

Observations Satellite (RAMOS) project, the successor to GPALS. Lieutenant General Ronald T. Kadish, the Director of the U.S. Missile Defense Agency, describes RAMOS as a “space-based remote sensor research and development initiative that engages Russian early warning satellite developers in the joint definition of aircraft and space experiments.”⁴⁵ The RAMOS project has had troubled history due in part to changing definition of its purpose on both sides. Still, Russia was recently cited by Deputy U.S. Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz, for its potential in sharing early warning data and joint development of missile defence technologies.⁴⁶

Moreover, the possibilities for international collaboration in early warning and space sensors is significant in light of the nascent state of new and diverse technologies and problems embedded in even the most favored programs. The SBIRS project pursued by the Pentagon since the mid-1990s is plagued by cost overruns, funding instability, management conflicts and “poorly prioritized system requirements.”⁴⁷ The last item, translated from bureaucratic jargon, means that the various branches of the U.S. military and intelligence services have piled on requirements for SBIRS to the extent that its mish-mash of tasks imposes complications on the system’s technology. In the spring of 2002 parts of the project were in danger of outright cancellation.⁴⁸ There is sufficient reason to believe that the early-warning and space-based sensors aspects of the NMD program will be subject to changing priorities.

Moreover, the United States will also be faced with a choice between expenditure on replacing its offensive nuclear systems and improving its NMD capacity, all at the same time as it shoulders the costs of the war against terrorism at home and abroad. The demonstrated appetite of the Bush administration for unilateralism can and will be mitigated by the mounting financial and political burden of challenges facing it. But equally, the trend of change within the NACD regime will be toward growing acceptance of missile defence as a fact of life rather than a de-stabilizing hypothesis. A sea change is underway in international thinking about security from nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction. It will progressively feature a greater balance between the principles of deterrence and defence as positive agents in the cause of non-proliferation.

Viewed from this perspective, there is no inherent threat to the NACD regime stemming from the advancement of missile defence technology. Indeed, if the research and development of such technologies is combined with a diplomacy stressing its potential benefits to global security, missile defence can give a much-needed new life and practical prescience to arm control.

IV Conclusion: Diplomacy over Theology

Missile defence should be approached in terms of its possible political and diplomatic benefits rather than from the theological perspective common to its enthusiasts and its detractors alike. Countries with an interest in multilateral peace-support operations have a stake in TMD systems to ensure the safety of interventionist missions against ballistic and cruise missile attack; the shortcomings of the MTCR, meanwhile, makes the development of the global surveillance technologies integral to NMD of equal long-term interest to countries with a strong arms-control tradition. Canada, a country with a continuous commitment to overseas peace-support — yet also a country sharing coastline and airspace with the United States in a way which applies to no other NATO ally --- can afford neither to evade the challenge missile defence poses nor to pass up the opportunities it offers.

Missile defence, whatever its incarnation, cannot provide the United States or its allies with hermetic security from WMD, but Washington’s commitment to it is firm. The Bush administration’s thinking on the precise architecture for such a system remains unclear. The ambiguity has more to do with the relative immaturity of much the available technology as with a