

Although international treaties have long been considered to be the most stable type of arms control measures, opinions are being expressed that the long periods of negotiation and long-term commitments associated with formal international treaties are no longer tolerable. Their place could be taken by unilateral commitments which would be subject to effective verification, and could be withdrawn should circumstances change. Harvey recommends coordination and consultation rather than formal codification. However, Rauf reminds us of the considerable accomplishments of the multilateral arms control treaties negotiated during and after the Cold War, and urges that they not be eroded. But Harvey points out that prevention, preemption, conventional deterrence, constructive engagement, economic sanctions, transparency, verification, and codification have all failed to ensure security from Weapons of Mass Destruction.

The authors remind us that ballistic missiles are not the only means of delivery of strategic warheads, nor are nuclear warheads the only weapons of mass destruction. Legault and Rauf point out that both strategic stability and stable deterrence could be enhanced if the existing non-proliferation regimes could be strengthened.

The arms control treaty receiving the most attention in the essays is the ABM treaty, largely because of the widespread expectation that its abrogation would precipitate the collapse of many of the multilateral arms control treaties. The essays suggest that this concern is overdone, but also consider that there is a good probability that the US and Russia will agree to modification of the treaty to permit a limited form of NMD, perhaps combined with balanced reductions in the numbers of offensive weapons (Legault, Rauf). These changes would leave the US and Russia with mutual and stable strategic deterrence, but also allow them both to acquire defence against much smaller threats from other states. Other possibilities are to multilateralize the ABM treaty and to refine its lines of demarcation between intercontinental and theatre range missiles.

Fergusson points out that the strategic characteristics of systems designed to defend against theatre range ballistic missiles are very different from those intended to intercept ICBMs. While none of the weapons currently planned for Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) would be able to protect US territory from ICBMs, they could defend many countries (including Russia and China from hostile neighbours, and also protect US, NATO, or UN forces intervening in distant theatres. Thus, many of the objections to NMD cannot be raised against TMD, while a capability for TMD has a deterrent effect against states engaged in regional aggression. Moreover, TMD systems can be transportable, and hence used for signaling determination in a crisis, as well as providing actual defence (Legault).

The authors of these four useful papers feel a vital need for Canadians to engage in a serious public debate over these important and complicated problems. They have provided good fuel for the debate.

Dr George Lindsey