

# **The ABM security regime: a wooly concept or the guardian of stability?**

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Submitted to  
Central European University  
Department of International Relations and European Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
International Relations and European Studies

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12,757 words

Budapest, Hungary  
2008

## **Abstract**

This research paper analyses the gradual abandonment of the ABM security framework by the United States. It is based on a conceptualization of the ABM framework as a security regime according to Keohane's propositions about international regimes. It conceives of American attempt to build an operational Ballistic Missile Defense that would include Europe as hegemonic aspiration and applies the theory of hegemonic stability to the case of the BMD development. By providing empirical evidence about the development of the BMD and the Russian reactions, it shows that there is a strong resemblance between the way regimes are established in the hegemonic stability theory and recent American undertaking in regard to the BMD system.

## List of abbreviations

**ABM** - Anti Ballistic Missile

**BMD** - Ballistic Missile Defense

**GPS** - Global Positioning System

**ICBM**-Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile

**TMD** -Theater Missile Defense

**WMD** - Weapons of Mass Destruction

## **Table of Contents**

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Theories of International regimes.....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	<i>Cooperation? What cooperation?.....</i>	5
2.2	<i>An innovative concept?.....</i>	6
2.3	<i>Definition.....</i>	7
2.4	<i>Power-based approaches.....</i>	9
2.5	<i>Neoliberalist approaches .....</i>	9
2.6	<i>Cognitivist schools.....</i>	10
2.7	<i>What is the usefulness of international regime analysis? .....</i>	12
<b>3</b>	<b>The concept of security regimes .....</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1	<i>Issue-areas .....</i>	13
3.2	<i>The ABM security regime .....</i>	14
<b>4</b>	<b>The hegemonic stability theory.....</b>	<b>16</b>
4.1	<i>Significance for international regime analysis.....</i>	16
4.2	<i>The problem of relative gains solved? .....</i>	17
4.3	<i>Possible shortcomings.....</i>	18
<b>5</b>	<b>Capabilities and Technology.....</b>	<b>19</b>
5.1	<i>BMD Development .....</i>	19
5.2	<i>Towards the ABM Treaty .....</i>	21
5.3	<i>Twilight of the ABM security regime?.....</i>	23
5.4	<i>Old Debates revived .....</i>	25
<b>6</b>	<b>Are we to expect hegemonic stability? .....</b>	<b>27</b>
6.1	<i>Is Russia irrational? .....</i>	31
6.2	<i>Europe and BMD .....</i>	32
6.3	<i>The host countries .....</i>	33
6.4	<i>Are the realists right?.....</i>	35
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>References.....</b>	<b>40</b>

# 1 Introduction

During the Cold War there were periods when the relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States was extremely intense and the world came close to a nuclear conflict. Even after the Cuban missile crisis, which for many proved the absurdity of the nuclear weapons buildup, both countries were very reluctant to cut down on aspirations to become world's leading power. Meanwhile the numbers of nuclear warheads and intercontinental missiles kept skyrocketing. It is only logical that any cooperation in the area of strategic arms must have been very limited.

However, looking closer at the management of the strategic environment during the Cold War, it is possible to identify patterns of coordinate behavior between the two superpowers. One of these patterns can be seen in the behavior of both countries with regards to the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which was signed in 1972. Often considered a “cornerstone of strategic parity,” the ABM Treaty was supposed to diminish uncertainty in the strategic environment by limiting defense capabilities of each side. By ratifying it, the United States and the Soviet Union bound themselves to stay vulnerable to each other's nuclear attack. In the following years the ABM arrangements played an important role in defining both the U.S. and Soviet strategic doctrines. However, the role of the Treaty for the strategic doctrines gradually started to differ. Although both superpowers appreciated cooperative arrangements based on mutual aversion towards nuclear conflict, the United States have never given up the idea of attaining complete invulnerability to missile attacks.

In this work I will take a close look at the development of the framework that was created around the ABM Treaty. I will especially focus on the development of the Anti-Ballistic Missile systems, because the efforts to build an operational missile defense clearly aim at altering the strategic parity between the two powers. My approach will be based on the international regime analysis, which is considered well suited for explaining cooperative patterns of behavior that

show a low degree of institutionalization, typical for the ABM framework. By choosing regime analysis as my basic tool to approach the subject matter of this research, namely the attempts to abolish the ABM Treaty arrangements, I will gain capacity of a strong institutional approach, which is capable of explaining subtle connections and frameworks between state actors in international relations. On the other hand, I also acknowledge that this approach limits my research in many ways: First, the identification of a regime in a particular issue-area is a very sensitive undertaking and there is no strong consensus on this in the discipline of international relations. Second, the conditionality of regime emergence and their persistence is highly under theorized and I will not attempt to extensively elaborate on this topic. However, I acknowledge the impact of different issue-areas such as economy or security on the likelihood of regime formation and persistence. Third, the regime analysis approach in its realist versions is considered quite static and focuses almost solely on the analysis of state actors in world politics.

In analyzing the gradual abandonment of the ABM international regime, I am interested in explaining the change of the regime per se. The most important question to be asked here is the following: What regime analysis approach is the most appropriate for explaining the gradual abandonment of the ABM security regime and its shift towards United States dominance? I hypothesize that the most appropriate account of the change and future abandonment of the ABM regime is the hegemonic stability theory. This theory seems to be very solid in most aspects needed for the explanation of regime's inception, its persistence and even adherence of the regime members to its principles and norms.

I cope with the problem of the ABM regime abandonment in the following way: First I introduce the paradigm of regime analysis. Here I stress the usefulness of the concept of international regimes for analyzing cooperative behavior in world politics. I present international regime analysis as a complementary concept to the more traditional idea of international organizations. I also engage in a debate over the definition of the concept and its shortcomings and limitations. In the next part of this thesis, I conceptualize the ABM Treaty framework as a

security regime according to Keohane's analytic propositions.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the hegemonic stability theory is introduced and its advantages and shortcomings are discussed. What follows is the empirical part focused on the development of the Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) systems in both countries. Here I pay a great deal of attention to the constant United States efforts to develop missile defense. Also, the stance of Russia and its reactions to the recent developments in the strategic environment are discussed. Although Europe has not traditionally played any significant role, I shortly elaborate on the European perceptions of the American missile defense project and devote a short section to the analysis of the BMD system's possible host countries.

Considering the vast amount of literature on international regimes that became available in the past three decades, I was faced with an intensive problem of where to ground my research theoretically. I decided to proceed from the classical debate that was triggered by a collection of insights on international regimes edited by Stephen D. Krasner in 1983. This debate is mainly concerned with the appropriate conceptualization of international regimes for the study of international relations. Since I am analyzing the American quest for hegemony and drawing heavily on the hegemonic stability theory, the work of Robert O. Keohane was probably the most useful in this regard. From the more recent contributions, I found a very good use of the overview of approaches to international regimes by Andreas Hasenclever et al., which attempts to bridge the gap between power-based, interests-based and knowledge-based approaches. Although I do not believe these three schools of international relations can speak to each other in one common and concise language, I use Hasenclever's careful observations and his analysis in the theoretical part of this work. The amount of literature for the empirical part of this paper was immense and therefore the empirical findings represent a true synthesis of various sources ranging from works on the strategic balance to speeches of renowned politicians.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

Through this piece of research I would like to complement the extensive literature on strategic studies. Traditionally, this field has been a domain of American scholars with their technical approaches based on game theory and the theory of probability. By bringing the international regime analysis in the picture, I hope to offer a new insight on the abandonment of the ABM treaty and on the changes in strategic environment.



## 2 Theories of International regimes

The field of international relations has traditionally been perceived as the science of “peace and war.” Concerns about understanding and explaining the abyss between these two poles are strongly reflected in the questions international relations scholars are asking; Why is the distance between conflict and peace sometimes so narrow and at other times so wide, what are the incentives that drive states into lethal conflicts, and many similar questions have been asked and answered. Up until the 1980s, probably the most developed answers were those tackling the causes and sources of conflict. For the realist school causes of war have been the ultimate focus for decades. Various explanations have been proposed by realist scholars for the occurrence of conflict ranging from Butterfield’s notion of human nature to Waltz’s systemic conditions.

