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The next meeting of the NATO-Russia Council will take place in Brussels from 10 to 13 May, at which various aspects of co-operation between the Russian Federation and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization will be discussed by the chiefs of the general staffs.

It is customary at such meetings to discuss the most topical issues of the day in a suitable form. Without a doubt, the decision by the United States of America to make countries of Eastern Europe a third deployment area for its national anti-missile defence system will be the subject of one of the most critical discussions.

Why is this issue so critical? Why has the question of the stationing of American interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar base in the Czech Republic virtually split the political leadership and public opinion in a number of European countries? Why has the idea of a resurrection of the Cold War between Russia and the West begun to circulate again? Why are Russia's fundamental concerns being blatantly ignored by its partners and why is genuine discussion of the issues that concern us being replaced by briefings and assurances that there is no question of the US anti-missile defence system being directed against Russia?

**Russia listed as a threat**

All of us can well recall how recent official statements by representatives of the White House talked of defence against missile attacks only from rogue States.

And yet US Defense Secretary Robert Gates unequivocally announced at Congressional hearings in the USA that Russia once again figured today on the list of threats to the USA.

We may also recall the words of Condoleezza Rice, whom the *Washington Post* describes as “the most influential woman in the history of American government”, in an interview with *Le Figaro* in February 2001: “I will not repeat this often enough, the principal threat to the world today, in my eyes, is that a Russia with its back to the wall would let part of its nuclear arsenal fall into bad hands, those of a ‘rogue state’ or a terrorist organization. I also know that at certain times the views of the Kremlin will conflict with ours.”

It is true that recent statements by Ms. Rice have not been so shocking. She has also called Russia a “friend and even a potential ally” of the USA.

So where do we stand — Russia and the USA — six years on?

In my opinion, the deployment of elements of the US anti-missile defence system in Europe will mark the beginning of a new round in an uncontrollable arms race.

Essentially this is the result of the unilateral and methodical destruction by the USA of the international mechanism for disarmament and arms control created over a period of many years during the bitter confrontation of the Cold War period in the second half of the twentieth century. An erosion of global and regional arms control regimes is taking place.

There are, in my opinion, convincing examples to illustrate this: the withdrawal of the USA from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and the new American nuclear doctrine, which has not only lowered the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons but has also changed them from a political means of deterrence into a battlefield weapon.

The threat of the emergence and use of low-yield nuclear devices and intercontinental missiles with non-nuclear warheads is growing. There is a real danger of the militarization of space and the complete collapse of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty). Arms based on new physical principles are being actively developed.

It should be pointed out that disapproval of the large-scale deployment of anti-missile defence systems is not new. The ABM Treaty was signed in 1972 at the initiative of the USA. It remained for many years, by general admission, a cornerstone of strategic stability in the world and served as the basis for a number of treaties on the reduction of strategic offensive weapons. It is therefore no coincidence that Russia has championed the need for retention of this Treaty and has since expressed its regret at the unilateral decision by the USA to withdraw from it.

In the year 2000, the expediency of the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty was justified by the need for defence of its national territory from missile strikes by rogue States, and it was thought to be sufficient to set up theatre ABM systems in Europe. It was at this point that the decision was taken to initiate co-operation between Russia and NATO on the issue of theatre ABM systems. Almost seven years have elapsed since then. During that time both Russia and NATO have come to understand the possibilities for co-operation even in an area as sensitive as theatre anti-missile defence systems.

Recently, however, the USA and its partners in Poland and the Czech Republic have set about the direct deployment in Europe of components of a US strategic anti-missile defence system. The governments of these two Eastern European countries have agreed to start official negotiations on the stationing of ABM facilities on their territories, which should result in the signing of agreements setting down the time frame and conditions for the stationing of missile bases and radar stations for the US anti-missile defence system. The Americans, in the justified belief that the results of these negotiations are a foregone conclusion and will not present any surprises for them, are sending more and more specialist teams to the construction sites of the future facilities to determine on the spot what will be set up where and when.

