

**A False START:  
The Role of Ballistic Missile Defense in US-Russian Relations**

---

*Matthew Dillon*

College Scholars and Baker Scholars Honor Programs  
Advisors: Dr. Brandon Prins, Professor of Political Science  
& Dr. Stephen Blackwell, Professor of Russian

*Abstract:* In response to Iranian nuclear ambition the US and NATO have enacted a collective security initiative that will install Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) technology throughout Europe; however, NATO's posture in Eastern Europe has compelled Russia to likewise reinforce its defenses and develop measures to incapacitate opposing BMD systems. This research analyzes the political impacts of BMD on US-Russian relations, focusing particularly on NATO's European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) program--described above. Considering the paucity of theoretical treatment in the literature, technological and policy considerations are synthesized with an examination of deterrence and security dilemma models. Addressing these issues, the analysis is divided into three sections: 1) an evaluation of BMD technology finding that the EPAA presents a legitimate threat to Russia's nuclear deterrence, 2) a combined theoretical and statistical analysis case study, which argues that resolution of BMD disputes constitute a *conditio sine qua non* for US-Russian cooperation, and 3) a policy review that recommends the integration of Russia into the EPAA as a possible solution to the BMD quandary. Ultimately, my research will contribute to our understanding of the increasingly complex political and legal environment surrounding nuclear technologies as well as the imminent role of the US-Russian relationship in global security.