### 2.1 *Cooperation? What cooperation?*

Looking at the study of cooperation in world politics one cannot escape the notion that compared to the study of war, this issue has been less developed and under theorized. However, in the past thirty years there has been a strong drive towards conceptualization of patterns of cooperative or restraining behavior. At first glance the concept of international organizations is perhaps the most widely accepted explanation for state’s cooperative behavior. It is centered on formal arrangements in world politics, and particularly, agencies that are created through these arrangements. The United Nations, World Trade Organization or the World Bank are just a few examples of agencies representing international organizations. However, cooperation in world politics is not happening only on formalized basis. One can observe many cooperative arrangements between states and other actors that are not formalized, yet there is a strong sense of adherence to certain principles, rules or customs. Since there is no formal authority that can coerce states to obey these rules and principles, the

concept of international organization is not suitable for explaining such behavior. Instead of about international organizations one should perhaps talk about international regimes.

## **2.2 *An innovative concept?***

The concept of international regimes (next to the idea of international organization) is arguably the boldest attempt to explain the persistence of various cooperative patterns in world politics. Since its first visible appearance in the late 1970s, it has taken many forms and all major schools of international relations used it as an important analytical tool for explaining cooperation in world politics. Just to mention some very general examples, the realist school uses it in explaining the Bretton Woods arrangements under the auspices of the United States, neoliberals emphasize the importance of international regimes in the framework of international trade, which is closely bound to the (former) General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and cognitivists focus on the role of epistemic communities in the Soviet-U.S. relationship towards the end of Cold War.

It may seem odd that such a broad range of arrangements is placed under one cohesive concept of international regimes, hence before I engage in defining the concept itself, I would like to address the relevant critiques of international regime analysis. The concept of international regimes as an analytical tool has been challenged on many grounds. Perhaps the earliest and fiercest criticisms of this analytical tool were presented by Susan Strange. Looking at the definition and characteristics of the international regimes, Strange presents strong arguments against the usefulness of international regime analysis. According to her, international regimes are said to reflect contemporary affairs in world politics such as the “external shocks” and decline of the United States in the 1970s. For Strange this reflects the subjective perception of the role of the United States in the minds of American scholars and serves as a tool to cover the retreat of America from its previous positions. In a way international

regimes are then seen as a contemporary fashion, similar to the theories of integration that sprang up after the successes of the European Communities.<sup>2</sup>

The second criticism is perhaps more substantial, since it tackles the meaning of the concept itself and even many proponents of international regimes analysis admit that this is a crucial issue for the usefulness of the concept in international relations research.<sup>3</sup> When talking about international regimes there seems to be no common understanding of the respective arrangements and frameworks. Moreover, there is no common notion of what an ideal international regime should look like. Strange therefore claims that the idea of international regime is just “one more woolly concept that is a fertile source of discussion simply because people mean different things when they use it.”<sup>4</sup> Considering the possible obscurity of international regimes analysis that Strange points out, the concept as such attracts surprisingly high numbers of scholars both in political economy and international relations. To make matters more clear, I will now move on to define and define the concept according to the mainstream proponents of international regimes.

### 2.3 Definition

Since the criticism of the concept is so fierce, a great deal of attention has been paid to its definition. As Hasenclever, Mayer and Rittberger point out, literally every work operating with the concept proceeds from the *consensus definition* of international regimes developed by Stephen A. Krasner.<sup>5</sup> In Krasner’s interpretation regimes are conceptualized as “intervening variables standing between basic causal factors<sup>6</sup> on the one hand and outcomes and behavior

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<sup>2</sup>Susan Strange, “Cave! Hic Dragons: A Critique of Regime Analysis,” in *International Regimes*, ed. Stephen D. Krasner (London and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 339.

<sup>3</sup>Oran R. Young, “International Regimes, Toward a New Theory of Institutions,” *World Politics*, Vol. 39, (Oct, 1986): 104-122.

<sup>4</sup>Strange, “Cave! Hic Dragoness: A Critique of Regime Analysis,” p. 343.

<sup>5</sup>Andreas Hasenclever, Peter Mayer, Volker Rittberger, “Interests, Power, Knowledge: The Study of International Regimes,” *Mershon International Studies Review*, Vol. 40, No.2 (Oct, 1996): 179.

<sup>6</sup>Krasner identifies these as power, interest, and knowledge.

on the other.”<sup>7</sup> This conceptualization thus sees regimes as mediators between social forces and social behavior. International regimes can be then defined as:

sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making processes around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations. Principles are beliefs of fact, causation and rectitude. Norms are standards of behavior defined in terms of right and obligations. Rules are specific prescriptions or proscriptions for action. Decision-making procedures are prevailing practices for making and implementing collective choice.<sup>8</sup>

Many authors of international regimes literature admit that this broad definition is too general and can cover international arrangements from the law of the seas or agreements aimed at limiting the greenhouse effect to the coordination of labor markets in the neighboring countries.<sup>9</sup> Therefore a more narrow specification, often aimed at the utility of the concept for empirical research, is often seen. Keohane asserts that the most appropriate and useful way of looking at international regimes is through their capacity to be perceived as frameworks of rules, norms and principles for negotiation.<sup>10</sup> Thus regimes can contribute to cooperative behavior in world politics as channels enabling the actors to talk and use a language grounded in the commonly accepted norms and rules. Another limiting aspect of the definition is the already mentioned difference between international organization and international regime. Although both international institutions can be created by specific arrangements (treaties, pacts etc.), regimes can be accepted and valid without a formal arrangement. This is impossible for international organizations, therefore a distinction between these two types of international institutions should always be made. Perhaps the clearest distinction is offered by Keohane,

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<sup>7</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables,” in *International Regimes*, ed. Stephen D. Krasner (London and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> For example in: Robert M. Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

<sup>10</sup> Robert O. Keohane, “The Demand for International Regimes,” in *International Regimes*, ed. Stephen D. Krasner, p. 337.

when he points out the fact that “regimes – being sets of principles, norms, rules, and procedures – do not possess the capacity to act.”<sup>11</sup> At the end of this section it should be noted that the concept of international regimes is in principle quite similar to the concepts of power or interest in international relations, yet it has been arguably more contested than the two.

## **2.4 Power-based approaches**

These approaches are deeply grounded in realist tradition and share most of realist assumptions about the nature and functioning of world politics. First of all, the main dependent variable for realists is power, possibly the distribution of power or capabilities among states. Seen through the realist prism, international regimes are conceived of as intervening variables that can constrain the choices of state actors and can lead to occasional coordinate patterns in states' behavior.<sup>12</sup> Overall the anarchical nature of world politics minimizes the possibility for cooperative attempts and leads to self-help and egoistic behavior. Since survival is the ultimate goal of the state, it is crucial in the realist world that states are with more than anything concerned with relative gains vis-à-vis the others. States are automatically interested in benefits that other states obtain and their relative gains are reflected in the distribution of power in the international system. However, since cooperation in world politics is not as rare as the realist paradigm would possibly suggest, realist scholars are “forced” to provide explanations for these occurrences that are in conformity with their assumptions about the international system.

## **2.5 Neoliberalist approaches**

In sum, the assumptions that neoliberals hold about the international environment are identical to the realist ones. Nonetheless, there is an important difference between the gains

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<sup>11</sup> Robert O. Keohane, “International Institutions: Two Approaches,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 32, as used in Hasenclever et al., “Interests, Power, Knowledge: The Study of International Regimes,” 179.

<sup>12</sup> Keohane, “The Demand for International Regimes.”

states are concerned with. Unlike realists, neoliberals take into account both relative and absolute gains, primarily accentuating that states are concerned more with the overall benefits of coordinate behavior than with the gains vis-à-vis others. Regimes are then seen as frameworks that can render the benefiting coordinate behavior possible.

Most neoliberal scholars stress the importance of regimes for solving the traditional game in international relations – the prisoner’s dilemma. From the nature of the prisoner’s dilemma, it means that they are looking for a solution to the problem of cooperation in situations where selfish behavior brings suboptimal outcomes.<sup>13</sup> By introducing regimes there is a greater chance for states to lower transaction costs, facilitate communication and negotiations, acquire relevant information and use it for their absolute gains.<sup>14</sup> Neoliberals do not omit the importance of relative gains. However, the state choices always take into consideration an imaginary total of the relative and absolute gains.

## **2.6 Cognitivist schools**

The cognitivist camp includes various schools of thought, which all base their theorizing on the phenomenon of knowledge. For cognitivists knowledge stands as the independent variable in explaining international affairs. The field of world politics is perceived through actor’s roles in the societal context and decision-making is then not based on selfish interests, but rather on normative judgments of the respective leaders about their role in society. Therefore cognitivists find themselves in sharp opposition to the realist assumptions about the primacy of power in international relations. Also the static nature of realism is contested by this school, mainly because the realist analysis is focused on either the unit or systemic level and leaves no room for societal factors.

