

# Dangerous Crossroads: Missile Defense and Washington's Foolish Eurasia Strategy

The Obama Biden Policy of Denigration and Confrontation

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Eight months into the Obama Presidency the outlines of Administration foreign policy are becoming very clear and what is emerging is a foreign policy establishment flying blind on automatic pilot, evidently unable to make the fundamental policy changes required of its new geopolitical and economic position in the world since the collapse of the Greenspan "revolution in finance" September 2008. For the first time since it emerged as the world's dominant power after 1945 the US policy establishment is unable to combine its military "stick" with any economic "carrot." The Obama effort marks the end of an era of geopolitics. Latest reports that Obama has decided to cancel US plans for an anti-nuclear missile defense in Poland and the Czech Republic suggest that a major internal battle is underway among US policy elites over what has clearly been a failed US foreign policy strategy.

Nowhere has the deficit in creative new strategic thinking been evident than in Washington policy towards the three pivot powers of the Eurasian continent—China, Russia and Iran. The recent calculated affront to Russia by Vice President Joe Biden was typical of the impotence of recent US foreign policy to regain American advantage across the strategic expanse of Eurasia—the undisputed "key" to world hegemony.

While the Obama Administration has made big fanfare about a so-called "reset" of US-Russian relations, it is clear the reset intended is back to the disastrous (for Russia) Yeltsin era of chaos and collapse of Russian state power in the early 1990's. What is ignored are the clear strategic-based reasons for the dramatic deterioration in US-Russian relations—Washington and Washington-led NATO have posed an existential challenge to the very survival of Russia as a nation by Washington's series of power coups or "color revolutions," most clearly the 2003-2004 revolutions in Ukraine and in Georgia which placed pro-NATO de facto puppet regimes in power on Moscow's most strategic periphery.

The strategic significance of "missile defense"

Adding to the appearance as seen from Moscow that US intent is to ultimately destroy Russia was the US insistence, until now endorsed by Obama, to place highly offensive missile and radar installations into Poland and the Czech Republic, the mis-named US "ballistic missile defense." As former US military experts have put it, missile defense is the key to nuclear first strike. Whether or not Obama definitively cancels the missile defense plans will be a decisive indication if serious US rethinking is possible or not.

Rather than take steps to reduce the danger of nuclear pre-emptive war by miscalculation, a danger which the Bush-Rumsfeld missile defense policy has created with Russia, the Obama

foreign policy has been drafted by an outmoded Clinton-era policy group whose calculations are based on a triumphal US sole superpower able to dictate terms to Russia and the rest of the world.

This was most clear in the ill-conceived Biden interview with the neo-conservative Wall Street Journal at end of July during a visit to Georgia and Ukraine. He proclaimed that Russia had “a shrinking population base, they have a withering economy, they have a banking sector and structure that is not likely to be able to withstand the next 15 years, they’re in a situation where the world is changing before them and they’re clinging to something in the past that is not sustainable.” It might as well have been describing the United States but for the population base.

The comments of the US Vice President, clearly approved beforehand by the White House, are read in Moscow as a US policy affirmation of crushing what remains of Russia. Even if there were some truth in the Biden comment, it far from defines the reality of Eurasian geopolitics today.

The fact that after Obama’s July meeting with Medvedev and Putin, Obama sent Biden on the provocative tour of Ukraine and Georgia made clear to Russia what Washington policy offers: nothing but negative consequences for Russia. Obama policy towards Russia was clearly nothing fundamentally different from Bush policy. As seen then in Moscow, it was a bankrupt US strategic policy, one on “automatic pilot.”

That policy, it was clear, would produce significant reactions globally that Washington was and is ill-prepared to counter, further underscoring the impotence of the United States as the global superpower. By declaring openly that Russia is not taken seriously by Washington, Biden and the Obama Administration revealed an arrogance not backed by strength in their own economic power. Russia has significant options to undercut America’s geopolitical strategy of divide-and-rule over Eurasia. Key are Russian relations with Iran, Afghanistan and China.

