

The Polish Missile Defence Decision: Reviewing the ‘Scrapping’ of the Bush-Era Missile Defence Plan

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Abstract: *Although the decisions of the Polish government to deploy the US missile defence base in 2008 and 2010 was regarded by many commentators as taken against the domestic majority opinion, this article presents some arguments to support the assumption that those decisions were compatible both with the improvement of Polish security, and with the attitudes of Polish society. This line of argument is based on the theory of double survival.*

Key-words: missile defence, Poland, security dilemma, theory of double survival

Introduction

The official negotiations over the possible hosting of a US anti-ballistic missile defence base in Poland commenced in May 2007, under the government of Jarosław Kaczyński (2005–2007), with the deadline for concluding negotiations scheduled for the end of the same year. However, following the October 2007 election victory of Donald Tusk, Poland dramatically altered its foreign policy course. Unlike its more conservative predecessor, the new government no longer regarded the deployment of the base as being a vital Polish security interest, but rather concentrated on negotiation outcomes and what may be gleaned from them on the broader scale. While both, the Kaczyński and the Tusk governments deployed the language of increasing Poland’s security as the main argument in the Polish-American negotiations, their attitudes clearly differed in the interpretation of which outcome would best contribute to strengthening state security. The Kaczyński government envisioned that the construction of the US military base would, on its own, increase Polish security, while the Tusk government concluded that the military base could generally undermine Polish security, which would then need to be reinforced by additional US guarantees and equipment transfers.

Tusk's interpretation was communicated during the visit of Polish Defence Minister Klich to the US in February 2008 as the second stage of negotiations began. Shortly before his trip to Washington, Klich was interviewed by a Polish newspaper where he outlined Poland's requirements for hosting of the proposed US base. According to this interview, Poland was to demand that the US deliver mobile air defence systems: the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 [PAC-3] (Patriot 3) or the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence system (THAAD), with the aim of strengthening Polish air defences. The rationale behind such a demand was, firstly, that Tusk knew the difficulties he would face in convincing the Polish public to accept the US installation on Polish soil – which heightened public anxiety – without further strengthening Poland's air defence capabilities since Poland does not, currently, possess an efficient short and middle ranged missile defence system, and such investments are not financially viable for Poland alone, said Klich. Secondly, the necessity to modernise Poland's armed forces, with US help, was based on the fact that the capabilities of the Polish air defence system have been fully exploited while the deployment of the US missile system would inevitably expose Poland to greater dangers, especially from terrorist organisations.¹

Although Washington repeatedly indicated that Polish expectations were too high and, because of the closed budget for 2010, could no longer be taken into account, Poland was adamant on additional guaranties, and a permanent placement of the PAC-3 system on Polish territory. In fact, Poland had good reason to believe that the Bush administration had a strong interest in successfully concluding the negotiations, and was therefore prone to offer concessions. There was no certainty though as to whether the US would finally accept Polish demands. Furthermore, it was not clear if and when the missile defence issue would reach the political agenda of the next US government, or how the next US administration would evaluate Poland's requirements. That is why, already in July 2008, Warsaw indicated its readiness to accept only one Patriot missile battery but under the condition that it should be placed on permanently, rather than temporarily, on Polish territory as Washington had initially proposed. Consequently, at the end of negotiations the contest for gaining sufficient air defences was replaced by a struggle for a permanent, rather than temporary, deployment of a PAC-3 battery in Poland.

In August 2008, Warsaw and Washington signed an agreement on locating 10 ground-based missile interceptors in the north of the country as well as a declaration on increased strategic cooperation. The latter pledge affirms, among other things, the intentions of Poland and the US to enhance their mutual security by cooperating in the industrial, research and technology areas of defence and, above all, through sharing information regarding political-military concerns. In this regard, foreign policy analysts stressed a particular article of

¹ Interview with Bogdan Klich, *Dziennik*, 'Klich: tarca za patriotę,' 12 January 2008.

the declaration in which, in addition to cooperating on missile defence, both countries declared their intention to work together to counter military as well as non-military threats posed by third parties. The relevance of this statement is that the non-military dangers could be interpreted as a guarantee of US assistance to Poland in the event of political pressure or blackmail from Russia. This part of the declaration also includes a commitment by Washington to assist Warsaw with the modernisation of its defence capabilities and, primarily, an agreement on the deployment of a US Army PAC-3 battery in Poland, which was the key Polish demand.