## **Statistics against the missiles**

This confidence by the USA in the successful outcome of its plans is not surprising considering the way in which such negotiations take place in reality, said recently retired Polish Minister of Defence Radek Sikorski in the 21 March issue of the *Washington Post*. Apparently, the Americans had attached to the note with the proposal for the start of negotiations on the placement on Polish territory of an American interceptor missile base a draft reply by the Polish Government containing a long list of obligations by the country accommodating the shield and just a few corresponding commitments by the USA.

In giving their agreement to the stationing of an anti-missile defence shield on their territories, the Governments of Poland and the Czech Republic ignored not only the opinion of their neighbours and of their NATO allies but also the position of a significant section of their own populations, which were highly apprehensive about the construction on their territories of a new "Berlin Wall" capable once again of splitting Europe into two camps. According to a recent sociological survey, 56 per cent of the population of Poland are against these plans and the number of supporters has also dropped since the beginning of the year from 34 to 28 per cent. Moreover, only one in ten is willing to agree to the plan without any reservations. Meanwhile, 77 per cent of the population of the Czech Republic is in favour of public discussion on this issue.

Other NATO countries have also been quite negative about the stationing of a US anti-missile defence system in Europe. On 28 March, the German national news channel n-tv conducted a unique survey: correspondents asked passers-by in Berlin, Paris and London live on television what they thought of the stationing of an American anti-missile defence system in Europe. The overwhelming majority were against it. At the same time, 80 per cent of German citizens expressed their opposition to the American undertaking on the Internet and by telephone. The respected German sociological institute Forsa also conducted a survey of public opinion in Germany, asking which country posed the greater threat to peace and international security today, the USA or Iran. Of those surveyed, 48 per cent said the USA (57 per cent of young respondents) and 31 per cent said Iran (25 per cent of young respondents). In addition, 72 per cent of the respondents said that they supported the opposition by Kurt Beck, chairman of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), to the American anti-missile defence system in Europe.

## **Balance of power vs. balance of interests**

Of extraordinary importance from a political point of view is the way in which the decision was made to introduce a new class of strategic arms to Europe at a time when the need for such a radical "arms upgrade" in Europe is not regarded as one of the priorities of its defence policy. There are a number of objective reasons for this.

First, there has been no military confrontation on the continent for more than 15 years. Of course, there are many problems connected with the differing attitudes to NATO enlargement, the implementation of the adapted CFE Treaty and the establishment of European Union (EU) defence structures. However, there is general agreement that the question of European security must be (and more importantly can be) resolved without the use of military force, all the more so in view of the creation in recent years of a mechanism

for co-operation by Russia and the Member States of the EU and NATO that is now beginning to work effectively.

Second, Europeans seem to be sceptical about some of the elements of the assessment of the missile threat foisted on them by American “experts”. Even some of the experts who propose the deployment of a global anti-missile defence system in Europe on ideological grounds now realize the absurdity of the notion advanced in Europe of a missile threat from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). This “threat” is no longer on the agenda these days. But, say these experts, a “more terrible threat”, the Iranian missile programme, has begun to emerge. They claim that in the next five to seven years there is bound to be a technological leap enabling Iran to achieve the same kind of progress that in their day the USSR and the USA needed 20 years to achieve. At that time, however, the USSR and USA had immeasurably greater material and intellectual resources than Iran. Despite this, an anti-missile defence system is being proposed to combat Iranian missiles with nuclear warheads that don’t even exist.

Third, there is a feeling in Europe that the inhabitants of the continent are pawns in a game being played on the other side of the ocean but being paid for by them. For all the allied rhetoric justifying the need for anti-missile defence, it can be said with a high degree of certainty that the US anti-missile defence system in Europe is intended first and foremost to resolve issues in the interests of the USA. In view of the astronomical costs of the anti-missile defence system, defence of “secondary” targets in Europe is simply inexpedient for the USA from a political and especially from an economic point of view. The American taxpayer will not tolerate such an irrational use of budget resources.

Iran today and North Korea in the recent past are merely pretexts for the real purpose of the system: to shift the strategic balance in favour of the USA by creating conditions for the more effective use of their strategic nuclear forces. The main target of a European ABM site is Russia.