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<sup>13</sup> Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 33.

In an attempt to categorize the knowledge-based schools, Hasenclever draws a basic dividing line between weak and strong cognitivist theories. Weak cognitivist theories aim at explaining the impact of knowledge on actors' behavior. He points out the importance of epistemic communities<sup>15</sup> in transferring and channeling ideas that in the end may begin to constitute an international regime.<sup>16</sup> Thomas Risse-Kappen is a representative of the group of the weak cognitivists scholars that concentrate on reconceptualization of Soviet foreign policy in the Gorbachev era, particularly its twist towards reconciliation with the West and its sudden openness to Western ideas and concepts.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the most important aspect of weak cognitivists' work is the explanation they provide for the persistence of regimes, which are based on the reinvigorating frameworks of epistemic communities. Strong cognitivists view world politics as an essentially social sphere.<sup>18</sup> Regimes for them are not mere results of cooperative behavior, but social institutions that create identities according to admissible rules and norms. Regimes are not a static concept. As Oran R. Young asserts, they have both self-constitutive and interpretative functions when they react to changes in world politics.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> A widely accepted definition of epistemic is the following by Peter M. Haas: "Networks of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area." First used in: Peter M. Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination." *International Organization*, Vol. 46, no 1 (1992): 1-35. The concept of epistemic communities received a great deal of attention, because its explanation of the twist of Soviet foreign policy in the late 1980s is very persuasive. Unlike realism, it provides a dynamic account of change in international relations, taking into consideration decision maker's knowledge and their ability and capacity to learn. Learning is thus an important part of the study of epistemic communities. However, many shortcomings of this approach have been identified, the most serious being the inability of epistemic communities analysis to explain, why particular ideas have been chosen over other ideas and transferred into knowledge.

<sup>16</sup> Hasenclever et al., *Interests, Power, Knowledge*, p. 206.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Ideas do not Float Freely: Transnational Coalitions, Domestic Structure, and the End of the Cold War." *International Organization*, Vol. 48, No.2 (Spring, 1994): 185-214.

<sup>18</sup> Hasenclever et al., *Interests, Power, Knowledge*, 207.

<sup>19</sup> Oran R. Young, "International Regimes: Toward a New Theory of Institutions." *World Politics*, Vol. 39, No.1 (Oct., 1986): 104-122.

## 2.7 What is the usefulness of international regime analysis?

International regimes analysis is quite specific among the analytic approaches in international relations. First of all, it is often seen as an observation tool, mainly used to identify a certain state of affairs, which is determined by shared norms and rules. Strange contents that the regime analysis is obfuscated by never ending obsessions to identify various orders in world politics and that the concept itself is flawed, because it does not take into account the reality of world politics: "It [regime analysis] consequently gives the false impression [...] that international regimes are slowly advancing against the force of disorder and anarchy."<sup>20</sup> Although Strange's argument is quite persuasive, the function of regime analysis is more significant than just trying to dispose of anarchy in world politics. In the mainstream theories, which apply regime analysis to world politics, the common function of regime analysis is best identified not as getting rid of anarchy, but rather as explaining perplexities of collective action in world politics. All three mainstream schools, namely realists, neoliberals and cognitivists, might acknowledge different levels of regimes' institutionalization and, moreover, use different dependent variables, but the common ground seen in the problem of collective action stays the same.

Second, regime analysis does not aim only at explaining purely collaborative behavior. Arguably, more occurrences of collective action in international affairs stem from cooperation rather than collaboration.<sup>21</sup> In principle coordination differs significantly from collaboration. Primarily, coordination is a far less explicit function of a regime. Stein connects collaboration with the notion of convergent expectations about common interests in world politics. Expectations about common aversions, on the other hand, would be a base for coordinate behavior.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Strange, *Cave! Hic Dragons: A Critique of Regime Analysis*, p. 349.

<sup>21</sup> Arthur A. Stein, *Why Nations Cooperate: Circumstance and Choice in International Relations* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 39.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.



### 3 The concept of security regimes

It may seem that the concept of international regimes is more successfully used in international political economy than in international relations and security studies. After all, international economy is a domain, where regimes and frameworks for cooperation play a decisive role for the everyday's functioning of the states' societies. Also, the domain of international economy is much more permeable for non-state actors such as multinational corporations, investment funds and others players, which provides for literally an abundance of space for cooperative arrangements.

#### 3.1 Issue-areas

The importance of absolute gains in this sphere is another reason, why the notion of regimes should find a better use in the economic issue area. On the theoretical level, this conviction is supported by many scholars from the cognitivist camp, namely Ernst-Otto Czempiel, who puts emphasis on the “divisible gains” in economy and contrasts it with the “indivisible power” in the security issue-areas.<sup>23</sup> The implications of Czempiel's division of issue-areas for security regimes is twofold. First, security regimes are less likely to be established than the economic regimes precisely because of the relative gains problem and the limited number of state actors involved. Second, security regimes (once established) might be less resilient to the changes of members' interests, again because of the “indivisibility” of power

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<sup>23</sup> Used in Ernst-Otto Czempiel, *Internationale Politik. Ein Konfliktmodell* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1981).

in international relations. Jervis mentions another difference between security and non-security areas. First, there is a considerable difference between defensive and offensive behavior in non-security areas. Actors can seek insurance against future dangers without affecting other members of the regime. In security areas, this endeavor is impossible, because even defensive behavior harms or menaces the others.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.2 *The ABM security regime*

Can we identify a security regime in the United States and the Soviet Union relationship? According to Jervis such an attempt is useless, because the rules and practices that are in place are very vague and can hardly be seen as explicit.<sup>25</sup> However, I argue that the concept of international regimes can be applied to the case of the Russo-American relationship in a particular sphere of strategic cooperation. First example of such cooperative behavior can be identified right after the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. The two superpowers went literally on the verge of nuclear war to find out that attacking each other is not in their self-interest. The hot line established between Washington and Moscow can be seen as a beginning of strategic cooperation, if only to avoid nuclear confrontation.

Although the hot phone line and the secret agreements about the withdrawals of missiles by United States from Turkey could be considered a cooperative behavior based on certain common aversions, it can be hardly regarded as a regime. Nevertheless, a more sophisticated arrangement followed ten years after the missile crisis in the form of the ABM Treaty. If set against the definition of international regimes provided by Krasner, that is the “sets of implicit or explicit principles around which actors’ expectations converge,”<sup>26</sup> the ABM Treaty arrangements can be considered as a security regime. The superpowers’ expectations about deterrence and strategic balance converged around the need for eliminating ABM systems capable of defending

<sup>24</sup> Robert Jervis, “Security Regimes.” *International Organization*, Vol. 36, No.2 (Spring 1982): p. 360.

<sup>25</sup> Jervis, *Security regimes*, p. 371.

<sup>26</sup> Krasner, *Structural Causes and Regime Consequences*, p. 2.

one's territory against the other's nuclear attack. The ABM regime "by extension, has maintained to a lesser degree the strategic balance among all the nuclear-weapon states, including small nuclear powers vis-à-vis the nuclear superpowers. No matter the U.S. like it or not, the fact is that, it is precisely because of this global strategic balance that the major powers have felt compelled to address global and regional security issues through peaceful means and avoid direct confrontation with each other."<sup>27</sup>

The ABM security regime seems to match all of Keohane's characteristics of a model international regime.<sup>28</sup> First of all, the ABM regime reduced uncertainty for both two nuclear powers by rendering both of them vulnerable to each other's strike. This is arguably the most important precondition for the strategic stability attributed to the ABM Treaty. Second, it lowered the costs for cooperation, since it provided a clear framework of norms and rules that can be drawn upon when a disputed issue was at stake. Third, the ABM regime established a notion of legal liability perceived as a commitment to the international community of states. Last but not least the Treaty also promoted multi-issue interaction in areas of arms control.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Sha Zukang, "Preserving the ABM Treaty and Promoting International Security," Speech at the seminar on National Missile Defense, Ottawa, March 2001, available at: [http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/2001/03/00\\_zukang\\_ABM-treaty.htm](http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/2001/03/00_zukang_ABM-treaty.htm) (accessed May 31, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Keohane, *After Hegemony*, p. 89-98.