Russia's 2008 invasion of its former Soviet neighbour, Georgia, offered an opportunity for Tusk to justify Poland's decision. Shortly after Moscow's demonstration of force, the Tusk government exploited the situation to gain additional support for the deployment of US military facilities in Poland arguing that the benefits of having a permanent US troop presence on Polish territory could enhance Polish security and compensate for hosting only one PAC-3 battery. This expectation turned out to be accurate. The first polls conducted by GfK Polonia (17 August 2008), after reaching the initial agreement revealed that support for the US missile defence shield was, for the first time, greater than opposition to the plan (55% in favour and 38% opposed). Nonetheless, the events in Georgia cannot be interpreted as a direct reason for Poland's agreement on the missile defence shield. Rather, Russia's military operations in its so-called 'near abroad' region gave the Bush administration a plausible justification for the permanent deployment of the PAC-3 system in Poland. Since Washington agreed to concede to the Polish demand, and the Polish public also seemed to be satisfied with negotiations result, the Tusk government could no longer delay final negotiations.

This is not to say that without the war in Georgia the Polish public would have *punished* the Polish government for the final missile defence decision. In the following sections a range of arguments are provided demonstrate how the Polish government's decision took both the security interests of Poland and the attitudes of the Polish public into account. The theory of *double-survival* provides an analytical framework for explaining the Polish missile decision and will be deployed accordingly.

The Theory of Double-Survival

The theory of double-survival is based on the hybrid economic theory of *democracy and the balance of threat theory*, and assumes that political elites, in order to retain their positions (internal survival), attempt to make foreign policy decisions that will advance state security (external survival). This behaviour stems from their expectations of voter maximisation in exchange for efficient foreign and security policy.

Accordingly, the starting point is that decision-makers aim primarily at maximising voters in order to keep their positions of power.² The main objective of political actors, and thus the main reason for undertaking a particular decision, results from the structure of the electoral competition, which emerges, in turn, from the institution of democratic elections.³

Moreover, it is assumed that voters are prone to cast the ballot to the candidate or political party that they expect to be more effective than others in striving for the territorial security and political autonomy – for the external survival of the state. From this perspective, it should be presumed that the more effective political actors are in safeguarding state security, the more votes they will be awarded. Certainly, publics do not always, and in fact – at least in societies with a low level of threat perception – rarely focus on foreign policy issues when casting ballots. However, given the great uncertainty surrounding the basis on which people make their electoral choices, politicians must consider the foreign policy preferences of society at large. In short, they have to consider public opinion consequences as they shape their foreign policies.

Consequently, given the objective of internal survival, individual decision-makers have to convince the public that they have chosen the optimal option for improving state survival. Anticipating the rewards for the security-seeking decisions, politicians aim in the decision-making process not only to safeguard internal, but also external, security.

Whilst keeping the relevance of the efficiency of a foreign policy decision in mind, political actors also have to be conscious of its consequences regarding the states' position in the international system, particularly the reaction of other states to the acting state. In order to assess such consequences, decision-makers must gain an understanding of the various interconnections in international politics, the challenges and main tendencies resulting from the anarchic structure of the international system, and the international distribution of power. But they also have to be aware of the necessary conditions for state survival, given certain threats, in a system defined by anarchy. At this point, the relevance of an analysis of the external environment from the perspective of the economic theory of democracy becomes evident. Specifically, its significance results from the fact that a comprehensive knowledge of the most efficient survival strategies cannot be acquired without an abstract assimilation of external circumstances at the system level. To be sure, there is no direct transfer of knowledge from the exploration of inducements and pressures of the international system to the

² Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, New York: Harper, 1957.

