

Ballistic Missile Defence Organization

Vapour trail of a missile during an intercept test of the Ballistic Missile Defence System, June 1999.

PROLIFERATION, ROGUE STATES AND NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENCE: ASSESSING CANADIAN AND EUROPEAN CONCERNS AND INTERESTS

INTRODUCTION

There are basically two ways to establish a case in favour of US National Missile Defence (NMD). One approach is to highlight the fundamental logical, historical and factual errors critics make when developing their case against NMD. Disconfirming claims about NMD's tech-

nological limitations, economic costs and proliferation risks indirectly strengthen the case in favour by diminishing concerns about the political, economic and military costs of deployment.¹ The other (more conventional) approach is to emphasize the contributions to US and

Dr. Frank P. Harvey is Director of the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies at Dalhousie University in Halifax.

Canadian security derived from deploying interceptor technology to respond to ballistic missile threats. In other words, deploying NMD makes sense because the technology to build, deploy and launch medium- to long-range ballistic missiles is spreading.

NMD critics in Canada and Europe are less likely to express concerns about the technological limitations of NMD or its \$60 billion price tag, but they do question the primary justification for deployment – namely, the ‘rogue state’ threat. The purpose of this paper is to challenge these critics to defend the claims they make about fabricated rogue threats (Section I), the pace and direction of ballistic missile proliferation (Section II), and the nature of international co-operation in a post-Cold War setting (Section III). Sections IV and V evaluate additional claims made by Canadian and European foreign policy officials when expressing concerns about NMD. The paper concludes with brief comments about the capacity of political scientists to forecast nuclear proliferation trends and the implications for NMD policy.

I. ROGUES OR RUSES: THE MILITARY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX REVISITED²

The rogue state portraits of Iraq and North Korea, most often put forward by defence officials in Ottawa and Washington, are formed by deeply held convictions that these (and other) states are acquiring ballistic missile technologies and, at some point in the future, will threaten to use them. Many others, including

tle, if any, capacity to feed its own people let alone embark on a massive military build-up. France, Spain, Italy, Turkey and several other NATO allies now favour lifting all remaining economic sanctions against Iraq, and Canadian foreign policy officials have decided to grant full diplomatic recognition to North Korea. It appears that the US position on rogue states is becoming increasingly isolated.

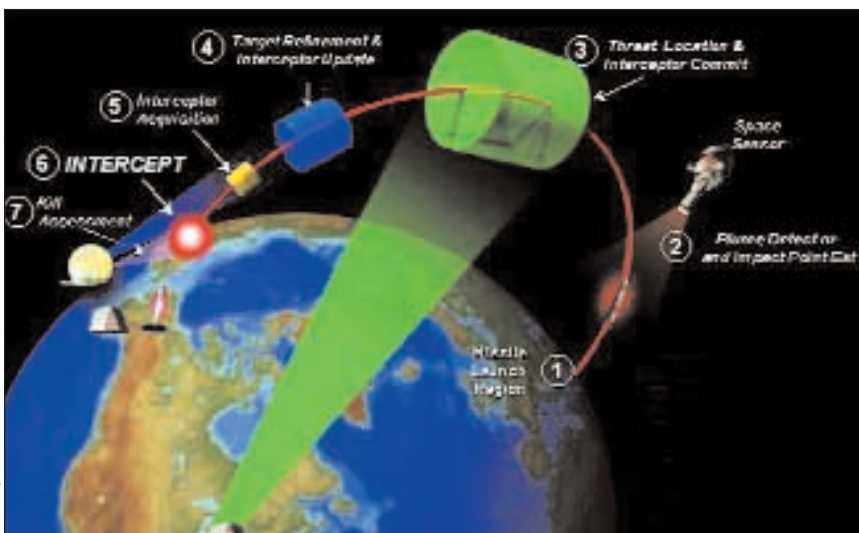
Among the more popular (and rarely defended) explanations for Washington’s refusal to budge on this issue is money: the US Pentagon and its powerful Military Industrial Complex (MIC) of defence-related industries need rogue threats to justify expenditures on the latest military technologies. Put differently, US officials are compelled to view the world through ‘rogue’ coloured glasses and exaggerate (even fabricate) non-existent threats for economic reasons. What better way to justify a \$60 billion expenditure for national missile defence than by convincing people that Iraq and North Korea are not particularly friendly. Notwithstanding the fact that both signatories to the ABM treaty have now acknowledged as real the threat from rogue states, many officials in Canada and Europe continue to defend the MIC thesis that rogue threats are exaggerated. There are at least four problems with this line of argument.

