

An appeal to Europe for participation

by Jürgen Todenhöfer

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The Europeans' attitude to the development of defensive beam weapons is currently still ambiguous and indecisive. This is in part understandable. The fear of giving up a proven strategy, or changing it, and being drawn into a new dramatic arms race with potentially destabilizing effects, is still prevalent. This is due, among other reasons, to an insufficient information policy of the West on this issue. On the other hand, there are more and more people in the West who see the promising, positive potential arising from space-based defenses for security, securing peace and especially positive effects for arms control over ballistic missiles, because were there a functioning space-based defense, the value of these weapons would be reduced.

The attitude of the German left is remarkable; it has damned the strategy of deterrence, and is now storming against purely defensive weapons with the same slogans. Morally it is extremely difficult to say anything against weapons that do not destroy people, but missiles. It is also often overlooked, that defense against attacking Soviet intercontinental missiles is a classical act of self-defense against an illegal assault.

The danger of a new arms race cannot, of course, be totally underestimated. The stationing of a defensive system could, theoretically, impel an adversary to further build up its offensive potentials. This would have the consequence of inducing additional costs for defensive systems. There is, additionally, the danger that both sides may be able to develop special weapons against space-based defense systems. Here arms control must take hold, to prevent such an arms race. This is its most important task at the moment.

Stabilizing effect of space-based defensive systems

Military-strategic, space-based defensive systems could have a stabilizing effect in times of tension and crisis. They could, in particular, significantly reduce the offensive deployment options of ballistic missiles. Even if, from a technical standpoint, the effectiveness of the shield will probably never reach 100%, no aggressor will be able to presume with

certainty that his offensive missiles will reach their targets. That increases the risk for the aggressor, and increases his uncertainty about the military success of his attack. If the aggressor wants, considering the cited disadvantages, to attack with other weapons, he only has slower weapons at his disposal, such as aircraft or cruise missiles.

Military-strategically, it cannot be ruled out that space-based defenses that can defend against 80% of the attacking missiles could lead both superpowers to the consideration that they can dispense with intercontinental missiles altogether. The lowered penetration capability of intercontinental missiles will, therefore, have significant effects upon the cost-benefit analysis of military planners. It would be a historic breakthrough if the age of intercontinental missiles could be brought to an end by space-based defensive systems.

If Europe does not obtain the same protection as the United States, a zone of reduced security would emerge in Europe, with unforeseeable consequences for external and internal security.

Joint European-U.S. research essential

It is, therefore, high time that the Europeans seek cooperation with the United States in space research. If it is correct that space research can lead to an important enhancement and improvement of the previous deterrence and war-prevention strategy of Flexible Response, then it is our duty to participate in the research to work out this changed strategy. It would be irresponsible, from the standpoint of security policy and of morality, were the Europeans to refuse to participate in the search for ways to secure the peace under the changed technological conditions of the year 2000.

In contrast to the United States, which is located on its own continent, and therefore can be primarily threatened only by nuclear missiles, the Europeans also have to defend themselves against conventional attacks, against nuclear battlefield weapons, and, soon, also against Soviet cruise missiles, against which a defense in space will hardly be effective. Research must show whether a protection of Europe against the medium-range missiles such as SS-20, SS-22, and the SS-23 is possible, and research must determine whether defense also against short-range missiles like the SS-21 can be achieved.

Information and consultations, as important as they are, are not sufficient where the issue is the survival of Europe. It is necessary rather that Europe participate in the space research programs of the U.S.A. In addition to the security policy aspects Western Europeans should not forget their own technological and industrial interests. The research programs will, as experience teaches, bring numerous results which can be applied in the civilian area. It is known that the Japanese have already reached agreements with the U.S.A. in this area, and are thus a nose ahead of the Europeans. Europe would fall far behind the U.S.A. and Japan if it misses the boat here.