³ As with all rational choice theories, the economic theory of democracy rests upon two premises: methodological individualism and the rationality assumption. Accordingly, each decision is seen as arising from individual goal-oriented behaviour (Ordeshook 1968: 1, Lupia, McCubbins & Popkin 2000: 8). One of the main assumptions of the economic theory of democracy is that decision-makers aim primarily at maximising voters in order to maintain their survival (see Downs 1957).

choice of certain foreign policy decisions. However, it is undoubtedly rational for political actors to rank the most efficient alternatives on the basis of an analysis at the system level when looking to eschew those options that do not ensure state survival.

In order to deal with external threats, the economic theory of democracy is enhanced by the balance of threat theory.

Whereas the neorealism of Waltz asserts that states focus their efforts against the most powerful states, the balance of threat by Walt⁴ assumes that these efforts are taken primarily against those states that pose the most serious threat, which is why they are perceived as aggressive. Walt depicts the core assumption of his balance of threat theory as follows:

(S)tates balance against the states that pose the greatest threat, and the latter need not be the most powerful states in the system. (...) Whereas balance of power theory predicts that states will react to imbalances of power, balance of threat theory predicts that when there is an imbalance of threat (i.e., when one state or coalition appears especially dangerous), states will form alliances or increase their internal efforts in order to reduce their vulnerability.⁵

Drawing on the balance of threat theory, I argue that the perception of threats has a crucial impact on a state's foreign policy behaviour. Unlike Walt however, the theory of double-survival does not assume any direct effects from a threat analysis on the choice of certain foreign policy options. Rather, the threat analysis offers decision-makers a basis on which to rank their preferences for available alternatives. In fact, the choice of a certain foreign policy option depends on the ability of politicians to persuade society that this option is an optimal answer from the perspective of a given threat. The imperative of voter maximisation therefore plays a double role in the theory of double-survival: it is the point of departure for political actor behaviour as well as the very last filter for choosing certain foreign policy options. It means the greater causal weight is attributed to unit-level dynamics.

Overall, the impact of systemic factors on the choice of foreign policy options can be summed up as follows: the structure of the international system offers foreign policy makers certain alternatives, which are then filtered through the perception of threats as well as the imperative of voter maximisation. As a consequence, the foreign policy alternative finally chosen belongs to the set of available options, and it is also a result of the threat perception of politicians, but above all, it reflects an outcome of the cost-benefit calculation of political leaders regarding their best chance of preserving internal and external survival. This view is entirely consistent with Waltz's idea that the structure does not determine the choice of foreign policy alternatives, though once a state ignores

⁴ Stephen W. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987.

⁵ Ibid. p. 263.

inducements and pressures of the system conditions it has to anticipate costs. However, the costs concern not only external survival, as with Waltz, but also the prospects for internal self-preservation.

The Polish Missile Decision and the External Threat

In order to specify current, or potentially dangerous states, the balance of threat theory points out three determinants: the aggregate power, the geographic proximity of powerful states and the assessment of others' intentions. In this section these three parameters of the threat perception shall be applied to the Polish missile defence decision.

In taking into account two of the three determinants of threat analysis – aggregate power and geographic proximity – it can be seen that there are three states that are located near to, and which are much more powerful than, Poland: Germany, Russia, and the United States (see Table 1 below).

The assumption of the proximity of the US stems from the deployment of US soldiers in Europe, and from the large political influence that the US has on Europe. In this context, the US could be regarded as a 'penetrating external power.'⁶ The power resources, depicted in Table 1, clearly demonstrate the enormous power asymmetry between Poland and the other, proximate states. Although not shown in the table, Poland's dependence on Russia, which opens up possibilities for blackmail, should also be considered in this context.

The third determinant of the threat analysis, the perception of intentions of neighbouring states, is, as already emphasised, composed of three elements. The first element constitutes conflicts in the past (history). In this context, from the Polish perspective Germany and Russia must be viewed as potential threats. The security experiences of Poland involve first, the partition of Prussia, Russia and Austria in the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as their absence from the map of Europe for 123 years. It also incorporates the military attacks of Germany and Russia respectively, including Soviet aggression during World War I and the execution of thousands of Polish military officers by the Soviet secret service NKWD during World War II, as well as Nazi concentration camps. The second element in determining the source of threat is hostile rhetoric toward Poland, which nowadays occurs only from Russia. Even if the verbal attacks against Poland are made in the context of the potential missile defence shield, it cannot be overlooked that the threats come only from Russia and not from other neighbours of Poland.

