

SDI and U.S. Foreign Policy

**Robert W. Tucker,
George Liska,
Robert E. Osgood and
David P. Calleo**



SDI and U.S. Foreign Policy

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SDI and U.S. Foreign Policy is the fourth in a series of five books. This series is being prepared by the FPI as part of a research project on the long-term implications of military programs and activities in space for strategic stability, superpower relations, and alliance cohesion.

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ABOUT THE BOOK AND AUTHORS

Showing how the development of space technology could affect the present system of deterrence, the authors consider the consequences for U.S. foreign policy, alliance relations, and strategic stability. In the first essay, Dr. Tucker argues that a greater commitment to defensive systems would not substantially affect deterrence or extended deterrence. Rather, if attainable, a ballistic missile defense (BMD) capability would only alter the character of our vulnerability to nuclear weapons. Dr. Liska suggests that a new offense-defense mix might enhance deterrence because of the greater uncertainty of military outcomes. He warns, though, that one side might risk a first strike if it perceives that the other is about to achieve invulnerability.

European responses to SDI are examined by Dr. Osgood, who maintains that the issue of defensive shields could become the chief obstacle to establishing a more stable offense-defense weapons mix acceptable to the allies. Although Europeans perceive technological benefits from a limited initiative, they are committed to a strategy of flexible response, safeguarded by the ABM treaty. In Dr. Calleo's view, the strategic dilemma of the United States can be improved only through a devolution of security responsibility. He argues that it is unrealistic to rely on a nuclear strategy that seeks to solve geopolitical problems through technology and stresses that Europe must gradually assume primary responsibility for its own defense.

Robert W. Tucker is the Edward B. Burling Professor of International Law and Institutions at SAIS. **George Liska** is professor of political science at The Johns Hopkins University. **David P. Calleo** is professor and director of European studies at SAIS.

Robert E. Osgood, who was the Christian A. Herter Professor of American Foreign Policy at SAIS, passed away shortly before publication of this book, which his coauthors wish to dedicate to his memory.



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Robert W. Tucker
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David P. Calleo



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PREFACE

In early 1985 The Johns Hopkins Foreign Policy Institute (FPI) of the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) was awarded support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to engage in a twenty-four-month study of the implications of extraatmospheric technologies for U.S. foreign and defense policies. The study was chaired by Harold Brown, former secretary of defense and now the FPI chairman. It concentrated on the military implications of new technologies in space, including both support missions, such as communication and surveillance, and weapons aimed at satellites or at ballistic missiles. It took as its major premise the assumption that such space technologies are bound in some way to expand, limit, or define the options of future policymakers.

Throughout this program specific consideration was given to such questions as:

- Is "advantage" in space critical to future national security? How is advantage defined, and can technologies now under development credibly offer such advantage?
- What effects will various alternative policies for both developing and limiting the military uses of space have on the likelihood of nuclear war—or on its nature if it occurs?
- How is the traditional arms-control process applicable to space-based systems? Should arms-control objectives be limited from

the outset? For example, can meaningful distinctions be made between antisatellite weapons (ASATs) and antiballistic missiles (ABMs)? Between low- and high-altitude ASATs? How do U.S.-Soviet negotiations on these matters relate to those on strategic or intermediate-range offensive nuclear forces?

- If space systems offer the potential for reinforcing national security, what share of the overall defense budget do they require? How should this allocation be divided among support systems and weapons?
- What will be the reaction of major allies to U.S. development of weapons in space, and to what extent can these allies be reassured in the light of their parochial interests?
- Is the military development of space divisible? In the presence of growing military technological capabilities and aspirations in space on both sides, how can a stable superpower balance in space be achieved?

To encourage a wide and open discussion on these questions, the FPI called upon a wide variety of experts, who met at SAIS on numerous occasions. These included a cross section of current government officials, members of Congress and their staff, former government officials, and experts from the national-security and scientific communities. We are enormously grateful for their help in the development of this study.

The essays that follow deal primarily with the impact of space technology on the foreign policy of the United States, including relations with the allies. Other SAIS Papers resulting from this program deal with such questions as the impact of such space technologies on the U.S. defense budget, their overall relevance to U.S. national security and arms control, and their consequences for U.S.-Soviet relations. All of these papers were written by SAIS faculty members and FPI associates.

