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Trends. Deadlines and Missile Defense

Editor

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A controversy over deadlines has sullied the waters of discourse over the feasibility of a United States Government (USG)-funded national missile-defense system that would be limited in scope. The controversy comprises the relative merits of a political deadline based on upcoming elections and partisan conflict among political parties and of a scientific deadline based on appropriate tests, testing data, and analysis of that data. Some analysts would even add a third type of deadline to the brew—e.g., a threat deadline based on weapons and strategic policy developments of real and putative USG adversaries. Then there’s a fourth deadline issue—how deadlines affect other deadlines. For example, deciding to go forward to build a missile defense this summer would probably obligate the USG to give formal notice that it was withdrawing from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in November.