<sup>29</sup> The effect of the ABM Treaty on arms control was, contrary to the popular notion, quite limited.

## 4 The hegemonic stability theory

Although it was not originally regarded as a theory of international regimes, the hegemonic stability theory plays extremely important role in analyzing and explaining the creation and persistence of international regimes. The fundamentals of the theory itself are connected with Charles Kindleberger, who used the idea of hegemonic stability in theorizing about the persistent “international economic infrastructure.”<sup>30</sup>

### 4.1 *Significance for international regime analysis*

Due to the fact that all states participating in trade and foreign exchange need to use this framework of international economic infrastructure, it was conceived of as a public good that should be provided free or for a relatively low cost. This arrangement should guarantee adherence of the members to the regime and, more importantly, its stability. However, the maintenance of the regime itself is not cost free at all; therefore the theory conceptualizes a stabilizer of the regime. The stabilizer is precisely a hegemon, who willingly takes up the task to provide (international) public good (in a particular area) even in a case when weaker actors attempt to free ride and do not participate in sharing the maintenance costs. By doing so, the hegemon acquires the option to assign the regime its own rules, norms, principles and customs. For the fields of international political economy and international relations the whole assumption about the provision of public goods was borrowed from Olson’s social theory of small groups, which basically claims that small groups of actors are better suited to provide the public good (in our case the regime ) for its members. According to Olson, in a small group it is always the member with the most power resources who will be likely to have an interest in providing the public good, be it the international exchange regime, law of the seas, or the satellite

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<sup>30</sup> Hasenclever et al., *Interests, Power, Knowledge*, p. 197.

communication systems such as the Global Positioning System.<sup>31</sup> As Snidal puts it, “the surprising implication [of the hegemonic stability theory] is that weaker states benefit from international inequality while hegemonic powers are better characterized as charitable benefactors than imperialistic or exploitative masters.”<sup>32</sup>

#### **4.2 The problem of relative gains solved?**

With regards to relative gains in international relations, the hegemonic stability theory is probably the one example of a concept aspiring to overcome this indefectible problem. In a particular way the theory’s logic limits the quest for relative gains and renders cooperative arrangements possible even under the anarchical system and selfish state behavior. As I have already indicated, the most important condition for cooperation under anarchy according to the theory is the appearance of “actors who hold a preponderance of power resources relevant to the issue-area.”<sup>33</sup> Such an actor holding preponderance of power is then the only one “able to afford participation in cooperative agreements, without defaulting on its relative gains concerns.”<sup>34</sup>

Already with a hegemon in place the regime is basically a product of the hegemon’s predominance in a particular issue-area. The perseverance of the regime is guaranteed by the hegemon’s interest in its maintenance. The maintenance from the position of the hegemon can be done coercively, thus forcing the weaker states to accept the “rules of the game” or in a more benevolent way, when the weaker players themselves decide to accept the regime, because they may see a prospect of benefiting from the coordinative arrangements. As Duncan Snidal claims, the way hegemony is exercised has deep implications and ramifications for international

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<sup>31</sup> As used in Hasenclever et al., *Interests, Power, Knowledge*, p. 197.

<sup>32</sup> Duncan J. Snidal, “Coordination versus Prisoners Dilemma: Implications for International Cooperation and Regimes.” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (Dec., 1985): p. 924.

<sup>33</sup> Robert O. Keohane, quoted in Hasenclever et al., *Interests, Power, Knowledge*, p. 197.

<sup>34</sup> Ilya Shulman, “Coordinate & Conquer: A New Perspective on International Regimes.” *Michigan Journal of Political Science*, Vol.1, Issue 35 (Fall/Winter 2003): p. 9.

relations: "When the conditions specified in the theory of hegemonic stability apply, all states will welcome leadership and seek to take a free ride on it. In other circumstances, when power is distributed asymmetrically but hegemony is exercised that do not benefit all states, subordinate states will chafe under the {coercive) leadership."<sup>35</sup> This is especially visible in certain issue-areas, where the distribution of power is very unequal and therefore it leaves room for the hegemonic arrangement. In these areas (such as the U.S. supported Bretton Woods monetary framework) the creation of a regime is more likely<sup>36</sup> than in areas where power is more equally distributed.

#### **4.3 Possible shortcomings**

The hegemonic stability theory has been contested on many grounds. The main concern of the critics is that the existence of the regime is bound to the relative power of the hegemon.<sup>37</sup> If the hegemon's power declines, regime change or its complete abandonment is expected no matter whether other actors attempt to uphold the regime principles and rules or discard them right away. The abandonment of the Gold Standard by the United States in the 1970s is an accurate example of a regime termination. On the other hand, it is very difficult to empirically prove that the reasoning behind the hegemonic stability theory is correct and valid for every regime with a vast preponderance of power on the side of the hegemon. Also, due to the different nature of particular issue-areas, it is difficult to draw general conclusions about the impact of hegemony on other actors.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Duncan J. Snidal, "The Limits of Hegemonic Stability Theory." *International Organization*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Autumn, 1985): pp. 579-614.

<sup>36</sup> Hasenclever et al., *Interests, Power, Knowledge*, p. 198.

<sup>37</sup> Snidal, *Coordination Versus Prisoners Dilemma*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

## 5 Capabilities and Technology

What does the ABM treaty and the expectations from its institutionalization mean for the United States is quite a puzzling question. On the one hand the United States tried to avoid the vulnerability from the Soviet Union's nuclear missiles starting in the late 1950s, on the other hand, after more than a decade of ardent development of the missile defense systems, it attempted to institutionalize this vulnerability and use it as a basis for a security regime that would allow for strategic stability. Thus paradoxically the vulnerability of American territory was supposed to mean its relative safety from a nuclear Soviet attack.<sup>39</sup> In order to explain this puzzle, it is helpful to look back at the development of the main element on which the ABM regime rests, namely the ballistic missile defense system (BMD). After a closer examination of the development of BMD it may be clear that the ABM regime, often seen as American contribution to strategic stability was more than a result of prudence and judiciousness of American statesmen simply a concession to technical difficulties.

However, there is another side of the coin. While the development of BMD successfully continued, the ABM regime and the mutual vulnerability it stressed, became both for Americans and the Soviets almost as clear as bell. My argument therefore is that although the ABM regime came to existence as a consequence of technical difficulties with the BMD, it persisted for deeper reasons, the most important of them being the obvious advantage of the ABM regime for both superpowers. In the next section I will discuss the technical development of the defense system that would clearly dissolve the ABM regime.

### 5.1 *BMD Development*

Obsessed with technological progress, the United States has tried to develop a defensive system against ballistic missiles since the end of WWII. Already in 1958 the American public was

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<sup>39</sup> Colin S. Gray, "European Perspectives on U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense." Research paper at the National Institute for Public Policy, March 2002, p. 5.

presented with a plan for building a missile defense system under the name Nike-Zeus, later renamed Nike-X. The function of this system was to destroy enemy's flying nuclear warhead in the final phase of the flight about 100 kilometers above the ground. This system was rather limited in scope, and aimed at defending only a very limited area of land such as a military base or sights high importance.

To make matters clear, it was actually the Soviet Union, which first constructed an operational ABM system. During 1962 the construction of a missile defense system around Moscow started with the aim of having eight complexes, each sheltering 16 interceptors. Due to technical difficulties only 64 interceptors were completed before 1972. After the ABM treaty was signed, Soviets began developing an upgraded system with 100 interceptors, which would be able to destroy the flying missiles outside the atmosphere.<sup>40</sup> However, since the completion of this system there have only been minor improvements in its capabilities and no attempt to expand the system beyond Moscow was ever announced.

Since the very beginning of the research programs there was a strong criticism towards the BMD system on both Soviet and American side. However, the Soviet debate was merely a matter of the military command and a few Politburo members. In the United States, on the other hand, the issue was more opened to discussion, but up until the 1980s and Reagan's SDI was not really highly politicized and the main contributors to the actual debate were mainly scientific circles. The first arguments of the opponents of missile defense systems were rather technical, aiming at the system's imperfections and inaccuracy. If this particular system was to protect a larger part of American territory, it would have been extremely costly and still probably would be able to cover the territory. Moreover, since the buildup of ballistic missiles skyrocketed in the beginning of the 1960s, it would be unlikely that a large scale Soviet nuclear attack could be deflected by the BMD system.