We are especially grateful to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which provided us with the support needed to undertake this program.

Simon Serfaty
Executive Director, FPI

INTRODUCTION

Before the nuclear age, war and preparation for war were the most conspicuous and, arguably, the dominant instruments of national power shaping international politics. Since the nuclear age began, war and preparation for war have been replaced by the arms race, deterrence, and arms control as the most conspicuous and the dominant instruments of power in international politics among the most powerful states.

With the emergence of the modern industrial-technological state and mass-based nationalism before the nuclear age, war and preparation for war increasingly preoccupied a professional elite and simultaneously engaged the ambitions and fears of national publics. With the infusion of nuclear technology into the armaments of the polarized postwar antagonists, the competitive pursuit of military strength, strategies of deterrence, and positions on arms control have reached a level of technical complexity and esoteric rationalization far exceeding the preoccupations of prenuclear elites. At the same time, the modalities of military confrontation and accommodation have affected and been affected by organized public sentiment to an extent unprecedented in history.

U.S. foreign policy and relations reflect this momentous magnification of the role of force in international politics. The peculiar intensity and complexity of the role of force short of war—whether through the medium of the arms race, deterrence strategy, or arms control—have exerted an especially pervasive influence on the United

States' relations with the Soviet Union and with its European allies. This phenomenon, however, has stimulated far less systematic and sophisticated inquiry into its political context than into its technical features. Given the relative susceptibility of technical complexities to at least the appearance of precise and elaborate reasoning, this is not surprising. But it can be dangerously misleading if it obscures the political implications of military developments.

This book, published by scholars of international politics and U.S. foreign and military policy at The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), is written to illuminate the political implications of what is the latest—surely not the last—and one of the most controversial military programs to seize the attention of national publics and elites since the H-bomb, *Sputnik*, and the antiballistic missile program: the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), announced by President Reagan on March 23, 1983. SDI is a striking manifestation of the enhanced role of military concerns in postwar U.S. foreign policy. No military program has had such a wide-ranging technological content. None has impinged so dramatically upon so many basic issues of arms competition, military strategy, and arms control. In governments and among defense and arms-control specialists SDI has ignited an explosion of technological assessments, strategic calculations, and arms-control prescriptions.

The authors of this study have not set out to reiterate these important inquiries and controversies. Instead, they have chosen to illuminate the larger context of East-West relations, U.S.-West European relations, and U.S. foreign and military policies in terms of which the political impact and implications of SDI must be explained. At the same time, they are aware of the extent to which such political considerations may be affected by technological and economic factors. Accordingly, they have taken these factors into account, as examined in other parts of the larger study undertaken by the Foreign Policy Institute, under the chairmanship of Harold Brown. Therefore, this book should be regarded, like all parts of the larger study, as an integral part of a comprehensive inquiry.

Robert E. Osgood
Christian A. Herter Professor
of American Foreign Policy, SAIS

1. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON SDI AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

Robert W. Tucker

In a recent essay on the technical prospects of the Strategic Defense Initiative, Britain's distinguished scientific adviser, Lord Zuckerman, observed: "Had anyone other than the American president ever invited scientists to try to render 'nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete', the suggestion would probably have attracted no more attention than had they been asked to square the circle or solve the problem of perpetual motion."¹ Zuckerman's point is by now a familiar one. To the many critics of the program, SDI exists because the president decreed that it exist. Leslie Gelb, reporting in *The New York Times* on the increasing momentum toward strategic defenses, declares that the "single most compelling reason for this is the force of Mr. Reagan's commitment and vision of transforming nuclear strategy from deterrence based on the threat of retaliation to peace based on effective defense. Administration skeptics say they dare not question this vision."²

There is evidently much to be said for this view. The president has not only been the prime but the indispensable mover of a program that must compete with other programs and that has drawn the opposition of many scientists and strategists. And it is only the president who is able, in the face of widespread opposition, to persuade a majority of the public that the vision he has evoked and the effort he has launched are deserving of support.

Even so, the emphasis regularly given to the role of the president may also prove misleading. It suggests that were it not for