

Missile Defence

Analyzing the threat and protecting European security interests

The evolution of the US administration related to missile defence will have a direct impact on Europeans, who will have to take a position and make decisions earlier than expected.

The “third site” project, now abandoned, was indeed quite convenient for Europeans : aimed at protecting the American territory, placed under American control, financed by Washington, the European contribution was seen as a complement of the site, through the NATO’s ALTBMD program, which allowed a clear burden sharing between Europe and the US. In the ALTBMD calendar, the deployments of SM-3 (for upper layer), were foreseen in 2020, which would have let us time to react and concentrate in between on the lower layer.

The declaration made by President Obama on the 17th of September has accelerated the process : the deployment of SM-3 in Europe is planned for 2012/2013, with a ground version in years to come, following a “phased adaptive approach”. And because this new configuration is aimed at protecting European territory and population, Europeans will be called to co-finance it, as M. Gates announced it recently.

Europe has then to make a decision on missile defence as quickly as possible, and the next NATO Summit (late 2010 in Lisbon) will probably be decisive in this regard.

The question Europe will have to answer is twofold and finds its source in budgetary constraints that we all suffer from : what level of contribution to a missile defence system Europe is ready to assume and what type of contribution ? Financial one or through providing European equipments ?

You will not be surprised if I tell you the way to be followed is the second one, which is the one defined for ALTBMD : a contribution based on the provision of autonomous national equipments, defined and developed in cooperation with European countries, interoperable but, above all, complementary to the systems brought by the US, in a NATO framework. This approach must be maintained.

Why is it important ?

Because it allows the preservation of our technological and industrial base, developments in missile defence pulling the whole industry up (missiles, sensors, satellites ...), and because it gives European states the means of developing sovereign capabilities.

Europeans will not spend more on missile defence and will not increase the burden sharing, nor their defence budgets, if they cannot preserve elements of sovereignty and the durability of their DTIB.

If Europe is not following this way, it will have to pay cash for US equipments, either directly, by buying them on the shelf, or through their contribution to the NATO budget.

How to follow this path ?

Current or already financed European land based and naval systems are optimized to counter threats in the lower atmosphere and will be upgraded.

The current version of ASTER, that is used by the French and Italian forces, is already contributing to the ALTBMD program.

Four companies –THALES, SAFRAN and MBDA (with EADS) – have teamed to develop a new version of the ASTER Extended Air Defense system. This new generation is designed to defeat the next generation of ballistic missiles which can remain within the atmosphere and have high manoeuvring capabilities. ASTER's new capabilities would perfectly fit into a global NATO system and provide unique capabilities necessary to defend against the full spectrum of manoeuvring missiles and would then represent a true added value to US assets. They will be complementary to the interception domain of the SM-3 and THAAD systems.

Moreover, the system could also be used autonomously by Europeans.

Missile defence will be an issue of the next NATO Summit in Lisbon. This Summit needs to be prepared now. If France and Europe do not take initiatives and define a coherent approach for this event, decisions will be made without us. It is a major challenge, politically, militarily, strategically, as well as industrially.

Thank you.