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<sup>40</sup> History of Russia's ABM System, [http://www.ucsusa.org/global\\_security/missile\\_defense/history-of-russias-abm-system.html](http://www.ucsusa.org/global_security/missile_defense/history-of-russias-abm-system.html) (accessed May 31, 2008).



With the end of the doctrine of massive retaliation and coming of McNamara's doctrine of mutually assured destruction (MAD) during the Kennedy administration, the idea of defending one's territory against enemy's ballistic missiles became undisclosed to say the least. This was due to the fact that the official acknowledgement of development of the BMD would totally destabilize the delicate nuclear balance between the two superpowers and most likely would lead to another gradual arms race.<sup>41</sup>

## 5.2 Towards the ABM Treaty

Even though the ballistic missile defense was not in conformity with the official American strategic doctrine, its development continued during the tenures of both Presidents Johnson and Nixon. In 1967 Johnson approved the program Sentinel, which was supposed to revive and extend the already quite ambitious Nike-X. Officially, this research program was not aimed against the Russian ballistic missiles, but against the quickly developing Chinese nuclear forces. This rhetoric came to place mainly because of the continuing arms control talks with the USSR.<sup>42</sup> The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) in 1969 between the two superpowers resulted, apart from other agreements, in the famous Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) in which both superpowers committed to limit their anti-ballistic missile systems in the following way:

[...] the United States and the Soviet Union agree that each may have only two ABM deployment areas, so restricted and so located that they cannot provide a nationwide ABM defense or become the basis for developing one. Each country thus leaves unchallenged the penetration capability of the others retaliatory missile forces. The Treaty permits each side to have one limited ABM system to protect its capital and another to protect an ICBM launch area. The two sites defended must be at least 1,300 kilometers apart, to prevent the creation of any effective regional defense zone or the beginnings of a

<sup>41</sup> *Getting MAD: Nuclear Mutual Assured Destruction, Its Origins and Practice* [online]. Henry D. Sokolski. Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, November 2004 [cit. 2006-12-29], p. 357,; <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB585.pdf> (accessed May 31, 2008).

<sup>42</sup> Bradley Graham, *Hit to Kill: The New Battle Over Shielding America From Missile Attack*. (New York: Public Affairs, 2003), p. 7.

nationwide system. Precise quantitative and qualitative limits are imposed on the ABM systems that may be deployed. At each site there may be no more than 100 interceptor missiles and 100 launchers.<sup>43</sup>

In an additional amendment signed in 1974 the number of protected areas was limited to one. United States kept their BMD system protecting the Grand Forks rocket base in North Dakota.<sup>44</sup> Soviet Union, on the other hand, retained the defense system protecting Moscow. However, both of these systems were quite limited in scope and their operational capabilities questionable.<sup>45</sup>

Even during the détente period in the U.S. – Soviet relations plans for breaching the ABM regime seemed to be high on the agenda of American administrations.<sup>46</sup> However, it took roughly until 1983 for the American industry to develop the key technologies, which could make the BMD system technically reliable.<sup>47</sup> In March 1983 President Reagan delivered his famous “Star Wars” speech, in which he called upon the American scientists to concentrate on means that could render the nuclear weapons “impotent and obsolete.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> The ABM Treaty, <http://www.state.gov/www/global/arms/treaties/abm/abm2.html> (accessed May 31, 2008).

<sup>44</sup> The ballistic missile defense around Grand Forks in North Dakota was dismantled in 1976. The reason was that its technical reliability in case of deceptive Soviet attack was very low and its maintenance too costly. Paradoxically, since the dismantling of this missile defense it was Russia that possessed the only operational system, though very limited in scope.

<sup>45</sup> It is very difficult to determine the effectiveness of these systems, mainly because they have never been used in real situations. Available information from the simulation tests tends to be positively biased towards the system’s capabilities. The tests themselves are often “softer” than the real attack, because combat missiles often use various decoys to disorient the interceptor missiles.

<sup>46</sup> Graham, *Hit to Kill*, p. 14.

<sup>47</sup> The most rapid progress compared to the 1960s was in laser tracking and homing technologies, which became available in the beginning of the 1980s.

<sup>48</sup> Ronald Reagan, Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security, March 23, 1983, <<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/22/documents/starwars.speech/> (accessed May 27, 2008).

### 5.3 *Twilight of the ABM security regime?*

The project that was to follow, the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), was arguably the most ambitious attempt to build a functioning BMD ever. Its plans included space-based elements for tracking the enemy's ballistic missiles and multiple surface-based radars and interceptors. Known as the Star Wars, the whole system under Reagan administration was supposed to be, next to the Apollo missions, the most costly project in the United States of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The cost and political circumstances are traditionally seen as the primary reasons for which the Reagan administration did not continue to put the SDI into operation. However, Reagan's rhetoric towards the Soviet Union was twofold. On the one hand he was an ardent proponent of the SDI project, but on the other he more or less actively participated in the nuclear weapons reaction talks, especially after Mikhail Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Communist party in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the generously funded research from Reagan's years serves now as a base for the contemporary efforts to build a BMD system.

Remarkable for the fate of the ABM regime was the Missile Defense Act of 1995. The American Congress passed this act, which for the first time directly scheduled the placement of the missile defense system on American soil. The act stated that it is the policy of the United States to: "develop for deployment a multiple-site national missile defense system that is affordable and operationally effective against limited, accidental, and unauthorized ballistic missile attacks on the United States, and which can be augmented over time as the threat changes to provide a layered defense against limited, accidental, and unauthorized ballistic missile threats."<sup>49</sup> The system was supposed to be quite limited in scope and completely in conformity with the ABM treaty (!), but the act also emphasized the need for further negotiations with the Soviet Union for the system's expansion. The whole of the system was supposed to be

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<sup>49</sup> *Getting MAD: Nuclear Mutual Assured Destruction, Its Origins and Practice.*

<sup>49</sup> Graham, *Hit to Kill*, p. 7.

in place in as soon as the required technology is developed; however, this did not happen. Firstly because of technical difficulties and, secondly, for political reasons; President Clinton remained quite skeptical towards such a costly system during his two terms in office.

However, estimates of possible threats to American security and intelligence planning continued during Clinton's era. In November 1995 the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) focused on newly emerging threats with a prospect for the next 15 years.<sup>50</sup> The report itself stressed the fact that no country except the current nuclear powers will be able to acquire a ballistic missile, which could endanger the territory of the United States. Special attention was paid to North Korea with its ballistic missile development program, but even in this case any acute danger was discarded, mainly because the Korean Taepodong-2 ballistic missile had only a limited flying range.

According to NIE 1995 the United States is able to block any attempt to develop ICBM technology in any non-nuclear country. This would be possible because of the tests of specific elements needed for the development of ICBMs, which have to be carried out about 10 years before the actual missile is ready for use and which cannot be carried out without awareness of the United States intelligence. The possibility that a nuclear power would provide the ICBM technology to the nuclear aspirants is also cast doubt upon, mainly because all states in possession of the ICBMs are part of the Missile Technology Control Regime and all protect the technologies from others.

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<sup>50</sup> *DCI National Intelligence Estimate. President's Summary. Emerging Missile Threats to North America During the Next 15 Years. PS/NIE 95-19. November 1995.*

#### 5.4 *Old Debates revived*<sup>51</sup>

As Henry Kissinger put it in his article for the *International Herald Tribune*, the revival of nearly 50 years old debates about ballistic missile defense (BMD) should not surprise anyone, mainly because Russia (or earlier the Soviet Union) has always showed a great interest in missile defense.<sup>52</sup> Nor is the debate around the new BMD system novel. Literally every decade since the 1950s had its own “debate” that centered on the missile defense system. What is then so special about the recent discourse? Or to put it differently, what is so surprising about it? Perhaps it is the furious insistence of Americans on having their homeland protected against the unpredictable leaders of the rogue states. In a way this concern may sound very surprising, especially because the United States was exposed to the Soviet nuclear threat for more than 50 years, and therefore the scale of a terrorist attack such as the one on September 11 should not precipitate a hysteric call for invulnerability that we have been witnessing since the attacks on the World Trade Center. What is even more puzzling is that the debate in the United States, although involving the rogue states and terrorist organizations, is still based on old Cold War arguments about deterrence and strategic parity.<sup>53</sup> In his speech at the National Defense University in Washington, four months before the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, President Bush attempted to obscure the basic principle of the ABM regime – the vulnerability to each other’s attack:

We [United States] didn’t trust them [Soviet Union], and for good reason. Our deep differences were expressed in a dangerous military confrontation that resulted in thousands of nuclear weapons pointed at each other on hair-trigger alert. Security of both the United States

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<sup>51</sup> As a basis for this section and the section “Is Russia Irrational” I am drawing on my previous research paper written for the course “Thinking about Security and Strategy” under the supervision of Professor Paul Roe at the Department of International Relations and European Studies at Central European University. The paper’s title was “Russia and the Ballistic Missile Defense.”

