

The Two Faces of American Defense Space Policy
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On July 9, 1999, Secretary of Defense William Cohen signed a DoD Directive on Space Policy to replace the 1987 version crafted during the waning years of the Cold War. Secretary Cohen writes that major changes have taken place since that time that warrant "a significant" policy update, including lessons from Desert Storm and the spread of space systems.

He's right. Change is in order. Yet the publication of DoD Directive 3100.aa does not, and cannot, address the most fundamental problem-America's space policy regime is dissonant and falls disturbingly short of providing clear, consistent guidance to the national security establishment.

The United States lacks a single policy for space, which is hardly the fault of the Secretary. Much like Janus, the two-faced god of Roman mythology, our national security space policy continues the 41-year tradition of looking in two different and, at times, opposite directions.

Two faces, or heads, vie for the position of prima donna on the space policy stage. Those who support written or declared U.S. policy and regard space (using the words of the new Directive) as "a medium like the land, sea, and air within which military activities shall be conducted. . . ." to defend and fight for America's interests represent the first head.

In contrast, the dominant head regards space as a peaceful preserve, a sanctuary that man must never despoil with his bloody strife. It is usually manifested in our public rhetoric, funding priorities, international diplomacy, and treaty commitments, chiefly our obligations in the 1972 ABM Treaty not to deploy anti-ballistic missile interceptors in space.

The policy debate concerning America's military activities in space traditionally focuses on two fundamental mission areas, space control and force application, both of which could incorporate space combat options. Given adequate capabilities, these missions may be expected to enable U.S. armed forces to control an increasingly vital medium to protect U.S. spacecraft and deny hostile uses of space, leverage the military potential of space to protect troops and territories, and project power abroad.

Interestingly, the new Directive makes clear that it does not provide the definitive guidance regarding these two controversial missions. Despite assurances that capabilities to conduct the space control and force application missions "shall be assured and integrated into an operational space force structure," the Directive goes on to state that space control capabilities will be provided only on the condition that they are "consistent with Presidential policy as well as U.S. and applicable international law."

Similarly, the Directive asserts that DoD shall "explore force application concepts, doctrines, and technologies consistent with Presidential policy as well as U.S. and applicable international law." Again, statements about having

force application capabilities (like space-based interceptors) "assured and integrated into an operational force structure" do not align very neatly with direction specifying that these options will be explored, and only when such activities are consistent with what is in effect a higher policy (the controlling head of Janus).

We are at war with ourselves. Our Janus-headed space policy regime continues to baffle those in DoD who must carry-on with mission planning, generate requirements, undertake RDT&E activities, acquire weapon systems, develop doctrine, and a myriad other related activities in order to ensure freedom of space (as directed in the '96 policy). This new DoD Directive, at least, recognizes its own impotence. It is a blunt reminder of our national dysfunctionality. In the end, the policies issued by Cohen in '99 and Clinton in '96 do not provide a definite guide for decision-makers. Janus' other head always is there to remind us of our self-torn state.

The truth is America's space policy is in shambles.

While declared policy recognizes that space is a medium like the land, sea, and air within which military activities shall be conducted (although how much "like" is not clarified), the nation's top space warfare commander maintains (correctly) that the development of active measures for space control and space attack operations does not comport with national policy. . . .

. . . while it is national policy to build effective national and theater missile defenses, we still adhere to a treaty that forbids the deployment of space-based interceptors to attack "strategic" ballistic missiles, an operational concept widely viewed as the best hope for defending Americans against the long-range missile threat. . . .

. . . while Congress funds ad hoc R&D programs within the Services to develop technologies for space control and space superiority (such as the Army Kinetic Energy ASAT and the Air Force Space Plane or Space Operations Vehicle), our President, the Defense Department (an arm of the Executive), and many Congressmen unconditionally oppose them. . . .

. . . while our funding for traditional military mission areas is stable (although not necessarily adequate by some measures), America's funding of its military space programs is meager, irregular, and wholly inadequate. . . .

. . . and while you will find no one who will deny that access to and control of the Earth's orbits are vital to the success of our armed forces, public rhetoric (which commonly suggest that combat activities in space cannot contribute to peace and must be "destabilizing") employs dubious and dire arguments to obfuscate the full meaning of space to security.

Such equivocation on matters of defense policy are tolerated in times of profound peace, when no challenger to our security-to include security in space-appears on the horizon. It is insufferable, however, to those of us who recognize the untamed nature of politics and an ugly truth of history-wars will happen. For how long will we be of two minds on this issue?

Renowned Cold War strategic thinker, Raymond Aron, somberly observed in 1966 that, "short of a revolution in the heart of man and the nature of states, by what miracle could interplanetary space be preserved from military use." Stark, perhaps. Radical, to be sure. But this is the beginning of wisdom in matters of space and security.