First, European officials are just as susceptible to viewing Iraq and North Korea through ‘rose’ coloured glasses for equally powerful economic reasons. Consider the following: France’s oil giants Elf Aquitaine and Total will be among the first petroleum

companies to move into Iraq to develop the Majnoon oil fields once economic sanctions are fully lifted (approximately 600,000 barrels a day); Spain’s Repsol and Italy’s Agip have been negotiating with Iraqi officials to develop other large oil fields; Turkey has lost approximately \$30 billion dollars in oil revenues since 1990, mostly from losses in trade and pipeline use related to the UN sanctions. China signed agreements with Iraq in June 1997 to develop the Ahdab oil field – worth approximately \$1.2 billion in trade. It goes without saying that acknowledging Iraq as a rogue state is not particularly conducive to unlocking billions of dollars in trade and oil profits. European officials have their own biases towards downplaying rogue

threats for reasons that have very little to do with the proliferation records of Iraq and North Korea.

Second, major defence contractors tied to the military industrial complex will make money from the \$60 billion



The National Missile Defence Concept.

some of Washington’s closest allies, prefer instead to portray Iraq as a battered state still suffering from devastating economic sanctions after an even more devastating defeat in the 1991 Gulf War. North Korea is similarly portrayed as a weak (almost failed) state with lit-

defence procurement regardless of whether NMD goes forward. The money was allocated from the US *defence* budget; if NMD is scrapped tomorrow, none of that money will be spent on roads, health care reform or development assistance. The simplicity of the MIC thesis also precludes identifying any useful answers to why NMD is preferred to the more ABM-compliant sea-based or boost-phase missile defence. Presumably these alternative systems are just as likely to generate impressive profits for US defence contractors.

Third, if rogues are indeed creations of the US MIC in search of profits, it is not at all clear how one would explain Russian president Vladimir Putin's decision to acknowledge these threats during the Clinton-Putin summit in June 2000. If the MIC thesis is valid, then either Putin is clueless or he too has been co-opted by powerful American defence contractors. Considering his former position as head of the KGB, a portfolio that requires at least some security clearance and at least some knowledge of the realities of nuclear and ballistic missile proliferation, neither of these MIC derived interpretations is likely to be very accurate or useful. A more balanced assessment of Putin's concession on rogue states (at such a crucial point in the 2000 US presidential campaign) is that Russian officials prefer the Democrats' NMD to a Republican revival of Reagan's strategic defence initiative. Republicans in the US Senate are generally opposed to NMD, not because they think that defence systems are wrong, the threat doesn't exist, or deployment will create another arms race with Russia and China. The Republicans reject NMD because it is insufficient and binds the US to an updated ABM treaty which they consider to be a relic of the Cold War. The Russian concession on rogue states has more to do with their preferences for NMD, and very little to do with Putin's inexperience or gullibility.

Fourth, if military industries make a \$60 billion profit in the process of developing an *effective* and *successful* defence system (i.e., one that contributes to US security with a 'high enough' probability of success), then questions about who profits are entirely beside the point. Would critics be more favourably disposed towards NMD if produced by a non-governmental organization in an environmentally friendly plant where profits fund culturally sensitive programs to feed people in less developed countries? Probably not, because, according to critics, two percent of the US defence budget (or 0.03 percent of the overall US federal budget) is a waste of money for an untested system aimed at non-existent threats that will probably create a host of other proliferation dilemmas for Russia and China. But none of these issues (i.e., tech-



An interceptor missile ready for launch.

BMD Organization

nological limitations, financial costs and security risks) has anything to do with who gets paid for NMD.³ Questions about the utility of NMD, therefore, are prior to and far more important than questions about who makes a profit.