At the same time, we should like to believe that the words uttered by the presidents of Russia and the USA at their meeting in Genoa in July 2001 were not just empty phrases. Let me quote them. “We have to maintain a balance in which neither side should feel that its security is constrained.” These words were spoken by the Russian President Vladimir Putin. At the time, George Bush, the US President, echoed Putin’s thoughts: “We seek a common standpoint. We need to set up a new strategic framework for defensive and offensive systems. This will make the world more peaceful.”

In this connection, we may wonder whether we, the USA and Russia, are in favour of a balance of power or a balance of interests.

From the statements by American military and political representatives heard today, it would appear that the USA is in favour of a balance of power.

Fourth, many responsible politicians in Europe believe that the principle of deterrence, which maintained peace during the period of the Cold War, remains valid. The leadership of any country, however inadequate it may seem to anyone, cannot but believe that even an attempted nuclear missile attack on the USA would result in the country concerned simply disappearing from the face of the Earth.

Fifth, there is resentment in Europe regarding the way in which the deployment decision was taken, all the more so since we experienced something similar not so long ago when the decision was taken to launch a second Iraqi campaign.

At that time, the invasion of Iraq was justified by the existence of “irrefutable” evidence of the presence of weapons of mass destruction in the country and the apparently confirmed intentions to use them or hand them over to terrorists. Today, a similar scenario with only slight changes is used to justify the anti-missile defence plans. Once again, the main enemies are the same rogue States, of which Iraq in its time was one. In the case of Iraq, it very quickly became clear that the fears were exaggerated, to put it mildly.

When the USA found itself unable to enlist widespread international support in Iraq, it put forward the idea of a “coalition of the willing”. It was also thought to be expedient to create this coalition without the approval of the United Nations (UN). The concept of “co-operation of the willing” has again been proposed in connection with the deployment of an anti-missile defence system in Europe, with NATO taking the place of the UN.

As at the start of the war in Iraq, the priority seems to be the endeavour by some leaders to prove their determination and their ability to complete the job regardless of the concerns and objections raised. However, the consequences of that decision have not been taken into account. We have daily reminders in Iraq of what this kind of approach leads to. The country is on the verge of total chaos, the withdrawal of the American troops is inevitable, and many of the USA’s allies have already left with their troops. There can be no doubt that the “Iraqization” of the Middle East will have a global impact. And what guarantee do we have that the USA does not risk suffering a “post-Iraq syndrome”?

It is therefore quite reasonable to wonder whether the deployment of an anti-missile defence system in Europe might not also have similar unpredictable global consequences. The likelihood is high. As in Iraq, these consequences are also likely to be long-term. The resolution of the problem of regional security will also mean that the next US administration and other governments will have to seek a change in the decision being taken today. What is happening today is essentially the long-term “brainwashing” of both Middle Eastern and European politicians with a view to diverting energies and resources from other priority regional development issues.

### **Europe will not become any safer**

Why is this unpopular decision to establish a third US deployment area in Europe being taken at all — and without any detailed analysis of the negative consequences of such a step? What are the real goals that the United States and its partners are setting themselves by creating a deployment area for a global anti-missile defence system in Europe? Lastly, how does Russia regard these decisions and what possible steps can the Russian leadership take in response?

Various articles on this subject have recently appeared in both Russian and foreign media. In stating their case, the authors frequently either dogmatically proclaim the common good of the expansion of the US anti-missile defence system, say nothing of the influence of anti-missile defence on global and regional security, or paint a picture of despair with no reasonable alternative solutions.

From time to time, complaints are heard about Russia's "exaggerated" response to the deployment of an anti-missile defence system in Europe. It appears to come as a surprise that in spite of the fact that "Russian representatives are constantly informed about the US anti-missile defence plans", Russia refuses to grasp that these actions are not intended to harm Russia's interests but are for its own good. At the same time, transparency measures are proposed in the form of visits to construction sites or "tours" of the anti-missile defence facilities once they have been completed. A typical example of this kind of commentary is a recent article in the Boston newspaper *Christian Science Monitor* stating that "Russia knows very well that it would not be threatened by the shield. It's hard to see how a largely unproven system with no attack capability and designed to handle only a few incoming missiles could spark an arms race".

In my opinion, the authors of the above and similar statements and assessments take a one-sided view of the problem, analysing only the political or the military component from their own perspectives and ignoring the connection between them. In reality, the European anti-missile defence problem is a complex one.

