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## Moscow's Missile Gambit

Six years ago, President Bush announced the U.S. withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and our intention to deploy defenses against emerging threats from countries such as North Korea and Iran. Contrary to prevailing expectations, the sky did not fall. Moscow's response, delivered in a statement by President Vladimir Putin, expressed disagreement with the U.S. decision but emphasized that U.S. defenses were not a threat to Russia and that Russia would make major reductions in its strategic offensive forces — a striking rebuke to the myth that ending the ABM Treaty would lead to an arms race.

Today, the United States and Russia find themselves in opposition on the issue of deploying 10 missile interceptors and supporting radar to Europe — an act of much less strategic consequence than abandonment of the ABM Treaty. Bush and his national security team have explained the concept, in considerable detail, to Russia's national security elite. Moscow objects by citing a threat to its own deterrent (an argument it knows has no merit) and the stationing of American forces near its borders (which reminds it of the painful loss of empire) and denies the existence of an Iranian missile threat.

Russia's stance reflects its increasing assertiveness as a major player on the international scene, helped by the price of its energy exports. Moscow is eager to regain its great-power status and thinks the path to success requires painting the United States as the threat. The United States, as a prominent former Russian official once told us, is the threat Russians love to hate.

With equal determination, the Bush administration has sought to change Russian perspectives. Over five years, the United States has made proposal after proposal to work with Russia's military and industry on missile defense. We have both been involved in these initiatives, offering modest cooperative activities, such as activation of a joint early-warning center, and projects that would be more technically, and politically, challenging. Each time cooperation has been deflected or rejected. Russia's offer of the use of its radar in Azerbaijan, for example, came with a string attached — that the United States forgo building an interceptor site in Europe.

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*Interceptors in Europe must  
go forward — with Russian  
cooperation or without.*

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Undaunted by Moscow's lack of interest, the United States recently proposed seeking agreement on criteria to define the emergence of the Iranian missile threat — criteria that would need to be met before the United States began operation of the site in Europe. But even the former head of the Russian Strategic Missile Troops, noting the capabilities of a recent Iranian "space vehicle" launch, predicted that Iran would have "ballistic missiles with a range of 3,500-4,000 kilometers or even more," possibly in the next few years. Washington reportedly offered Russia access to sites in the United States and, pending agreement with host governments, access to our missile defense

facilities in Europe. The result has been to confound our allies, including Poland and the Czech Republic, and signal a lack of resolve to defend against the Iranian threat.

Instead of trying to persuade Russia to do something that it does not perceive to be in its interest, the United States should redouble its efforts to advance the two initiatives sponsored by Bush and Putin that do enjoy widespread support in both countries. The Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism has grown in a little over a year from 13 partners to more than 60. Russia has been a good partner because it is concerned about this threat. Similarly, Moscow has worked to put in place new approaches to expand the use of nuclear energy in a manner that meets energy and environmental goals and reduces the risk of proliferation. These joint efforts may provide a basis for building cooperation in other areas, perhaps setting a positive tone for the new Russian president.

On missile defense, the United States must move forward, just as Russia does when its vital interests are at stake. We should continue to be respectful and transparent about the need for our deployments but make clear that the United States will proceed without Moscow's cooperation. Going beyond current proposals for cooperation would encourage Russia to be even more intransigent, playing to its instinct to drive wedges between the United States and its allies, and would foster the Kremlin's policy to run out the clock in the hope that the next U.S. administration will abandon the effort in Europe.

On issues where we have mutual interests, such as proliferation and nuclear terrorism, there is more to do with Russia. But waiting for its cooperation on missile defense will only delay us further and re-create the form, if not the substance, of our Cold War antagonism while taking energy from opportunities to work together in areas vital to international security.

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