<sup>52</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, “Don’t rule out Putin’s Initiative,” *International Herald Tribune*, 9 August 2007.

<sup>53</sup> This can be clearly seen in the National Security Strategy 2002. This high profile document is very imprecise in specifying and distinguishing between the new threats and the Cold War environment of two superpowers.

and the Soviet Union was based on a grim premise: that neither side would fire nuclear weapons at each other, because doing so would mean the end of both nations. We even went so far as to codify this relationship in a 1972 ABM Treaty, based on the doctrine that our very survival would best be insured by leaving both sides completely open and vulnerable to nuclear attack. The threat was real and vivid. The Strategic Air Command had an airborne command post called the Looking Glass, aloft 24 hours a day, ready in case the President ordered our strategic forces to move toward their targets and release their nuclear ordnance.

In the light of Bush's speech the often repeated argument that the BMD is a reaction to the attacks of September 11 seems quite tenuous. If we look at Russian side, their case is significantly different, although until the 1970s the Soviet Union's attitude towards missile defenses did not seem to differ much from the United States'. Generally speaking, in the early years of the BMD development both superpowers tried to develop systems that would provide them with assurance that even after enemy attack they would be able to retain capabilities to strike back. However, Moscow's stance over the decades has changed and the Soviet Union and later Russia abandoned the craving for invulnerability that appears so typical for the United States. The reasons for this change in Soviet strategy can be partly seen in the poor performance of the Soviet economy in the 1980s, but there is also a notion of adherence to the spirit of the ABM treaty, which seems to be much less apparent in the case of the United States. There is rarely an occasion, when Russian leaders talk about the country's strategic nuclear forces without mentioning the ABM treaty as the basis for cooperative strategic arrangements in relations with the United States. For Moscow the ABM regime has worked since its very inception.<sup>54</sup> After all, Russia has never attempted to develop a national missile defense, which has been the ultimate focal point for the United States since the 1980s.

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<sup>54</sup> The stability and relief that the ABM treaty was a symbol of, was seriously disrupted by Reagan's administration and its plan to develop a missile defense that would change the strategic parity in America's favor. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the Reagan administration argued that the proposed Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) was in complete accord with the ABM treaty, which was obviously

Assuming the novel geostrategic nature of the early 1990s the Bush senior and later the Clinton administrations tried to adapt the ABM treaty to what they perceived as current or possibly future threats.<sup>55</sup> In a way this was a very complicated task, considering the chaotic political situation in Russia. Perhaps it was the instability of Russia's development that caused that both Bush and Clinton administration still regarded the ABM treaty to some extent as a useful stabilizing element and strove to arrive at consensus with Russia, which would allow for certain small scale developments in BMD while keeping the old strategic stability.<sup>56</sup>

## 6 Are we to expect hegemonic stability?

There is not much doubt about the position of the United States among the world powers.<sup>57</sup> The United States has played the leading role in world affairs for more than a decade. In theory the hegemonic nature of U.S. politics should have affected the ABM regime immediately after the Cold War, when the United States could easily take advantage of its deteriorating rival. However, a major reversal of American attitudes towards the ABM took place only in 2001 after the G.W. Bush administration indicated that it would deploy a complex system of BMD in order to protect American territory and its allies against a possible small-scale nuclear attack. President Bush was aware that this move would require either a fundamental revision of the ABM treaty or its complete abrogation from the side of the United States. The latter eventually happened after G.W. Bush's decision to notify the Russians and after intensive diplomatic effort

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nonsense, given the fact that the treaty explicitly forbade such unilateral developments. The serious crisis of U.S.-Soviet relations that followed the announcement of the controversial SDI left a bitter aftertaste on the Soviet side and potentially led to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

<sup>55</sup> Charles L. Glaser, "Nuclear Policy without an Adversary: U.S. Planning for the Post-Soviet Era." *International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Spring, 1992): p. 35.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 44.

<sup>57</sup> Although an exciting topic to discuss, I will omit the recently popular debate about the decline of American hegemony and the future role of China and other rising powers. I believe that there simply has been no decline of American capabilities in the military sphere and the ambitious BMD project supports this opinion.

to meet the abrogation conditions set in the ABM treaty.<sup>58</sup> In June 2002 the Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz announced United States' dissatisfaction with the provisions of the Treaty and presented the content of the Treaty as a bridle on the United States' effort to secure its territory from unspecified emerging threats. He implicitly indicated the predominance of the United States in world politics and explicitly suggested a new framework for cooperation designed exclusively by the United States:

As a result of hard work and determination on both sides, relations with Russia -- and between Russia and our NATO allies -- are entering a new and promising era. Future U.S.-Russian summits will not be dominated by the question: What treaty are you planning to sign to regulate the nuclear balance of terror? Instead, we will focus on cooperating to meet the security challenges facing both our nations, the war on terrorism, and what we can do to enrich the lives of our peoples through closer economic, cultural, and political ties.<sup>59</sup>

Russia, abiding by the Treaty and possessing only a limited ABM system suddenly appeared in a defensive, or better to say in a passive position. Actually, ever since the introduction of the SDI project, Soviet and later Russian leaders have been forced to react to changing American attitude towards the whole ABM regime. The Russian leaders are now obviously puzzled by the fact that the United States rejected the ABM treaty in 2001 and announced the even more ambitious BMD system with its elements placed on the European continent, while reassuring Moscow about the importance of deterrence and vulnerability to Russian ballistic missiles.

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<sup>58</sup> Matthew G. Berger, "Analyzing the Abrogation of the ABM treaty: U.S.-Russian Missile Defense Diplomacy in the Early Years of the Bush Administration." *Journal of Diplomatic Language*, IV:1 (2007): p. 1, <http://www.ljdonline.org.IVgerber.html> (accessed May 31, 2008).

<sup>59</sup> Paul Wolfowitz, "Beyond the ABM Treaty." *The Wall Street Journal*, 14 June 2002, online at the U.S. Department of Defense website: <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=258> (accessed May 31, 2008).



Surprisingly, Russian reactions to the U.S. withdrawal was quite muted. In spite of the fact that the Russian foreign affairs minister Igor Ivanov once labeled the ABM treaty a “cornerstone of strategic stability,”<sup>60</sup> there was no visible response from the Russian side to the U.S. withdrawal. In the following years until 2006 when the United States officially revealed its complex plans for the BMD, Russia’s responses were not much intensified either. Looking for a single remarkable objection, one could only identify Russia’s denunciation of the START 2 treaty.<sup>61</sup> Other than that, for the period between 2001 and 2006 Russia’s rhetoric remained restrained with only a few significant announcements made by President Putin, in most of which he upheld Russia’s ability to eliminate any type of American BMD.

In this light President Putin’s harsh Munich reaction to the U.S. plan to deploy a missile defense system including a small number of interceptors in Poland and a radar base in the Czech Republic seems very inconsistent with voices previously heard from Russia. Putin himself denounced the U.S. intentions on the basis that it will completely disturb the strategic parity, render Russian nuclear deterrence feeble and create possibilities for a first strike carried out by the U.S. nuclear forces.<sup>62</sup> Russian President’s speech aroused an intense debate, in particular in Europe, about the developments of the strategic environment and the revival of the Cold War hostilities. Later in June 2007, Russia went even further, after Putin’s announcement that it would point its missiles on European cities.<sup>63</sup>

As a matter of fact, the current complains and worries of Russian leaders with regards to the expansion of the American BMD into Europe are in a way striking. Have the Russian leaders not realized that the technology being developed is in a long-term capable of lowering Russia’s

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> In practice it did not have any impact on the relations between the two powers, since the United States Congress did not ratify the START 2 treaty anyway.

<sup>62</sup> Vladimir Putin, “Speech at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Munich Conference on Security Policy,” 2 October 2007, <http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?sprache=en&id=179> (accessed May 31, 2008).