⁶ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers, The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. p. 47 and p. 372.

Table 1: *The Aggregate Power of Russia, the US, Germany and Poland*

Power capabilities	Operationalisation	Poland	Germany	Russia	USA
Military resources	Military expenditures <i>Source: SIPRI, 2005</i>	1,9%	1,4%	4,1%	4,1%
	Military expenditures <i>Source: SIPRI, 2006</i>	\$6.330	\$36.984	\$34.700	\$528.692
	aggregated numbers of holdings of heavy weapons <i>Source: SIPRI, 2005</i>	3.270	7.300	44.980	35.730
	Nuclear warheads	-	-	3.113 <i>Source: BAS 2008b</i>	3.775 <i>Source: BAS 2008a</i>
Economic resources	GDP per capita <i>Source: CIA Factbook, 2007</i>	\$16.300	\$34.200	\$14.700	\$45.800
	Market value of publicly traded <i>Source: CIA Factbook, 2007</i>	\$144 billion	\$1.334 billion	\$365 billion	\$1.149 trillion
Population	Population <i>Source: CIA Factbook, 2008</i>	38.501	82.369	140.702	303.825
	Manpower available for military service <i>Source: CIA Factbook, 2008</i>	19.255	38.137	73.240	144.354

The third element that determines the intentions of other states is the calculation of costs for aggressive states. If another state attacks Poland militarily or in other ways (for instance through political blackmail), the following results could be expected:

An attack on Poland's territory or political autonomy from the US or Germany would imply exceedingly large domestic costs for both of them. In contrast, the domestic costs for Russia's leaders should be estimated as much lower, since any opposition within Russian society would be confronted with state repression. Accordingly, international sanctions are likely to be imposed on Washington and Berlin in the event of an attack on Poland, which would mean, not least, a loss of credibility, legitimacy and recognition on the international level. In turn, since Russia's gas-blackmailing of Ukraine (2006 and 2008), its rhetorical and cyber conflict with NATO-member Estonia (2007), and its threat of cyber attacks against another NATO member, Lithuania (2008),

caused no significant reaction from West European countries or the US, Russia can expect, at most, rhetorical responses if it deployed similar tactics against Poland. Certainly, since Poland, in contrast to Georgia, *is* a NATO member, a military attack by Russia on Poland seems at first glance to be exceedingly unlikely. It is however plausible to assume that European states in this case would use all possible means to avoid a conflict with one of their most important trading partners.

Furthermore, there is also a possibility for Russia to attack Poland without inciting the indignation of the European public. That would succeed if Moscow could convince the European public that an attack was not intended. An example of such reasoning was offered in July 2008 by a Russian officer who stated that a missile fired from Polish territory could mistakenly be viewed as an offensive weapon by Russia's automatic defence system, therefore inducing an immediate response. In this case, it would be appropriate to speak about a very sad mistake, rather than Russia being at fault. The launching of a Russian missile from Belarusian territory should also be taken into account.

Regardless of the prevalence of its power, the US is, from the Polish perspective, not regarded as a threat because its intentions are not viewed as aggressive. Of course, because of its proximity to Poland, which is, as mentioned above, a result of US influence as a balancing power on the European continent, Washington constrains Poland's room to manoeuvre. However, Warsaw takes this into account because Russia's and Germany's room to manoeuvre is constrained as well. Due to its dual role as a balancing power, first within Europe and second between Germany and Russia, the US is viewed in Poland as the ultimate guarantor of European security and, therefore, also of Polish territorial integrity. Consequently, the Polish decision for closer ties with Washington – seen, for instance, through its participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, and the missile defence decision in 2009 – has to be regarded as reflecting the 'desire for American protection (...) against some sort of regional threat.'⁷ It is worth remembering that the sort of behaviour that many analysts of foreign policy view as 'bandwagoning' may also be seen as a form of regional balancing.

