opinion

SDI control could be harder than arms control

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edge, they will respond with countermeasures, decoys, and more missiles. In short, they build more weapons.

What does the United States do when our SDI system does not work? 30,000 warheads face 100,000? Calling upon technology, we upgrade our Star Wars defense to Version 2.0. We build more weapons.

Eventually, the Soviets will figure out how to build their own SDI. If then, we could negotiate a treaty insuring both SDI's would only be used defensively, we might have a successful outcome to one type of nuclear threat. Unfortunately, it is impossible to imagine a SDI system that could not be easily software-upgraded to chase out the other country's SDI. SDI satellites are riding ducks compared to ships

Charles Zayek SM '81, executive vice president of the Mitre Corporation, describes multiple SDIs as, "The worst crisis instability situation. It'd be like having two gunfighters in space around the area with quick-dis- capable.

The cause of the instability is simple. It would be unacceptable for our country's SDI to go "down," because that would leave the other country free to launch a first strike under its protective SDIs. An SDI vs. SDI attack would thus be perceived as an opening maneuver leading to a first strike.

Even worse, true SDI software would have to be programmed to react to situations where things go wrong, even if the problems are with the other country's SDI. A human decision of how to respond to a mistake would undoubtedly consider political circumstances on the ground — even statements in Pravda! But time requirements would preclude human involvement; the software would have to decide whether to attack using incom- plete information in situations for which it was not tested.

To be "safe," each country would need an "SDSD" to protect its SDI. But then, all the arguments of the previous paragraphs would still apply, at a higher defensive level.

Boeing, Rockwell, Lockheed, and McDonnell Douglas might be given the task of building SDSD's and SDSDSD's, but the result would be decreasing stability, not increasing deterrence. Technologi- cal development unfettered by poli- tical concern would cause the complexity of retaliatory policy and software to surpass the capabilities of polit- ical makers, and certainly make "SDI control" an even more dif- ficult problem than arms control is today. Why not solve the easier problem?

(Admitted: Rich Cowan is a member of MIT Student Peacewatch.)

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Our Technical Recruiters would like you to join them for an afternoon jog on Monday, November 4th. We'll begin at 77 Massachusetts Avenue at 5:30 p.m., jog down Memorial Drive to the Boston U. Bridge, cross over to Storrow Drive and head down to the Longfellow Bridge, cross back over to Memorial Drive and finish up our 4.8 mile jog back at 77 Massachusetts Avenue. Some of our managers will turn back up Massachusetts Avenue at the Harvard Bridge for a 2.7 mile run.

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