<sup>63</sup> Luke Harding, “The New Cold War: Russia’s Missiles to Target Europe. Kremlin Warning on eve of G8 as gulf widens over U.S. Defense Shield Plans,” The Guardian [online], <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jun/04/topstories3.politics> (accessed May 15, 2008).

deterrence potential and render their nuclear arsenal obsolete? The question here is whether there really is an objective risk to Russian security or whether the debate over the BMD is just aimed to interpret the extended BMD system as a danger to Russian security. Studies of the impact of the BMD based in Central Europe on Russian security (in terms of deterrence capabilities) do not offer a clear answer. On the one side, Lieber and Press argue in their study about emerging American nuclear primacy that the deteriorating Russian strategic nuclear forces might not be able to retaliate after a U.S. nuclear attack in an extent sufficient to overcome the BMD.<sup>64</sup> Thus a preemptive first strike by the United States would rule out Russia's retaliation. On the other side Pavel Podvig's analysis of Russian nuclear forces indicates that such scenario is impossible given the vast number of Russia's remaining silo-based, mobile and submarine-based missiles.<sup>65</sup> The latter analysis seems to be more accurate, especially because most Russian pundits admit that the BMD would be only a minor obstacle for their modernized Topol-M inter-continental ballistic missile.<sup>66</sup>

However, what is at stake in the debate is most probably not the technical issue of penetrating the BMD placed in Europe, although many commentators have questioned the ability of Russian strategic forces to overcome this system. It is the principles and norms of the ABM regime that created a base for the two superpowers to communicate with each other in the same language. This common language is now being substituted by the United States' insistence on high tech defensive technologies, which render the traditional language of nuclear deterrence obsolete.

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<sup>64</sup> K.A. Lieber, D.G. Press, "The Rise of U.S. Nuclear Primacy." *Foreign Affairs*, (March/April 2006): 42-54.

<sup>65</sup> Pavel Podvig, "Open to Question." *Foreign Affairs*, September/October (2006): p. 150-153.

<sup>66</sup> "U.S. asks Czech Republic to deploy missile defense radar," RNA Novosti [online], January 20, 2007, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20070120/59417301.html> (accessed May 31, 2008).

## 6.1 *Is Russia irrational?*

Russia's behavior in the light of the BMD talks between the United States, Poland and the Czech Republic circulates around the often repeated perceptions of its own insecurity. In the 1990s such insecurity was created by the NATO expansion to the East. In Russia's view the U.S. attempts to create a transatlantic security structure that would include most Eastern European countries were interpreted as a clear threat.<sup>67</sup> The referents against which Russian foreign policy defined itself were then the perceived hostile and discriminatory military measures adopted by the United States, which were (in Russian interpretation) willingly accepted by the smaller states of Central and Eastern Europe. NATO expansions, war in former Yugoslavia or invasion of Iraq are examples of such military measures. Russian objections were often interpreted as threats to the West and thus the idea of creating a U.S.-oriented Russian backyard reinvigorated itself.

In explaining Russia's national interest in the connection with the BMD in Central Europe, it is important to look at what values are being projected and generated in Russian foreign policy. From the western point of view these values might seem quite constant and include expansionism, ideology or authoritarianism. All of these values also represent a certain historical legacy and at the moments of crisis may come to the fore. Nonetheless, Russian leaders are usually strongly against this stereotype: Igor Ivanov argues that Russian foreign policy has always been assessed by the West in this rather negative, one-sided manner. His explanation of contemporary Russian foreign policy is based on national interest rather than ideology or expansionism. Ivanov argues that the values of the Russian Federation considerably diverge from those of the Soviet Union, but never specifies which values they are and what they mean

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<sup>67</sup> It should be noted that military security was not the only security concern of Russian officials in the 1990s. Perhaps even more striking seemed to be the sharp decline of Russian economy. Lately, however, President Putin announced that more financial support will go to the Russian strategic forces. With the latest developments in the field of ballistic missiles, the Topol-M ICBMs are said to easily penetrate the missile defense deployed in Central Europe or anywhere else.

for the Russian foreign policy<sup>68</sup> The Russian national interest should be therefore seen more in the way Russia defines itself in a relation to the referent other.

Alla Kassianova in her study that analyzes Russian state identity claims that in the early 1990s the West has been Russia's main referent other represented on two levels: "as an idealized and abstract epitome of democratic and free market principles presumed to be congenial to the nature and sympathetic to the aspirations of the new Russian state, and as an association of material political entities, most notably the USA and Western Europe, that may have interests not necessarily harmonious with those of Russia."<sup>69</sup> In the case of the BMD this juxtaposition is taken much farther and becomes more tangible when the BMD is interpreted as a symbol of Russian isolation and loss of control over its "near abroad." With regards to the ABM regime, the conviction that Russia might have held about it, namely that it is an arrangement that guarantees Russia's position as a decisive actor in world politics, might be gone

## 6.2 *Europe and BMD*

Although Europe never played a major part in the establishment of the ABM security regime, it, nonetheless, was greatly affected by its arrangements. In case of a nuclear conflict between the two superpowers Europe would most likely be the first territory to be devastated. For the majority of Europeans the treaty was perceived as an "icon to the Russo-American, and the East-West, commitment to cooperate in strategic affairs."<sup>70</sup> This believe prevailed even though the ABM regime did stop the arms race, which was originally one of its most upheld promises. For Europeans the regime has brought a sense of predictability into the anarchical international system and promised avoidance of another lethal conflict. To a certain extend Europe could be seen as the biggest beneficiary of the ABM regime. It could enjoy its benefits

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<sup>68</sup> Igor Ivanov, "The New Russian Identity: Innovation and Continuity in Russian Foreign Policy." *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer (2001): p. 7-13.

<sup>69</sup> Kassianova, p. 835.

<sup>70</sup> Gray, European Perspectives on U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense, p. 17.

without engaging or participating in the regime, mainly for insufficient resources for building its own missile defense. In theory Europe can then be seen as a free rider, benefiting from a regime established and managed by the two powers.

In general Europeans see the current United States' efforts to ensure its invulnerability as a dangerous attempt, which could undermine the current security system that still more or less rests on the ABM treaty. Deterrence for them is a valid strategy, even though it might not be the most effective way of dealing with the newly emerged threats that are defined in the United States' National Security Strategy of 2002. However, the BMD for Europe will most likely have low pay-off, because it will erode the appreciated ABM regime. "Europeans concede readily enough that of course there is a case for homeland BMD, and even more for the TMD systems."<sup>71</sup> But thus far at least, that case pales into near triviality when it is contrasted with the generally perceived costs of ABM Treaty withdrawal."<sup>72</sup>

With regards to the problem of rogue states and their possible nuclear programs or missile possessions, Europeans are being more skeptical than Americans. In their view, there are many other ways of preventing nuclear proliferation and the use of nuclear missiles by rogue states, namely "adroit diplomacy, or political and economic empathy."<sup>73</sup>

### **6.3 The host countries**

The above mentioned skepticism of Europeans towards the BDM represents a more general, rather Western-European view. Interestingly, the former Soviet satellite states (or their governments) view the BMD deployment in a different light. Their governments do not seem to be much concerned with the traditional and long nurtured strategic relationship stemming from the ABM regime. More than that, they even readily accept United States' offers to become a part of the newly emerging BMD system. From a realist position it is easy to argue than both Poland

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<sup>71</sup> TMD – Theater Missile Defense.

<sup>72</sup> Gray, European Perspectives on U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense, p. 19.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

and the Czech Republic are bandwagoning with the United States. To a certain extent this is most likely the case with the BMD and their eagerness to accept the “security deal.”

The countries possibly hosting the elements of BMD are well aware of Russian disagreement with the missile defense. However, having built up close ties with American administrations in the past two decades, they are very likely to bandwagon with the United States. Polls show that in the Czech Republic more than 65 percent of the population oppose the deployment of the missile defense radar.<sup>74</sup> There is not a clear explanation for this considerably negative public opinion towards the U.S. designs. The Czech debate so far has been quite shallow and both the proponents and opponents’ arguments are based on the historical parallels and truly Czech historical experience. Many argue that it is the notion of Soviet military presence after the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968 that is the most striking parallel Czechs make to the deployment of the radar, which would also involve U.S. military presence at the base. However, the case is an excellent example of the articulation of national interest. According to the Czech government security of the state itself is at stake, therefore the decision whether to accept or refuse the radar base on the state’s territory has to be made by qualified authorities. Thus the political elites decide on the controversial question of the radar deployment, which has over the past year become a national security issue par excellence. The proponents of the radar claim that it is mainly because of solidarity with the United States and state sovereignty in the light of Russia as a possible enemy, that the radar base should be built on the Czech territory.<sup>75</sup>

Poland seems to pursue its national interest through its resentments towards Russia. As Tomasz Zarycki puts it, “the dominant Polish model of national identity relies on victimization in a

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<sup>74</sup> Leinert Ondřej, “Proti vybudování radaru je 68 procent Čechů,” *IHned* [online], December 12, 2007, [http://ihned.cz/3-22603790-radar-000000\\_d-39](http://ihned.cz/3-22603790-radar-000000_d-39), (accessed May 31, 2008). English translation of the title: “68 percent of Czech population against the radar.”