The fact that US defence contractors make a profit from selling military equipment to the Pentagon is irrelevant if officials in the Pentagon, CIA, State Department, Congress and the White House believe the project enhances US security. Most officials in Washington (and a large segment of the American public) believe (correctly or incorrectly) that national missile defence is an effective way of dealing with ballistic missiles. The only way to verify the 'fabricated threats' thesis, then, is to demonstrate that US officials are not at all concerned about the proliferation records of Iraq and North Korea, and are not at all persuaded by the evidence of evolving nuclear and ballistic missile threats. But a five-minute Web search using keywords "nuclear proliferation" or "ballistic missile proliferation" should provide any optimist with sufficient evidence to reconsider their position on rogue states and the nature of the threat.⁴

II. BALLISTIC MISSILE PROLIFERATION VERSUS 'OTHER' HUMAN SECURITY THREATS

The extent to which one accepts the rogue state threat depends largely on the relative importance one assigns to ballistic missile proliferation versus newly emerging security threats. For many critics of NMD, the end of the Cold War has created a host of other 'human security' problems that are not related to (or solved by) traditional military capabilities or 'hard' power: for



Test launch of an interceptor missile.

example, resource and ozone depletion, environmental degradation, drug trafficking, child soldiers, population and associated refugee pressures, world hunger and disease, AIDS, intra-state communal and ethnic conflicts, terrorism, chemical and biological weapons proliferation, and so on. All of these non-nuclear/non-ballistic missile threats are far more central to the concerns and priorities of most large and small states and must be addressed by means other than the use of military force. One of the clearest representations of this position is expressed by Project Ploughshares:

Indeed, it is the impotence of military excess that has given rise to a counter expression, "soft power" – namely, the pursuit of influence and change through diplomacy and political persuasion backed by information, expertise, and a supportive public will. Information, communication, diplomatic skills, mobilising public opinion, co-operation between like-minded states and between states and civil society, public debate and consensus building, are all tools of "soft power." The exercise of "soft power" especially requires an alert, engaged, and sustainable civil society sector with a capacity for ongoing research and education, a sense of commitment and relevance, and persistent preparedness. And one way of characterizing the work of Project Ploughshares is that we seek to make a sustained contribution to "soft power" diplomacy.⁵

Moreover, the 'hard' power and precision of conventional forces has evolved to the point where major powers retain a significant advantage in destructive capabilities over smaller states. These revolutionary capabilities are now more than sufficient to deter major aggression. In addition to being considered morally reprehensible, nuclear weapons are becoming increasingly irrelevant to both large and small states. Included among the trend setters who have acknowledged the 'absurdity' of nuclear weapons are Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, South Africa, Brazil and Argentina.

Oddly enough, the same two trends are cited by proponents of NMD to defend the mutually exclusive prediction that proliferation is likely to get worse. Critics correctly point out that other, non-nuclear threats are becoming important, but many of these 'new' security threats are creating even greater levels of conflict over pieces of the proverbial resource pie. This, in turn, produces additional incentives for developing nations to acquire the tools to improve their bargaining leverage. Indeed, one of the most important lessons learned by nuclear threshold states when assessing the costs and benefits of crossing the line is that it pays. Consider for a moment the attention paid today to India, Pakistan and North Korea. Initially, international reactions were expressed through diplomatic pressure, sanctions and condemnation, but the approach has now shifted to one of engagement, dialogue and economic co-operation. What are the lessons for Iran, Iraq and Libya?

True, conventional capabilities of major powers are more than sufficient to achieve relatively easy (although quite major) military victories without having to suffer large numbers (or even small numbers) of casualties. But

proponents of the human security agenda should acknowledge the implications of success in campaigns such as Bosnia and Kosovo (which they generally supported) – they create the very incentives for Milosevic, Hussein and Kim Jong Il (not to mention leaders in Iran, Syria and Libya) to acquire and deploy ballistic missile technology to prevent them from experiencing another NATO success. The real lesson for officials in the US, Europe and Canada is that defensive technologies are becoming more crucial, not simply to protect against missile attacks or inadvertent launches, but for the security of hundreds of thousands of people in the midst of these kinds of humanitarian (and human security) catastrophes. The key problem facing the US, Canada and Europe as we enter the 21st century is not how to deter rogue states from launching a nuclear attack, but how best to prevent them from thinking they can deter the US or NATO from launching a ‘human security’ intervention.⁶

