on the formerly all-nuclear bases must be ready to strike first and hard.

The foregoing is particularly troubling since it blurs the line between conventional and nuclear warfare.

**Conclusion**

As analysts have pointed out, there is a strong strain in American elite (and arguably also popular) thinking that has historically only reluctantly accepted balance of power and deterrence thinking. This explains the fact that whenever the USA has had the ability and resources to do so, it has attempted to transcend the restraints of the balance of power and deterrence, in favor of missile defenses. The irony in pursuing this course of action is that such behavior is a catalyst for balancing and deterrence.

This article has examined the reaction of Russia and China, in the structural context of the post-Cold War era of unipolarity, to the deployment of BMD during the Obama Administration. It has been argued that Moscow and Beijing’s response is a demonstrable instance of hard internal balancing in the nuclear sphere, activating security dilemma dynamics. It is possible that the reactions of Russia and China could have been avoided, or their intensity reduced, but it would have at once required more restraint and a more comprehensive strategic vision on this issue on behalf of
the Obama Administration. Russian and Chinese officials repeatedly stated that balancing would be their inevitable reaction to the US pursuit of missile defenses. Moreover, Moscow and Beijing responded even though they believed it was undermining their own and America’s security, leading to a net decrease in security. As this article has shown, the danger is that internal balancing has become self-reinforcing, thus facilitating the emergence of an increasingly conflictual international system in which heightened security dilemma dynamics characterize great power relations.

Notes


5. Following Waltz, internal balancing is defined as states ‘relying on their own capabilities rather than the capabilities of allies’. See Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979), 168.


11. This has included the cancelation of the Kinetic Energy Interceptor, the Multiple Kill Vehicle and the Airborne Laser.


40. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
62. Ibid., 13.
63. Ibid., 21.
64. Ibid., 14.
65. Ibid., 26.
66. Ibid., 33.
67. Luo Gang of the Chinese Armament Command Department wrote that missile defense was creating a ‘missile blockade’ along China’s eastern flank that “directly undermines our defensive military capability and constitutes direct threats to our defence posture.” Quote cited in Eric Hagt, ‘China’s ASAT Test: Strategic Response’, China Security (Winter 2007): 45.
76. Ibid., 24.
79. Schneider et al., The Nuclear Forces and Doctrine, op. cit.
80. Estimates are based on MIRVs containing 5–10 warheads so that one brigade of 12 ICBMs would contain 60–120 warheads. See Richard D. Fisher and Testimony before the House Armed Services

84. ASB is a successor to the Air-Land Battle concept of the 1980s, which sought to contain the growth in soviet military capabilities in Europe.
93. Ibid., 53.
94. Ibid., 53.
95. Ibid., 60–1.