

between the need to adapt to changes in the strategic environment that can be seen as "decoupling" the American strategic deterrent from the security of Europe (of which the vulnerability of the American ICBMs is a primary example) and the political sensitivity of nuclear issues for domestic politics. Thus one effect of continued American interest in ballistic missile defence could well be further to stimulate the debate over nuclear weapons taking place in many allied countries. The timing of any decision to pursue BMD would be important here: if a decision were made before other issues concerning the nuclear posture of the alliance had been settled, such as theatre nuclear force modernization for example, then US policies concerning missile defence could be very disruptive of intra-alliance relations.

Canada no longer needed

In terms of the general political implications of any move by the United States towards BMD deployment, probably the Canadian response would be similar to that of the Europeans, with concern being expressed as to the possibly negative consequences for arms control. On the other hand, and in the long-term more significant for Canada, would be the implications for Canadian strategic interests. These may be said to fall into two broad categories. First, unlike the proposed *Sentinel* and *Safeguard* systems of the 1960s, the deployment by the United States of a hard-point defence would not involve the interception of incoming missiles over Canadian territory, nor would facilities on Canadian territory be required for the effective operation of a low-altitude ballistic missile defence. In other words, a continental approach is no longer necessary to meet US strategic and military objectives. NORAD or some similar joint approach to the defence of North American territory is irrelevant to an American decision on BMD. This state of affairs simply underlines the impact that technology has had on Canada's geo-strategic situation. Canadian strategic interests remain profoundly affected by American defence decisions, but Canadian cooperation is less and less required. Along with this, of course, goes an erosion of Canada's ability to influence American strategy as it directly affects Canada.

When a bilateral context for Canadian representations to Washington does not exist, it has been natural for Canadian governments to attempt to further their interests in a multilateral forum. Thus Canada in the past has sought on more than one occasion to link problems of continental defence with NATO, using Canadian membership in the alliance as a classic "counterweight" to the United States. However, and it is here that the revival of American interest in ballistic missile defence affects the second general category of Canadian strategic interests, Canada is also affected by the strains on the transatlantic link which threaten increasingly to "decouple" European security from the American strategic deterrent. In this case the effect is to reinforce the strategic dependence on the United States that flows from the facts of Canada's position as a North American power; but as already pointed out, as far as the strategic defence of the United States is concerned, Canada is of diminishing relevance.

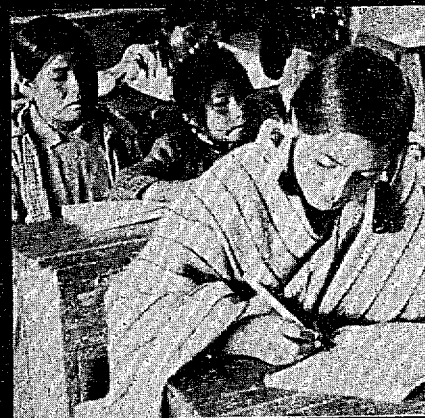
Canadian reexamination required

One unfortunate consequence is the challenge posed to some of the basic premises of Canadian defence and

foreign policies, particularly those founded in some way on the notion of the special importance of Canada's connections with Europe. Despite attempts from time-to-time to reorient the direction of Canadian policies (of which the defence and foreign policy reviews of the late 1960s were perhaps the most determined examples), Canadian governments have continually returned to more traditional alignments. As many commentators have observed and as a number of politicians have discovered, Canada's ties with Europe seem to offer at least some solutions to the problems created by the overwhelming presence of the United States. This has been true in the security as in other fields; and, certainly, a primary political function of NATO membership has been to create an environment in which Canadian security has been seen in a broader context than North America. Now, however, changes in the military balance, by underlining differences in strategic interests on both sides of the Atlantic, have made the requirements of a broadly-defined Canadian security policy more demanding.

Given the record on these matters, should the United States decide to deploy a ballistic missile defence, the decision is likely to be taken with little or no prior allied consultation. Nonetheless, such a decision would have substantial impact on the NATO allies, and would, in the absence of careful preparation, lead to further stresses on allied relations. In this respect, the revival of interest in the United States in BMD and the problematic quality of the issue are symptoms of the wide range of tensions generated by current developments in the strategic environment. Although it is unlikely that the United States will give priority to a decision on ballistic missile defence in the near future, the possibility of doing so has become a genuine option for American strategic policy. It would be as well for Canada, and others for that matter, to be aware of this fact. After all, whatever decision the Americans arrive at, including one to continue with the status quo and to leave the present ABM treaty in place, it is likely to have some significant effect on our interests. □

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