#### Washington strategy backfires

Obama strategy has been to re-establish US influence in parts of Eurasia that suffered dramatic decline during the fiasco of the Bush-Cheney era. This was evident in Obama plans to significantly pour more troops into Afghanistan. It was evident in covert US Administration support for regime change and destabilization of the Ahmedinejad government after the Iranian elections. There the goal was to weaken Iran influence in the Middle East as well as its close ties to China and Russia.

Were Washington truly able to rethink fundamentals of its geopolitical power projection it would take very different steps under the cover of the Obama regime change.

Rather than continuing the confrontation with Russia in its own security sphere of Georgia or Ukraine, it would have to consider making concessions to Russian security concerns by negotiating an end to the US missile defense as Obama suggested in the campaign debates. The fact that the Czech press suggests that has just been decided, indicates a desperate internal attempt within the US power establishment to rethink fundamentals of America’s global strength. Cancelling missile defense and easing of NATO support in Ukraine and Georgia would open the door to urgently needed Russian cooperation for a US policy with Iran and Afghanistan.

By being confrontational with Russia, Obama's Administration had foolishly compounded its problems across Eurasia and beyond. Ironically, the US Government has just released its latest threat review. The US 2009 National Intelligence Strategy (NIS), a four-year blueprint for the intelligence services, cites Russia, China, Iran and North Korea as countries that "have the ability to challenge US interests," not only in traditional ways, such as military force and espionage, but also in "emerging" ways, in particular cyber operations. It noted, "Russia...may continue to seek avenues for reasserting power and influence in ways that complicate US interests."

The Obama Biden policy of denigration and confrontation, if continued, no matter how weak Russia might appear economically, would certainly make that challenge to US influence a self-fulfilling prophesy.

The fact that Ahmadinejad personally went to the Yekaterinburg, Russia annual meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in July amid the height of the US-led destabilization of his country, to talk with Russian and Chinese leaders, indicates the effect of Washington's bankrupt foreign policy. Iran is the key factor to help politically stabilize Iraq where some 60% of the population is Shi'ite as in Iran. Russia could play a key role in stabilizing Iran where Russian technology is building the Bushehr nuclear power complex. As well, a less confrontational US policy might win cooperation of Iran in neutralizing problems in Afghanistan.

Significantly, only days after the Biden remarks about Russia, Russian newsmedia reported that Iran would receive an advanced Russian-made S-300 anti-aircraft system by the year's end that could help fend off any pre-emptive strikes against its nuclear facilities. The first deliveries are to begin this month and be completed within 12 months.

The announcement so destabilized the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu that the Prime Minister just made a rush trip to Moscow to try to stop the sale.

Moscow has been diplomatically and militarily able to create a serious weakening of US influence in Africa and as well in Latin America. President Dmitry Medvedev visited four African countries in June - Egypt, Namibia, Nigeria and Angola.

As well, Moscow has just agreed with Venezuelan President Hugh Chavez to provide \$2.5 billion line of credit to purchase Russian armoured vehicles and surface-to-air missiles. Chavez also said he expects arrival of some "little rockets" from Russia, which he said have a range of up to 300 kilometres and were strictly for defence purposes. Chavez cited recent Colombian government decision to permit the US military access to seven military bases on its soil as justification. "With these rockets, it is going to be very difficult for them to come and bomb us. If that happens, they should know that we will soon have these systems installed..."

Far from being an irrelevant player, as Biden and Obama were earlier prepared to declare, Russia is a decisive strategic factor in what is a growing move across the world to lessen dependence on the United States as "sole superpower." The evident decision by Washington now to rethink its missile defense provocation of Russia indicates some in the Administration realize the US military bluff has been called. Now it remains to be seen if Washington is also willing to roll back its demand that Ukraine and Georgia join NATO. Were that to happen, it could signal a major US shift in strategic policy.

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