Finally, what evidence do critics cite to support the view that ballistic missile proliferation will somehow be controlled or, better yet, cease to pose a security threat if the US scraps NMD in favour of focusing more of its attention on the human security agenda? Regardless of whether one looks at the supply or demand side of any dimension of nuclear and/or ballistic missile proliferation, the balance of evidence does not favour the optimists’ view.⁷ The burden of proof rests with critics to explain why the information in these reports is wrong and why we should believe their assertion that we live in a benign and compassionate world with little if anything to worry about. If we are indeed on the verge of devaluing the currency of nuclear weapons because of the growing consensus that these weapons are absurd, then why is the absurdity spreading? Why are Russia, the US and NATO refusing to sign onto a relatively straightforward commitment to ‘no-first-use’. The former refuses to sign on because it can’t sustain the conventional forces required for effective deterrence, the latter two because of the prevailing belief that nuclear threats can deter chemical or biological attacks – implicit in US Presidential Directive 60 is the need to maintain that very option. Why are we still embedded in the logic of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), and why are disarmament groups now embracing that logic after having spent years dismissing it as absurd? Even if we assume the arms control regime has successfully slowed the pace of proliferation, it has not stopped the spread of nuclear weapons technology. Either new nuclear and threshold states just don’t grasp its incredible absurdity and foolishness, or critics don’t quite grasp its perfect rationality.

Critics will no doubt reject the assertion ascribed to them that there are absolutely no missile threats out



The launching of an interceptor missile during a recent test.

there. But they would still be faced with the two key questions to answer: are the benefits associated with deploying NMD (for whatever current and future level of missile threat they identify) greater than the costs and risks of that decision, and are the benefits associated with scrapping NMD greater than the costs and risks of that decision? Opponents of NMD have an obligation to provide the same detailed defence of their position, and to do this by going well beyond repeating the same arguments about non-existent threats and abuses by the military industrial complex. These superficial arguments are not only short-sighted but actually quite dangerous, particularly when those making them refuse to acknowledge historical patterns or the expanding body of evidence on the nature, pace and security implications of proliferation.

Take for example a recent report produced by nine ballistic missiles experts from Germany, Norway, Russia and the United States. Among other observations the report concludes that “new threats such as North Korea, if they materialize, will be from very few missiles, which in turn will be capable of carrying much smaller payloads and will be much less accurate”.⁸ But,

as Harvey points out, even if we accept this very optimistic estimate of evolving threats:

...the current yearly investment of 2% of the US defence budget is quite a bargain, especially considering where the remaining 98% of the US defence budget ends up and the correspondingly limited contribution much of that investment makes to US and Canadian security.⁹

Moreover, even a very small probability of ballistic missile threats from one state, like North Korea:

Represents a far more significant and relevant concern when viewed in terms of the overall US defence profile: that is, all American security, defence and threat scenarios the government considers relevant and the consequences in damage and lives should those threats become real. Now, if we include only those threats the US can actually tackle with at least some likelihood of success, then even a small probability of a ballistic missile threat becomes more relevant. Put differently, a 99% probability of a terrorist attack in the next three years resulting in 100 deaths is not as relevant as a 10% threat with the potential to produce tens if not hundreds of thousands of casualties. The question policy makers are confronting is whether the strategy designed to address the 10% threat has a higher probability of success than corresponding funds and programs to stop, for example, terrorism. Would another \$60 billion investment in anti-terrorism be as likely to provide an equal (or better) return in security than stopping even a single missile with NMD?¹⁰

The question of how to enhance national security deserves more sophisticated assessments of the issues, separate from traditional biases and assumptions about abusive and corrupt defence industries or the hegemonic and imperialist predilections of an evil American empire. Many of the arguments put forward by critics often appear to have less to do with the realities of proliferation and more to do with the latest efforts to slam defence spending – not because NMD is wrong or unnecessary, but because it requires defence spending and, by definition, represents a waste of money. It would be informative to ask whether these same critics have ever met a defence expenditure they liked or a weapons system they considered useful. If they have, I suspect the system in question would have many of the same features, associated financial costs and security risks as those tied to NMD.

III. COLD WARS REVISITED: THE SELECTIVE USE OF 'THREAT' RHETORIC

Many critics of NMD, including some in the arms control and disarmament communities in Canada and Europe, have attempted for over a decade now to convince everyone that the world has undergone fundamental and irreversible transformations. Globalization and constantly expanding levels of economic interdependence have created an environment in which large scale conflict involving major powers is becoming increasingly remote and, for a number of dyads (i.e., pairs of states), obsolete. Economic and trade relationships are far more useful for predicting interstate behaviour today than traditional factors tied to military competition, power and status. For example, American officials spend far more time and diplomatic capital on renewing China's Most Favoured Nation status and its admission into the WTO than they do managing military crises between China and Taiwan. Liberal internationalism prevails and economic interdependence rules.