Drawing on the above analysis, the presence of US military facilities in Europe, and the expansion of the defence relationship between Warsaw and Washington, has to be seen as being of great importance from the Polish perspective. Therefore, the dwindling importance of the NATO for Washington, and the shift in its geostrategic interests away from Europe and towards the Middle East and Southeast Asia, may be a cause of concern in Poland. In turn, the approval of the missile defence base would imply the restitution of a hegemonic relation between Europe and the US. In this case, the US military facility may be seen in Poland as an absolute necessity to deepen the US's political anchor on the European continent.

⁷ Stephen Walt, 2005. p. 187.

Drawing on neorealist assumptions, a European rejection of the US missile defence shield would imply: a loss of interest in Washington for maintaining strong security cooperation with Europe, and a decision to construct the missile defence shield on its own territory instead, which is technically possible but with greater costs involved. As a logical consequence of this step, the US may fully withdraw its soldiers from Europe leading possibly to the dissolution of NATO because Europe's non-cooperation would be interpreted as a confirmation of incompatible threat perceptions between the US and Europe, undermining the last reason for the alliance's existence. In this case, i.e., without US protection, Europe would remain largely insecure because of its insufficient security capabilities. Since Europe would have to carry the negative security balance itself, after the withdrawal of US soldiers, this would lead to attempts at major rearmament across Europe. Furthermore, if the US function as an external balancing power in Europe disappeared, the great European powers would become unbalanced, and the question would be raised of how they would behave towards each other? Would Germany strive to acquire nuclear weapons? Worries about the security and defence capabilities of the EU, and a sense of responsibility for boosting these capabilities, could provide Berlin with a plausible justification for such a decision. In turn, an unbalanced Russia would enhance the threat perception in the post-communist states as well as in Sweden, Norway and Finland. Ultimately, because of the absence of US protection, Poland, with its sandwiched position between Germany and Russia, would fall again into an insecure, grey zone.

Drawing on this line of arguments, the following assumptions can be made: First, if Poland's external survival depends on the continuous presence of the US in Europe as a stabilising power, and second, if the refusal of the US missile shield would cause the withdrawal of US soldiers from Europe, then the decision of the Polish government to host the US missile defence shield should be seen as an optimal position for Poland.

According to this argumentation, the acceptance of the missile defence system should be regarded as the best option the Polish government has in order to safeguard external survival. The following section argues why this decision should also be deemed a contribution to the maintenance of internal survival, namely of office holding.

The Polish Missile Decision and the Internal Threat

The positive image of the US in Poland, which was partially based on a mix of gratitude and fascination,⁸ has become far less amicable in the last few

⁸ See, for instance, Ronald D. Asmus and Alexandr Vondra, 'The Origins of Atlanticism in Central and Eastern Europe,' *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 18: 2, 2005.

years. There are several reasons for this, not least of which is the remarkable disappointment regarding the current status of the Polish-US relations. Contrary to expectations, after the 2003 Iraq conflict, Poland did not become a 'special partner' of the US. Rather, it became a player of the third league of US allies.⁹ Consequently, according to a *BBC* survey from January 2007, there was no other country in which the US had lost its prestigious standing to such an extent. In 2006, the majority of Polish respondents (62 %) still had a positive image of the US; in 2007 only 38 %.¹⁰ Consequently, the sympathy of the Polish public towards the US also decreased: In 1993 62 % of the Polish public assessed the American people as sympathetic; in summer 2007 only 44 %.¹¹ According to the *Transatlantic Study* published in 2008, in 2007 the exerting of a strong leadership in world affairs by the US was favoured by less than the half of the Polish respondents (35 %); while 47 % said it was not desirable (see table 2).

