

# WebMemo



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## Europe, Missile Defense, and the Future of Extended Deterrence

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During the Cold War, the U.S. supported the security of its allies by threatening a possible nuclear response to an attack on them by the Soviet Union. This policy, which was based on retaliatory threats, was referred to as “extended deterrence.” Today, the policy of extended deterrence is no less important to overall U.S. security than during the Cold War.

The context, however, is quite different as a result of the rise of the multi-polar world. In this context, it is becoming increasingly clear that the means for applying the policy of extended deterrence is changing in two fundamental ways.

First, extended deterrence is less about retaliating against an attack and more about convincing the enemy that he is unlikely to achieve the political and military purposes behind an attack.

Second, the rise of the multi-polar world means that the extended deterrence policy must be supported by a layered structure of alliances and security commitments. These emerging changes in extended deterrence are revealed by recent agreements with the Czech Republic and Poland to field missile defense facilities in Europe.

**Missile Defense Agreements.** Earlier this year, the U.S. signed agreements with the Czech Republic and Poland to field missile defense facilities in those two countries for countering longer-range missiles that could threaten both the United States and Europe. The agreement with the Czech Republic was signed by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Prague on July 8.<sup>1</sup> This agreement will permit the fielding of a missile defense radar in the Czech

Republic. Rice signed the agreement with Poland on August 20 in Warsaw.<sup>2</sup> This agreement will permit the fielding of 10 missile defense interceptors in Poland. Both agreements require the approval by the respective Czech and Polish parliaments.

The agreement with Poland is accompanied by a declaration of strategic cooperation, which was also issued on August 20.<sup>3</sup> This joint declaration strengthens U.S.-Polish bilateral security commitments in a manner consistent with the broader NATO alliance, in which both countries are members. At the broadest level, the declaration is designed to reinforce the security commitment in the North Atlantic Treaty with a bilateral security commitment. The declaration also seeks to modernize and strengthen Poland’s military capabilities. Central to this effort is deployment of a Patriot air and missile defense battery in Poland. It will be accompanied by a future Ballistic Missile Defense Framework Agreement to permit cooperative missile defense research and development with provisions for industry-to-industry collaboration.

**A New Approach to Extended Deterrence.** The missile defense agreements between the U.S. and the Czech Republic and Poland represent a new basis for the traditional U.S. policy of extended

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deterrence. The new approach will place less emphasis on U.S. retaliation for an attack and more emphasis on protecting and defending the ally. It will also rely less on a single commitment to alliance security and more on concurrent commitments, for two reasons.

First, the agreements with the Czech Republic and Poland are focused on fielding missile defenses. These defensive systems are designed to protect both the U.S. and its European allies against attack. During the Cold War, deploying U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe signaled to the Soviet Union that even a conventional attack in Europe carried the prospect of a nuclear response by the U.S. Defensive measures were assumed to be incompatible with deterrence. In today's multi-polar world, the U.S. and its allies are becoming less certain that unpredictable leaders will be deterred by the threat of retaliation. In today's context, they see defensive measures as compatible with deterrence and reinforcing its effectiveness.

Second, the U.S. pursued its extended deterrence policy for Europe during the Cold War through NATO. (The only significant exception to this was the special relationship between the U.S. and the United Kingdom.) Today's complex multi-polar world is driving the U.S. and its allies to adopt a more flexible system of concurrent and overlapping security commitments. The Declaration of Strategic Cooperation between the U.S. and Poland in particular demonstrates that both nations will use NATO structures and a close bilateral relationship to strengthen security.

These changes are timely because a retaliation-based extended deterrence policy is prone to breakdowns in today's complex and multi-polar world. This is why the agreements include steps for bilateral reinforcement of NATO commitments. The relative clarity of the bipolar world permitted carefully

designed signals about which actions by a potential aggressor would result in retaliatory and escalatory steps by the U.S. The multi-polar world makes sending these signals much more difficult, because the signals must apply to multiple actors operating in different contexts and with different perceptions of the U.S. and its allies. The emerging structure is better able to handle multiple potential threats and contribute to security in ways that go beyond the limited capabilities of the missile defense systems that they support.

**Moving Forward.** Congress should seek to accelerate the trend toward an extended deterrence policy that relies on a more defensive military posture in the alliance. It should also instruct the next Administration to explore selective bilateral security ties with European NATO members that augment and reinforce the existing multilateral security commitments. It can do this by:

- Providing the necessary funding for the new agreements with the Czech Republic and Poland; and
- Adopting provisions for next year's defense authorization bill that direct the next Administration to explore bilateral agreements with European NATO members to field additional defenses that will result in an overall alliance-member military posture that is a mix of offensive and defensive capabilities.

Such actions will result in U.S.-European security structure that is better adapted to meeting the challenges of the multi-polar world.

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1. U.S. Department of State, "Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement Between the United States and the Czech Republic," *Fact Sheet*, July 10, 2008. Also, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Czech Defense Minister Vlasta Parkanova signed a related technical military agreement regarding the missile defense site on September 20, 2008.
2. U.S. Department of State, "Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement Between the United States and the Republic of Poland," *Fact Sheet*, August 20, 2008.
3. U.S. Department of State, "Text of the Declaration on Strategic Cooperation Between the United States of America and the Republic of Poland," *Media Note*, August 20, 2008.