Consistent with expectations derived from this ever expanding web of interdependencies and vulnerabilities, and perhaps the clearest indication that the entire payoff structure has shifted away from viewing the military as an effective tool of statecraft, defence expenditures in practically every major European capital continue to fall. Given these transformations and the incredible improvements in co-operative relations between East and West, there is virtually no justification for large numbers of nuclear weapons. If conventional forces and military power are becoming less relevant in a world dominated by trade and financial markets, then large numbers of nuclear weapons are irrelevant and perhaps always were.

But this entire liberal internationalist framework of analysis, not to mention the complex combination of arguments and evidence put forward to establish its relevance in a post-Cold War setting, gets discarded by many critics once the subject of NMD comes up. Many of the same individuals who point to these fundamental changes when accounting for the irrelevance of nuclear weapons now believe that a relatively minor expenditure of two percent of the overall US defence budget (or 0.3 percent of the US federal budget) can reverse these 'fundamental' changes in a relatively short period of time. A decision to deploy NMD, they claim, will produce an arms race that is virtually identical to those we experienced during the Cold War, and for identical reasons – security, military power, control and influence. Apparently 'realism' prevails, and power and self-interest rules.

If this is indeed a more accurate representation of contemporary international politics, then the Cold War is far from over, China and Russia have legitimate security concerns about US objectives to develop a first-strike advantage, and the US may at some future point in time actually contemplate launching a pre-emptive first-strike against rising powers like China. But either we live in a post-Cold War world in which new incentives combine to produce a new logic guiding international relations, or we don't. Growing levels of economic interdependence have either changed payoff structures such that nuclear weapons are becoming increasingly obsolete, or payoff structures (and associated demands for access to nuclear weapons) remain the same. If payoff structures have changed for the better, then we should not expect a relatively minor investment of two percent of the US defence budget to have such a profound impact in international relations. On the other hand, if NMD can reverse this 'new' (and obviously very fragile) post-Cold War system in such a short period of time, then critics should acknowledge that we live in a world in which military might, nuclear weapons and ballistic missile technology are still very relevant and useful, both for existing and future nuclear powers. Now, if these weapons retain their utility, then NMD should be viewed as prudent. If nuclear weapons have no value, as per liberal internationalist dictates, then NMD should not be perceived as threatening by Russia and China. Regardless of one's views about post-Cold War transformations, then, the case against NMD is weak. Critics need to establish a Cold War mindset to defend claims about the destabilizing effects of NMD, but doing so seriously undermines their case against the utility of nuclear weapons in a post-Cold War world.

IV. A ROGUE BY ANY OTHER NAME: CANADA'S DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION OF NORTH KOREA

Canada has decided to establish full diplomatic recognition of North Korea. The official objective is to facilitate constructive engagement and dialogue with Pyongyang in hopes of convincing the regime to abandon its plans to develop and sell long-range missiles. The obvious political objectives are to reshape North Korea's image by chipping away at its 'rogue' status and, in so doing, undermine the primary justification for NMD.

Constructive engagement and dialogue with North Korea should be applauded, but Canadian foreign policy officials should not overlook the unintended consequences of ignoring Pyongyang's past and ongoing proliferation record. The increasing level of attention paid to North Korea by the US State Department, G8 minis-

ters and now Canada is likely to send an important message to aspiring nuclear weapons states – acquire, develop, deploy and sell ballistic missile technology as soon as you can, because that is the quickest path to international respect, diplomatic recognition and membership in the 'family of nations'. India and Pakistan are experiencing the same kinds of 'constructive engagement' overtures in the aftermath of their recent nuclear tests – economic sanctions didn't last very long, for obvious reasons. Canada's decision to establish full diplomatic ties with North Korea is not likely to convince officials in Pyongyang to change course, especially now that North Korea's proliferation strategy appears to be paying off. Ironically, Canada's 'soft power' approach is likely to make US NMD deployment more, not less, prudent.

Canada's efforts to downplay ballistic missile threats from North Korea continue to overlook the other, perhaps even more important, objective of NMD: preventing opponents from believing they can deter the US, Canada or NATO from launching a conventional war or intervention. Protecting US (and Canadian) bargaining leverage in crises like Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and those along the 38th parallel between North and South Korea is as relevant to NMD as protecting North America from a missile attack. Critics of NMD will no doubt respond by pointing out that North Korean officials would never be foolish enough to launch an attack on the US or one of its allies in the first place, given the devastating conventional retaliation Pyongyang would suffer. The mere existence of this conventional retaliatory capability is more than sufficient to deter officials in North Korea from even threatening a nuclear attack. But there are at least two problems with this line of argument.