Table 2: *Transatlantic Trends 2008*

How desirable is it that the United States exerts strong leadership in world affairs?						
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Desirable	64 %	43 %	39 %	42 %	39 %	40 %
Undesirable	22 %	34 %	47 %	42 %	44 %	43 %

Source: <<http://www.transatlantictrends.org>>

In order to convince the Polish people to accept the US missile defence shield, the Polish government had to present tangible benefits for the public, while avoiding rhetoric of an unconditional support, such was the case shortly before the 2003 Iraq invasion. The scepticism of Polish society toward the US explains the negotiation tactics of the Polish government, which were first based on a new tone in Polish-US politics regarding expectations about mutual benefits, and second, on the demand for upgrading Poland's armed forces.

The first tactical element, that is to say, the more pragmatic and interest-based foreign policy course conducted by Tusk's government, rather than idealism or opportunism, were widely recorded by commentators of Polish politics as well as Polish society at large.

Already in March 2008, 58 % of Poles evaluated Tusk's foreign policy outcomes as better than those of Kaczyński. Two-thirds (66 %) said that Tusk well represents Polish interests, while only 16 % disapproved.¹² Also, the majority of Poles accepted decisions made during missile defence negotiations. For

⁹ Interview with Zbigniew Brzeziński, *Polityka*, 19 August 2006.

¹⁰ For the survey, see: <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/home_page/306.php?nid=&id=&pnt=306&lb=hmpg1>.

¹¹ CBOS, 03 August–06 August 2007.

¹² CBOS, 07 March–10 March 2008.

instance, two out of three respondents signalled their satisfaction with Tusk's refusal of the offer Washington made Poland in early July 2008, while only one-fifth backed the position of the Polish president, who pleaded for a quick end to the talks.¹³

At the same time, an overwhelming majority (84 %) of respondents admitted that Poland should give the US 'hard' demands, while assessing the US-oriented politics of Tusk as being 'too mild' (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: The Assessment of Polish-America Politics by Polish Society¹⁴

How do you assess the US-politics of the Tusk government?	
Too hard	8 %
Too mild	84 %
Exactly right	29 %

Due to the insistence of the Polish government on the demand of upgrading Poland's armed forces with a modern PAC-3 missile defence system (the second tactical element) the negotiations took about 18 months to conclude. According to the RAND Corporation, Poland initially asked the US for 12-15 PAC-3 batteries. Finally, as mentioned above, Poland had to accept only one battery. Because the one PAC-3 battery Poland at least 'won' cannot be seen as a decisive increase of Polish security, the purpose behind the hard negotiations over the PAC-3 was to overcome the stigma of the shield representing Poland as an unconditional ally, and to demonstrate the Poland's sovereignty by making decisions with impacts on the regional political order.

In analysing surveys, the rationality of this tactic could be confirmed. First, a majority of Poles were initially opposed to having the missile defence shield based on Polish territory, however, since the Polish Defence Minister demanded additional security guarantees in February 2008 – primarily to bolster Poland's air defence capacity – support for the US facility has risen by 8 %.¹⁵ Second, during negotiations, more Poles were in favour of continuing talks rather than suspending or breaking them off.¹⁶ This clearly shows that the Polish public was not definitively against the US base. Third, when instead of the two standard 'for or against' questions, the Polish people had to consider another option for the base – installation in exchange for PAC-3 missiles – this turned out to be the most preferred choice (see Table 4 below).

¹³ GFK Polonia, 07 July 2008.

¹⁴ GFK Polonia, 07 March 2008, cit. in: *Rzeczpospolita*, 'Chcemy twardej rozmów z USA,' 08 March 2008.

¹⁵ CBOS, 11 April-14 April 2008.

¹⁶ TNS OBOP, 09 February 2008.

Table 4: Polish Civilian Approval of Deploying the US Missile Defence Base on Polish Territory under the Requirement of US Rewards

Poland should unconditionally agree to deploy the US missile defence shield on Polish soil.	3%
Poland should agree to deploy the US missile defence shield only if the US would contribute to increasing Polish security, for instance with air defence systems, the modernisation of the Polish armed forces or other security guarantees.	47%
Poland should refuse the proposal of deploying the US missile defence shield on Polish soil.	37%
Non opinion	13%

Source: CBOS 11 April–14 April 2008

Drawing on these results, it can be argued that the Polish public's evaluation of the missile defence talks depended on whether the US also agreed to meet Polish demands, rather than just on the costs and benefits of hosting the base itself. Surely, the US missile plan was not enthusiastically embraced in Poland, but Tusk might have been aware that evaluations of his government's performance in the negotiations would be positive if the Polish public could be convinced of the benefits of locating the missile defence base on Polish territory.

