

launched from underground silos and armed with an exoatmospheric kill vehicle that the interceptor deploys after being boosted to high speed by its rocket stages (interception). Because the kill vehicle does not carry a warhead and is designed to destroy its target by the force of impact alone, absolute precision in identifying the target and distinguishing it from any counter-measure decoys the target might deploy is essential to a successful intercept.

The most reliable element in the system is its early-warning component, composed of radar, satellite or both.<sup>33</sup> A theater system can provide a missile shield in a regionally-specific format and simultaneously represent the first element in a larger missile fence system. There are two principal merits to promoting boost-phase detection on the one hand and TMD on the other — one diplomatic, the other practical. Such a system is least likely to arouse the opposition of China and Russia, while it would offer defence against rogue states with smaller arsenals in those regions where the United States, its allies, and the United Nations are likely to have forces deployed. Hence, TMD can be regarded in the long-term as the thin-edge of missile defence technology because it could well lead to more ambitious plans in a “layered” missile defence architecture. In the short-term it represents the perfect symbiosis of defence and deterrence. It could shield forward-deployed, multilateral expeditionary forces involved in peace-support missions from missile attack in regional settings while leaving nuclear deterrence as the principal stabilizing element between the U.S. and the Chinese and Russian great powers.

Governments with forces involved in humanitarian and peace-support operations should look at TMD carefully. European governments are becoming more sensitive to threats emanating from the “arc of instability” extending from the greater Middle East and Persian Gulf into North Africa. Parts of Northern Europe, after all, are within range of Iranian or Iraqi missiles with a reach of more than 3,500km.<sup>34</sup> A TMD system for defense against ballistic missiles with less than intercontinental range would be less contentious politically and diplomatically than a “global” system to shield North America and Europe. A comparatively modest system would involve lower costs, and would entail less pressure on the fiscal resources of participating states, but would also feature the virtue of avoiding the argument that the deployment of a more comprehensive system would provoke with China and Russia over their respective positions in the global strategic balance. A theater-level defense could protect ports and cities against short-range missile attack and, under certain conditions, against strategic missiles. Additionally, it could protect NATO troops deployed in or near conflict zones, the Balkan region coming to mind as a long-term European security mission that could be imperiled or terminated by vulnerability to missile attack. The progress of missile defense technology and the trajectory of change in international security converge on the question of the viability of humanitarian operations, a fact that should focus all sober discussion of missile defense in the present tense to its theater dimension. This is true too for non-European NATO states such as Canada, in light of a continuing Canadian role in international peace-support.<sup>35</sup>

Among the theatre-level systems which may be able to offer a shield for multilateral peace-support operations are the U.S. Navy’s Aegis system, the Theatre High Altitude Air Defence System (THAAD), the upgraded Patriot (now referred to as PAC-3) and the European Principle Anti-Air Missile System (PAAMS).<sup>36</sup> But other systems are in development as well. In June 2001 NATO selected two industrial teams to examine the future of trans-Atlantic cooperation. American collaboration with Germany and Italy on a medium extended air defense system (MEADS) has survived multiple setbacks while Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands are considering a joint effort for developing ship-based tactical missile defense systems, and Italy is pursuing lower-tier defenses with Turkey.<sup>37</sup> Much of the political contention inherent in land-based facilities would be circumvented by deploying Aegis technology for theater defense in a multi-layered format. Aegis platforms deployed in the eastern Mediterranean, the Baltic Sea,