First, in hindsight, both Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic would have been more than willing to launch a major ballistic missile attack on the US in exchange for the devastating conventional retaliation they both experienced and ultimately survived in 1991 and 1999 respectively. Critics will no doubt respond by arguing that US (or NATO) retaliation would be far more devastating in response to a ballistic missile attack. But consider the following: many of these same critics rejected US and NATO retaliation in Kosovo – claiming it was disproportionate, unnecessary and, according to some, a crime against humanity – notwithstanding the fact that it was in response to ten years of ethnic war in Bosnia, 250,000 deaths (many from ethnic cleansing), two million refugees, another 3,000 deaths in Kosovo circa 1998-1999, and the expulsion of close to 800,000 Kosovar Albanians over a one-month period. The Balkans case offers two key lessons for those who believe threats of large-scale conventional retaliation

are sufficient to deter all forms of attack: never underestimate the capacity of the public to reject as obscene and unacceptable **any** military retaliation in response to **any** attack (even a ballistic missile attack), and never underestimate the tendency of officials in 'states of concern' to assume their western counterparts (and western publics) lack the will to sustain a long and potentially brutal and costly conventional war, even in retaliation for a ballistic missile attack. Threats of massive conventional war will never be as effective as nuclear threats when deterring ballistic missile attacks, because conventional retaliations (even those as significant as the 1991 Gulf War) will never be perceived by opponents as more costly than even a small nuclear retaliation.

Second, in terms of contemplating how each stage of a hypothetical foreign policy crisis with North Korea can be managed, US policymakers are more likely to be asking themselves the following sorts of questions: in the midst of a crisis, does the probability of a war, initiated by Pyongyang, increase or decrease if North Korean leaders are facing US NMD? Now take a step back; are officials in North Korea more/less likely to escalate tensions in the face of US NMD? And in terms of the initial stage of the crisis, are the incentives for resolving the conflict higher or lower for North Korean officials with/without US NMD? At each stage of this hypothetical crisis, US NMD is likely to be more stabilizing – unless, of course, the North Korean leadership is irrational.

That is precisely the problem, the critics will argue – North Korean leaders may act irrationally thereby upsetting the logic of this simplistic, 'rationalist' interpretation of their preferences. That may be true, but in addition to defending the culturally insensitive assertion that North Korean leaders are less rational than their western counterparts, critics are now faced with having to explain why officials in North Korea would actually contemplate launching a ballistic missile attack (for whatever irrational reasons) – an act previously assumed to be unlikely and a fabrication of the US military industrial complex.

Moreover, if critics are correct about how irrational it would be for leaders in North Korea to launch even a single missile at the US, then how much more inconceivable would it be for the US to contemplate (for a second) launching a devastating nuclear attack against Russia or China today? What credible scenario could a critic of NMD offer in this regard, even assuming the US perfects a shield capable of defending against every single missile, decoy and countermeasure Russia and China would launch in retaliation?

Canadian and European critics of NMD rarely offer realistic scenarios in this regard and should perhaps refocus some of their energy towards convincing China and Russia that their concerns about a US first strike strategy are not realistic. They certainly are far less realistic, and significantly less probable, than threats tied to ballistic missile proliferation by North Korea in about five, eight or ten years.

V. EUROPE, NMD AND TRANS-ATLANTIC SECURITY

European leaders are not likely to issue official denunciations of NMD and will probably continue to make 'official' statements about the US having a right to make its own defence and security choices. Although several high-ranking European officials continue to express concerns about Russian and Chinese proliferation in the aftermath of NMD deployment, their positions should be viewed in the context of several other political and economic interests at stake.

Among the primary concerns in Europe is that NMD will push the US to become more isolationist. As Americans become independently secure through their own defences, they are more likely to shift foreign policy priorities away from traditional commitments to European stability. The new foreign policy chief for the European Union, Javier Solana, sums up the concern, "If we were not to be defended by the United States, that may risk the beginning of 'decoupling'."¹¹ While European critics of the US-led NATO intervention into Kosovo should welcome the prospects of such a shift in American priorities, most are worried and for obvious reason: recent crises in Bosnia and Kosovo gave European leaders the clearest illustration to date that they have neither the will nor the capability to manage these sorts of conflicts on their own, or prevent escalation and spillover, if and when they erupt.