Russian diplomats and military experts have given a realistic and unbiased assessment of the situation on a number of occasions. They are the result of deep analysis. The essence of these evaluations is clear and simple: US anti-missile defence in the vicinity of our borders poses a threat to European security.

This is due to the fact that we do not view the European component of US anti-missile defence in isolation; we are fully aware that it is part of the overall American anti-missile defence system, which includes the deployment area in Alaska, the system of radar stations in the United Kingdom and Greenland, the sea-based Aegis ballistic missile defence system, the space-based detection systems and much more. In addition, we assess not just the number of interceptor missiles and radar stations; we are talking about the establishment of an important element in a single global anti-missile defence infrastructure, which can be reinforced relatively easily by a decision of the United States politico-military leadership on its own.

In the future, the interceptor missile silos could house interceptor missiles of a more advanced nature than the ones we are talking about today. It is conceivable that they would be smaller and have multiple warheads. Nor can we rule out the possibility that long- and medium-range ballistic missiles would be deployed in these very same silo launchers. An Assistant Secretary of Defense of the United States indirectly confirmed that these assumptions were not groundless when he said in an interview in a European newspaper that although there were no such plans at the moment, if such plans were to emerge, they would be agreed with Poland and other allies within NATO. In that case, both defensive and offensive capabilities of the anti-missile defence deployment area would grow enormously.

For that reason, President Putin noted in his address to the Munich Conference on Security Policy in February of this year that: "We cannot help but be disturbed by plans to deploy elements of an anti-missile defence system in Europe. Who needs what would inevitably turn into a resumption of the arms race? I very much doubt that the Europeans themselves do. None of the so-called 'problem countries' have missiles with a range of 5,000 to 8,000 kilometres that could really threaten Europe. Moreover, the hypothetical launch of a North Korean missile, for example, against United States territory through

Western Europe is clearly at variance with the laws of ballistics. As we say in Russia, it would be like using the right hand to reach the left ear.”

### **A dangerous trend**

In fact, the USA does have an ally in NATO, namely Turkey, that borders directly on Iran and is closer to North Korea than Poland or the Czech Republic. One would think that Turkey would be the most convenient springboard for the deployment of an anti-missile defence shield against these countries that are considered so “dangerous” to the United States. It is also far easier to survey the territory of Iran from Turkish territory, and any hypothetical missiles can be intercepted far more effectively at the start of their flight trajectory. In spite of all of this, the third deployment area is nevertheless to be located in Eastern Europe. This means that the United States has some other ideas on this matter after all.

And yet the USA continues with startling persistency to try to persuade public opinion both in Russia and elsewhere that its anti-missile defence system in Europe is for the good of everyone. This is done in the form of constant briefings held across Europe by high-ranking representatives of the US administration and the Missile Defense Agency. However, as one famous American writer noted, “sand is a poor substitute for oats”. In that sense, in an area as sensitive as strategic stability, briefings at which only specific information is provided and the opinion of those for whom the information is intended is not taken into account are no substitute for fully fledged negotiations.

This is all the more true because at these briefings, which for some reason are constantly passed off as proper consultations, it was announced initially that the third deployment area for the US anti-missile defence system was a bilateral matter between the USA and the Czech Republic and Poland, and that inasmuch as this issue was a question of safeguarding US security, it had nothing to do with a NATO European theatre anti-missile defence system. As it happens, however, the United States Assistant Secretary of State, Daniel Fried, recently said that the main purpose of the third deployment area was the protection of Europe and its possible further integration into future allied anti-missile defence systems. We are also being assured that briefings can evolve into negotiations, but at the same time it is emphasized that this would scarcely make any difference to the basic policy pursued, since the Pentagon has no intention of sharing technologies or operational control of its European anti-missile defence system.

And the most interesting thing is that these briefings are held everywhere except in Russia itself, and at meetings with Russian officials US representatives do everything possible to avoid answering specific questions.