As a consequence, both the hard and long negotiations, and the final agreement for the missile defence shield seem to be in alignment with the expectations of the Polish public.

Conclusion

In this article, a multitude of arguments have been presented to support the assumption that the decision of the Polish government to deploy the US missile defence base was compatible with both the enhancement of Polish security, and with the attitudes of Polish society at large. In doing so, it has been emphasised that taking into account only some survey questions without considering other crucial factors, for instance, the power position, and the geopolitical position of a state, does not allow for a more comprehensive picture of the needs of Polish society and leads instead to an incorrect conclusion about the Polish attitudes toward establishing a US military facility on Polish territory.

It is also worth mentioning that the decision of the Obama administration in September 2009 to redesign the missile defensive system does not change the line of argumentation used to explain the Polish missile defence decision concerning external survival. Undoubtedly, from the perspective of Polish security, it is not essential, whether the parts of the missile defence system will ultimately be deployed in Poland. Rather, the fact that the government in Warsaw accepted Washington's proposal and thus, did not question the US's

overwhelming impact on, and its position in, Europe or the necessity of leaving transatlantic relations untouched, is more important. Moreover, according to Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski, after announcing the modification of the missile defence plans, the Obama administration assured Poland it would honour the commitment to deploy PAC-3 missiles on Polish territory, made as part of the deal to host the shield.¹⁷ This means that the additional gain Tusk strived for in order to improve the prospects of internal survival, will not be lost with the scrapping of the Bush-era missile plan either.

Additionally, according to Sikorski, Poland can expect an increasing number of US soldiers deployed on its territory. Furthermore, as the US Defence Secretary Gates noted, it is taken into consideration that in the second stage of the new missile plan, missiles could be placed on land in Central Europe.¹⁸ Instead of setting up a base with 10 ground-based interceptors on Polish territory, as stated in the agreement from August 2008, improved versions of the US Navy's Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) could be placed there.

In short, in contrast to the beliefs of several commentators, scrapping the Bush-era missile plans should not be regarded as a dilemma of either repairing relations with Russia or disappointing the Czech Republic or Poland,¹⁹ with 'the potential to undermine perceived American leadership in Eastern Europe.'²⁰ Neither should it be seen as disappointing to Poland²¹ or leading to the betrayal of 'the trust of our allies in Warsaw and Prague, leaving Europe defenceless against Iranian missiles, enhancing the Kremlin's stature and diminishing U.S. credibility.'²² As the new missile plan seems to satisfy Moscow, for Polish society it could even be regarded as more desirable, because Poland will still maintain the possibility to upgrade its armed forces without being compelled to endure the hostile rhetoric from Russia anymore.

¹⁷ Interview with Sikorski for the Polish ITI Group's *TVN24* news channel, broadcasting: 'Kropka nad I', available at: <<http://www.tvn24.pl/12690,1619930,0,1,sikorski-to--na-czym-nam-zalezalo--ma-byc,wiadomosc.html>>.

¹⁸ 'Dismay in Europe as Obama ditches missile defence,' *TIMES*, 17 September 2009.

¹⁹ Anne Gearan and Desmond Butler, 'Obama scraps Bush's European missile defence plan,' *Associated Press*, 17 September 2009.

²⁰ John McCain, [cit.] in Kevin Connolly, 'Will missile defence shift benefit US?' *BBC News*, 17 September 2009.

²¹ Anne Gearan and Desmond Butler, 'Obama scraps Bush's European missile defence plan,' *Associated Press*, 17 September 2009; Judy Dempsey, 'Obama Ends a 'Special Relationship,' *New York Times*, 16 February 2009.

²² 'Obama jilts Poland and the Czech Republic,' *Washington Post: Editorial*, 28 August 2009.