Political shocks from Kosovo have once again renewed European interests in creating their own security and defence identity, but these efforts have more to do with appearing less dependent on the US while at the same time avoiding complete independence from the US. Indeed, the fact that few European leaders are pushing to reverse the downward spiral in defence spending is indicative of the true objectives underlying European and Security Defence Identity (ESDI): Europeans want control over decisions regarding the deployment of the planned 60,000 strong rapid reaction force, but also want access to NATO assets (read 'American assets') should they need them. The jury is still out on whether the US will make any significant concessions in that regard.

European concerns about decoupling are entirely distinct from Russian and Chinese worries, which have more to do with the probability of US 'coupling' itself more assertively to European security interests and crises. The latter assumes the additional protection from NMD will give American officials the assurances they need when contemplating future interventions like Bosnia or Kosovo (perhaps in Montenegro). It is not clear which of these two mutually exclusive positions, decoupling or coupling, represents the more accurate assessment of NMD's implications for US foreign policy, but the fact that both interpretations are accepted is informative.

Others in Europe are concerned that NMD will perhaps make the US more secure, but in the process make themselves less so as NMD propels Europe into the position of surrogate target for missiles that otherwise would have been aimed at an unshielded North America. Not only does this particular fear explain why European officials are opposed to NMD, but it also explains why they appear to be more favourably disposed to President Putin's alternative – an ABM-compliant, theatre missile defence system based on boost-phase technology. This alternative is, for Europeans at least, far more conducive to addressing their fears about NMD, proliferation and surrogate targeting.

Other European leaders are opposed to NMD not so much because they believe the rogue threats have been fabricated, but because acknowledging such threats would directly affect other core economic interests. France, perhaps the most vocal critic of NMD in the NATO alliance, has been trying for close to a decade to have all economic sanctions against Iraq lifted. These efforts have far less to do with their humanitarian agenda and more to do with re-establishing access to Iraqi oil. French concessions on the core American justification for NMD (rogue states threats) are not the best way to unlock billions of dollars in oil profits.

CONCLUSION

Political scientists constantly face criticism from sceptics in more traditional fields of scientific inquiry (e.g., physics, chemistry, biology and perhaps even economics) that, unlike their own fields of study, accurate predictions and forecasts of international phenomena are virtually impossible. Predicting the behaviour of inanimate objects and chemicals is much simpler than predicting the behaviour of political officials who interact in complex social groups, bureaucracies, states and international systems. I'd like to end the paper with the following bold assertion: the problem political scientists face is not that we can't predict the future; the

problem is that too many people mistakenly believe we can't. That belief is among the more serious impediments to developing sound foreign and defence policies, because if one starts with that assumption, then any prediction about the future – and all policy recommendations that flow from those predictions – can be rejected as pure speculation. But some patterns of behaviour are more obvious and, therefore, more predictable than others.

Nuclear and ballistic missile proliferation represent a subset of historical patterns and associated behaviours that have always been guided by the same fundamental principles and social forces – security, survival and 'hard' power. I believe the predictions about nuclear proliferation and evolving ballistic missile threats that I've outlined in this paper are likely to be far more accurate than the mutually exclusive predictions put forward by critics of NMD. Only time will tell. But in either case, one should be prepared to explain and defend the predictions derived from the fundamental principles and assumptions concerning the nature of international politics and the forces that guide human social behaviour.

For example, European and Canadian critics have yet to explain why their proliferation scenarios are any more valid than predictions by proponents that an effective NMD system could actually promote disarmament. Consider the list of unilateral concessions the US is offering Russia in the context of NMD consultations:

- "information exchange with annual updating sufficient to give a comprehensive picture of key elements in the system (among other things, the number and location of ABM interceptor missiles, both deployed and non-deployed);"
- "notification of key events, in preparation and past, pertaining to the ABM system to assist in observation of compliance with the provisions of the Protocol;"
- "inspections to verify raw data and short-notice inspections to ensure safeguards of the accuracy attained within the bounds of the exchange of information and notifications to be provided by each Party;" and
- "a mechanism for resolving matters of concern related to compliance, such as visits with special access rights within the bounds of the START. Using this mechanism, for example, one Party can request a visit to facilities inaccessible under other circumstances to verify the presence or absence of ABM interceptor missiles."¹²

Concessions tied to transparency and surprise inspections are designed to enhance predictability and, together, represent the very ingredients of 'credible'

arms control agreements for which the disarmament community has been fighting for years. These concessions are not consistent with what we would expect from US officials who are determined to establish a first-strike advantage. On the contrary, the offer speaks to the real intent of NMD – to address ballistic missile threats from a growing number of ‘states of concern’. If anything, the initial bargaining position put forward by the US is a testament to post-Cold War international politics and the renewed strategic relationship between the US and Russia. Unfortunately for arms control advocates, too much intellectual capital has been invested in restating the same warnings about proliferation, while almost no time has been spent actually exploring the US offer and assessing its implications for disarmament.

