

offensive strike weapons in space.⁴² Both Russia and China have a strong interest in reinforcing international norms against weapons in space and the threat or use of force against space objects, especially if parallel unilateral declarations were the first step in an agreed process for moving from broad political declarations to legally binding obligations.

There are good reasons, too, for the United States to take this initial step. It would continue the current state of affairs and enhance the credibility of U.S. claims that it has neither fielded weapons in space nor is currently funding space weaponization programs.⁴³ It would support the U.S. desire for a moratorium on further debris generating ASAT tests, but would not preclude anything that the United States is highly motivated to do. Ruling out space-based interceptors for missile defense would be a smart move because this basing option is the least technologically mature, the most expensive, the most vulnerable, and the most threatening to China and Russia. Therefore, the United States would not be precluding any options to protect national security, and it could have a much more constructive international conversation about missile defense if this option were off the table.⁴⁴

Envisioning a Reassurance-based Regime for Space Security

Encouraging states to take the first steps towards a reassurance-based regime for space security could be helped along by a shared vision of the desired end-state, since the concept of a reassurance-based space security regime is much broader and less familiar than other space security proposals. As has been noted in discussions about achieving a nuclear weapons-free world, a bold vision to guide action on incremental measures can make those actions seem more urgent and fair, while breaking the bold vision down into component actions can make the desired end-state seem more realistic and achievable.⁴⁵ By discussing the goals of a reassurance-based regime for space security and breaking the regime down into its constituent elements, states can also see how modest steps can be mutually reinforcing pieces of a much more ambitious and consequential project.

The following proposal about potential elements of a fully developed reassurance-based regime for space security is intended as a stimulus for discussion and for creative

⁴² Statement by Vladimir Putin, U.N. General Assembly, September 25, 2003.

⁴³ See Marc Kaufman, "Bush Sets Defense as Space Priority — U.S. Says Shift if Not a Step Toward Arms; Experts Say it Could Be," *Washington Post* (October 16, 2006) and Peter B. de Selding, "Pentagon Official: U.S. is not Developing Space Weapons," *Space News* (February 20, 2008), <http://www.space.com/news/090220-pentagon-space-weapons.html>. Such comments undoubtedly use a very narrow definition of space weapons, but if the US government wants such reassurances to be taken seriously, then the proposed policy declaration would be a good step.

⁴⁴ According to a study by the person nominated to be the White House Office of Management and Budget's Associate Director for Defense and International Affairs, stationing weapons in space is a very expensive and vulnerable way to accomplish most military objectives compared with terrestrial alternatives. See Steven M. Kosiak, "Arming the Heavens: A Preliminary Assessment of the Potential Cost and Cost-Effectiveness of Space-Based Weapons," Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (2007), http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20071031.Arming_the_Heavens/R.20071031.Arming_the_Heavens.pdf.

⁴⁵ Description of Nuclear Security Project led by George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn, at: http://www.nuclearsecurityproject.org/site/c.mjJXjbmMIoE/b.3534665/k.5828/About_the_Project_Index.htm.