If we were to translate this kind of “briefing” and the measures of transparency being proposed to us into a language that is understood by everyone, for example, into the language of communication between ordinary people, this proposal could be rephrased as follows: “We are your neighbours. We propose to mine your house so as to be able to blow up terrorists in it if they move towards us from your house. So that you don’t worry we will inform you every day about how the mine-laying is proceeding, and we will even be prepared to invite you to the ceremony at which the explosives are armed. We will also let you know when we finish the work. You therefore have no need to worry — go on living happily ever after in your home as before, we are your friends after all. However, we will decide when to press the

button to detonate the mines.” This proposal might seem attractive to some people, but it does not impress us.

All of this is going on against the background of constantly changing views regarding the role and planned scale of the deployment of the US anti-missile defence system components in Europe, in which we see an extremely dangerous trend. In recent years the US military infrastructure has always endeavoured to be located as close as possible to the regions from which the USA expects its interests to be threatened.

Under these circumstances, how should we react to the assurances that the third deployment area for US anti-missile defence in Eastern Europe will not be reinforced and expanded? What is there to stop plans for the stationing of a US anti-missile defence system in Ukraine, Georgia and other countries? We know only too well what became of promises regarding the non-expansion of NATO military infrastructure to the territory of the countries of Eastern Europe.

It is precisely for this reason that we have on more than one occasion spoken out against the unilateral adoption of decisions on the deployment of anti-missile defence systems in Europe.

### **Illusion of impunity**

In our opinion, large-scale deployment of anti-missile defence systems is a destabilizing factor that gives one of the parties an “illusion of impunity”. This being the case, as military people we must develop possible ways of neutralizing this potential threat by military means.

As in the years of the Cold War, deterrence, once again, remains an effective means of preventing both nuclear and other forms of conflict. All the forces and resources at the disposal of the armed forces and the State as a whole may be used to this end. It is for this very reason that in an interview the commander of the Russian Strategic Missile Forces stressed that, just like other branches and services of the armed forces, these forces must be able to carry out any missions as assigned to them. This includes interpreting anti-missile defence facilities as potentially dangerous installations that pose a direct military threat to our country. This is not an empty phrase but a statement of fact, evidence that the country’s armed forces are doing their job.

How can we find a way out of this situation?

In my view, we first need a careful analysis of the reasons for the establishment of an anti-missile defence system in Europe. This analysis needs to be carried out not in secret but on a broad basis. The NATO-Russia Council could be an excellent forum for this kind of dialogue. In view of the fact that this problem is extremely sensitive for the entire continent, it might be a good idea to involve other non-NATO European countries in the dialogue.

Second, on the basis of the analysis, requirements for the anti-missile defence system necessary for Europe could be formulated using the same format, taking into account its realistic cost and on the condition that the same level of security is ensured for all the participants in this process.



Third, a large pool of concerned countries might be formed to elaborate this system on the basis of recommendations, taking account as far as possible of the current capabilities of each participant.

As far as its influence on strategic stability in Europe today is concerned, anti-missile defence is no longer restricted to the area of applied military technology; it has become an instrument that could either contribute to European security or start a new stage of confrontation. The former is more acceptable to us.

In conclusion, I should like to mention the following.

Since the official withdrawal of the USA from the ABM Treaty in June 2002, we have seen the US administration is persistent in its policy to deploy a global national anti-missile defence system. Despite some technical problems, this programme continues to move forward, its financing is steadily increasing and the geographical boundaries are constantly being expanded.

Undoubtedly, the US anti-missile defence plans will be implemented to some extent, and this will inevitably involve a shift in the existing balance of Russian and US strategic offensive capabilities. Since military potential and actual weapons systems take more than a decade to develop and have considerable inertia, they are bound to affect politico-military forecasts and strategic planning not only in Russia but also in many other countries.

Nor do I rule out that the new situation will require that Russia adjust its approach to the further reductions in both strategic arms and other weapons.

I therefore believe that if the leadership of the United States of America and its allies in NATO are truly committed to the spirit of real partnership with Russia and the desire to join forces to ensure stability and security on the European continent and in the world beyond, our logic and our arguments will surely be heeded and understood on their merits.

The world in the twenty-first century cannot be united as long as the political, military and other lines of division that caused so much harm to humanity in the twentieth century persist. In recent decades, Russia has done everything to ensure that these lines disappear. We therefore expect our partners to take reciprocal steps. We are always open to frank, honest and constructive dialogue.