In September 2000, President Clinton passed the buck on the deployment of national missile defence (NMD). But the decision to defer deployment had very little to do with NMD technology; it was a product of US domestic politics, the 2000 presidential campaign and Clinton’s concerns about his legacy.

Both Clinton and Gore calculated as too high the political costs of beginning construction of the radar sites in Alaska to meet the 2005 timeline. Since the Pentagon adjusted the timeline for the more advanced (and lighter) booster rocket (2006/2007), it made very little sense to break ground for construction of NMD radar sites on Shemya Island (in Alaska’s Aleutian

chain); the interceptors wouldn’t be ready for another year. The diplomatic risks and costs associated with undermining the spirit (if not the letter) of the ABM treaty, at that particular point in time, were simply too high, with virtually no benefits in security to compensate for the political fallout. The additional year would give the new president more time to address (and hopefully limit) the inevitable diplomatic fallout when the deployment decision is made in 2001.

Also, since Clinton’s decision represented a more prudent approach to a popular defence policy, Gore would have an easier time selling it to the American public. He could avoid the appearance of being handed a potentially controversial deployment decision by a lame duck president (thereby distancing himself from yet another Clinton policy in the midst of his campaign), and would be well-positioned to criticize the Republican alternative – a more robust space-based system reminiscent of Reagan’s strategic defence initiative. The support Clinton (and Gore) received from Russia, China and NATO allies at the UN Millennium Summit (6 to 8 September 2000) helped the Gore campaign maintain its momentum as the presidential debates approached. In the end, perhaps the most compelling explanation for Clinton’s decision had to do with his legacy: Clinton was never excited about the prospects of being the president who killed the ABM treaty.



NOTES

- Proponents of NMD continue to focus almost exclusively on emphasizing the benefits of NMD without challenging critics to defend the claims, assertions and theories they put forward about the costs. See Frank Harvey (2000a), “The International Politics of National Missile Defence: A Response to the Critics” for a comprehensive evaluation of the critics’ arguments in this regard (forthcoming, *International Journal*); Harvey (2000b), “North Korea: a Rogue by Any Other Name,” *National Post*, 29 July 2000; Harvey (2000c), “Good Defences Make Good Neighbours,” *Globe and Mail*, 11 April 2000.
- For a detailed account of why the US State Department decided to expunge the term ‘rogue state’, see Robert Litwak, “Rogue State Label Was a Bad Fit.”
- For a detailed response to these criticisms, see Frank Harvey, “The International Politics of National Missile Defence: A Response to Critics”, *op. cit.*
- A few examples are listed below:
 - www.fas.org/irp/threat/bm-threat.html
 - www.fas.org/nuke/guide/iran/missile
 - www.fas.org/irp/threat/missile
 - www.fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/missile/index.html
 - www.stimson.org/policy/nucleardangers.html
 - www.cia.gov/cia/publications/nie/nie99msl.html
 - www.editors.sipri.se/pubs/pressre/akbk.html
 - www.cato.org/pubs/fpbriefts/fpb-051es.html
 - www.cns.miis.edu/pubs/npr/karp53.html (Centre for NonProliferation Studies)
 - www.nuclearfiles.org/prolif/
- Demilitarization and “Soft” Power*, Project Ploughshares 1998 Annual Report.
- See Robert Kagan, “A Real Case for Missile Defense,” *The Washington Post*, 21 May 2000, p. B07.
- For a detailed account of nuclear theft and related dangers, see www.stimson.org/policy/nucleardangers.html. For additional resources see listing in endnote 4.
- Ploughshares Working Paper 00-1, “Ballistic Missiles Foreign Experts Roundtable Report,” 30 to 31 March 2000, Chateau Laurier, Ottawa.
- See Harvey, “The International Politics of National Missile Defence.”
- ibid.*
- See John Perlez, “US Missile Plan Could Hurt Security, European Says,” www.archives.nytimes.com/archives.
- Refer to www.nytimes.com/library/world/global/042800arms-text.html. For a discussion of the offer see also www.nytimes.com/library/world/global/042800russia-us-arms.html.