<sup>75</sup> Tereza Nosálková, “Karel Schwarzenberg, “Radar zaměřený na Rusko? Proč ne?” *IHned* [online], December 17, 2007, [http://domaci.ihned.cz/c4-10006000-22630310-002000\\_d-radar-zamereny-na-rusko-proc-ne](http://domaci.ihned.cz/c4-10006000-22630310-002000_d-radar-zamereny-na-rusko-proc-ne) (accessed May 31, 2008). English translation of the title: “Karel Schwarzenberg: A Radar Targeting Russia? Why not?”

particular special way, and Russia plays a key role in justifying that vision.”<sup>76</sup> One could almost argue that elements of Russo phobia have always constituted part of Polish identity, which then shaped its foreign policy. Therefore the public support for the BMD is much higher than in the Czech Republic, reaching almost 60 percent.

Overall, in both countries the deployment of the elements of the BMD represent a very sensitive issue. Public opinion is divided and there is a great pressure from the governments to present facts about the BMD in a very cautious form. Therefore the debates so far have been oriented more towards the political meaning of the BMD than towards its technical and practical features, which don't seem to catch the public's attention anyways.

#### **6.4 Are the realists right?**

Is the effort of the United States to create an operational BMD, which would provide security from the threats of rogue states and other incalculable threats, in accordance with the hegemonic stability theory? Most of the assumptions of the theory of hegemonic stability are met in the case of the United States. Namely, the United States enjoys the preponderance of power in the military sphere; its defense budget has been by far the highest for more than 40 years and considering its combat capabilities, it is the only superpower that can nowadays afford to deploy its troops anywhere in the world at a moment's notice. Keeping this in mind, it is clear that Americans are the only nation capable of building the BMD and providing it to its NATO allies. The second assumption is the actual willingness of Americans to do so. If we are to judge the eagerness of the United States to provide a certain public good to weaker actors while benefiting from the regime, it is obvious that the United States is strongly committed to do so in many issue-areas. The question here is what are these issue-areas and what are the public goods that are being provided.

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<sup>76</sup>Tomasz Zarycki, “Uses of Russia: The Role of Russia in the Modern Polish National Identity.” *East European Politics and Societies* (2004): p. 18, <http://eep.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/18/4/595> (accessed May 31, 2008).

Writing about hegemony, many authors are inclined to term the American execution of it as benign or benevolent.<sup>77</sup> “Americans know that they are the sheriff of last resort; theirs is the only country with the wealth, logistical reach, and sometimes the will to take on the dirty jobs required if international order is to be maintained.”<sup>78</sup> Such statements clearly say that the United States pursues the hegemonic position willingly. The BMD system is a symbol of its technical and military superiority that reiterates the traditional American eagerness to find a solution to any problem. The benign characteristics of the hegemony can be possibly seen in the way the United States is planning to deploy it on the European continent.

As the system is presented now, it should involve Poland and the Czech Republic, with the interceptors placed on Polish and the radar on the Czech territory. The scope of the BMD in Central Europe is quite limited, only some 20 interceptors are to be deployed in the initial phase of the project. Overall in Europe, and especially in the so-called “New Europe,” it is often emphasized that this new design is a pure reaction to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Both Central European countries present this fact in justifying the BMD to Russian politicians. However, the American willingness to build and maintain the BMD system is not just a matter of the post 9/11 policies. The Bush administration planned to revive the SDI well before the 9/11 attacks. President Bush’s speech on Missile Defense at the National Defense University from May 2001 clearly proves this:

We need a new framework that allows us to build missile defenses to counter the different threats of today’s world. To do so, we must move beyond the constraints of the 30-year-old ABM Treaty. This treaty does not recognize the present, or point us to the future. It enshrines the past. No treaty that prevents us from addressing today’s threats, that prohibits us from pursuing promising technology to defend ourselves, our friends and our allies is in our interests or in the interests of world peace. This new framework must encourage still further cuts in nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons still have a vital role to play in our security and that of

<sup>77</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership*. New York: Basic Books. 2004.

<sup>78</sup> Expressing the view of the historian Donald Kagan, in Gray, *European Perspectives on U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense*, p. 8.



our allies. We can, and will, change the size, the composition, the character of our nuclear forces in a way that reflects the reality that the Cold War is over.<sup>79</sup>

In the political sphere Americans strive to provide principles and norms that have always suited their own development and strengthened the United States' position as a world power. The times of the "gunboat diplomacy" might have come back, though in a different form and different international setting. An exemplary case is the quest for establishing democratic models of government in Iraq and the Middle East. Whether the BMD in Europe is a part of an attempt to establish a regime in a security area is more than anything a matter of theoretical approach. With the United States inclining towards the benevolent or benign hegemony<sup>80</sup>, it is possible to argue that such an attempt is already on its way.

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<sup>79</sup> George W. Bush, "Speech on Missile Defense at the National Defense University," Washington, May 1, 2001, White House transcript, <http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/abmt/news/010501bush.html> (accessed May 31, 2008).

<sup>80</sup> It is important to note that the concept of benign hegemony in the theory of hegemonic stability is not identical with the concept of world government. While the hegemon holds preponderance of power and through the regime basically decides "who can do what," it still operates in an anarchical environment. World government, on the other hand, clearly implies a hierarchical setup.

## 7 Conclusion

When closely following the official American foreign policy rhetoric in the past decade, one could hardly term the one-sided termination of the ABM Treaty by the United States as a surprising fact. Already from the 1980s, attempts from the American side to pull out of the Treaty or at least rearrange the ABM agreement are identifiable. This is, first of all, a result of the United States' strong believe in the promise of modern technology and its struggle to overcome any possible problem that appears in the way of technological progress.

In this piece of work I attempted to complement the mainstream approaches to the study of the strategic environment between the United States and Russia, in particular the game-theoretic approach. I proceeded from a general insight into the international regime theory and its application in international politics to a more specific area of security regimes. Since the ABM Treaty framework closely resembles a regime as defined by Krasner, I conceptualized it as the ABM security regimes according to Keohane's requirements on regimes.

The main thrust of this undertaking was to explain the change of the ABM security regime and possibly its complete abandonment. Because of the dominant position of the United States in world politics, I hypothesized that the change in the regime was caused by the U.S. attempts to acquire hegemonic position. The change in the ABM regime would be in line with the attempt for hegemony if it fulfilled the preconditions of the hegemonic stability theory.

Since the BMD is clearly a symbol of the quest against the ABM regime, I provided a review and analysis of the development of this system both in the United States and the Soviet Union. Closer attention was paid to American efforts, first, because it is the United States that is now about to deploy an operational BMD and, second, there have always been more visible efforts and political will to promote the BMD systems on the side of the United States. Last but not least, information sources from the former Soviet Union are either very hard to access or still doze in the classified folders.

In case of Russian reactions to the American withdrawal from the treaty, I found surprising that Russia has remained almost silent for the next five years and then came back with a fierce opposition. The famous Putin's speech that the Russian President delivered in Munich revealed a lot about Russian intentions and beliefs that Russian politicians hold about the nature of world politics nowadays. Consequently, I provided an explanation of Russian behavior based on the repercussive notion of insecurity that is crucial for understanding the Russian strategic culture. It seems that for Russia, the ABM regime was not just about power politics arrangements and technology (as it is for the United States), but it constituted a part of the country's strategic doctrine for almost thirty years, while gradually infiltrating Russian beliefs about the strategic environment.

In my analysis, the overall changes in the ABM regime were in line with most of the assumptions and principles of the hegemonic stability theory. If this is the case and the United States will succeed in deploying the BMD in Central Europe, thus providing the free riding Europeans with security perceived as an international good, then the hegemonic stability theory, although often theoretically and empirically contested, is an appropriate way of addressing the issue of regime change.

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