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A GLOBAL SPACE CONTROL STRATEGY

Disturbingly, the strategy laid out in Dr. B. T. Cesul's article "A Global Space Control Strategy" (November–December 2014) essentially is a throwback to the "space dominance" policies and ambitions set out by the administration of President George W. Bush, following from the 2001 Rumsfeld Space Commission report. Furthermore, the strategy it espouses is just as unobtainable and undesirable now as it was then. Ironically, the article itself cites several of the key reasons why.

First, the United States is the most vulnerable to "space war" because of the disproportionate (versus other space powers) reliance of the US military and intelligence community on space assets. However, counter to the article's assumptions, an offense-dominant strategy that involves destructive antisatellites and space-based weapons will not fundamentally reduce this vulnerability. More stuff—especially scarier (to potential adversaries and even allies/friends) stuff—simply equals more targets. Second, space systems are expensive. Yes, they are, and space-based weapon systems cannot pass any reasonable cost-benefit analysis, given their expense and the relatively limited target set versus the cheaper and more available technologies to counter them. Third, a first-strike space posture is "provocative." That is, on your way (your very long way, given the time and expense for developing space systems) to trying to achieve that posture, your potential adversaries are "provoked" into spending more time, energy, and money to counter your possible advances. Fourth, the fact that military-related space technologies are proliferating means that more potential adversaries, if they so choose, could pursue robust counterspace programs once they

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are provoked. Fifth, the space economy is globalized and can thrive only in a benign security environment, partially because of the capital costs involved. Yes, and the specter of space war, increased levels of dangerous space debris, and the fact that commercial satellites would ipso facto become targets do not a benign environment make. Making commercial satellite operators' jobs more difficult—and costly—will not help improve national security. Sixth, omniscient space situational awareness is impossible, and without it a dominance strategy cannot succeed. (Oh, and by the way, “complete electromagnetic dominance” can be achieved only with unobtainium.)

In reality, a space arms race—exactly what such a strategy would engender—cannot be won and would be counterproductive to a safe, stable, and sustainable space environment. Given the fact that what any one actor (whether military, commercial, or civil) does in space has the possibility of harming all others, the only workable approach to reducing risks and preventing (or limiting) conflict is one that mixes cooperative security with defensive measures and methods of lowering military dependence on space assets. At a time when the international community, with the full support of the Obama administration, is making headway—slowly, but headway nevertheless—on confidence-building measures that could lay the foundations for cooperative security approaches, blustering about the need for unilateral US space dominance is not helpful.

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