

The Middle East's long-term importance to American foreign policy is roughly proportional to its share of the world population—"less than five percent."

foreign policy. But that assumption is wrong, and getting less true with each passing year, argues Philip E. Auerswald, an economist at George Mason University and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

Petro-alarmism is exaggerated, he says. When oil prices more than doubled between 2002 and 2006, the crippling effects on the U.S. economy were precisely none. While rising prices hurt particular groups, such as low-income residents of rural areas, the impact on most consumers has been minimal. Oil is an "inherently feeble strategic weapon" because the "economies of the oil-producing [states] are even more dependent on oil revenues than the economies of consuming countries are on the crude they import," he says. The higher the price soars, the more the oil-importing nations are likely to come up with substitutes. As prices rise, new sources of energy, such as ethanol and oil from Canada's tar sands, become more viable. Smart producers will keep prices from rising so high that investors pour money into developing alternatives that threaten the economic foundation of their nations.

Catastrophic scenarios of a sudden cutoff of oil from Saudi Arabia because of an abrupt regime change ignore history, according to

Auerswald. When the Ayatollah Khomeini took over Iran, its oil production decreased for a year but has grown ever since. Since 1980, Islamic Iran's decisions on how much oil to pump have been "no more menacing or unpredictable than Canada's or Norway's."

Threats to international shipping lanes in the Middle East such as the Suez Canal are real, but no more serious than threats to the Cape of Good Hope or the Strait of Malacca. Middle East nuclear terrorism is a legitimate concern, but no more so than a nuclear-armed North Korea. America can maintain its irrevocable commitment to Israel's right to exist and its support for a viable Palestinian state even as it reframes its priorities in the Middle East as a whole. "The long-term importance of the Middle East is roughly proportional to the share of the world population for which the region accounts—less than five percent," Auerswald contends. "Sometimes, simply paying less attention leads to better outcomes."

#### FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

## A New Race in Space

### A SURVEY OF RECENT ARTICLES

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH'S new National Space Policy, released unobtrusively late on a Friday afternoon before a long holiday weekend last October, took some time to percolate through the foreign-policy establishment. But its forceful assertion of U.S. rights in space has sparked a passionate argument that mirrors the ongoing debate over

America's international strategy: Bold or belligerent? Essential in a world of instability or dangerously unilateral?

Freedom of action in space is now as important to the United States as air and sea power, the space policy states. As recently as the end of the Cold War, the chief military function of space was reconnaissance. Now, satellites guide precision strikes from a distance to put fewer soldiers in harm's way, reduce confusion on the ground, make the U.S. military more effective and lethal, and reduce casualties among troops, writes Jeff Kueter, president of the George C. Marshall Institute, in *The New Atlantis* (Spring 2007). Just about all phases of military operations, from planning to execution, involve space, says Marc J. Berkowitz, former assistant deputy undersecretary of defense for space policy, in *High Frontier* (March 2007), a journal of the U.S. Air Force Space Command.

The new National Space Policy has raised alarms both in the United States and among its allies because of "undiplomatic and unilateral" language, according to Theresa Hitchens, director of the Center for Defense Information, writing in the same issue of *High Frontier*. The policy states that the United States will "deny, if necessary, adversaries the use of space capabilities hostile to U.S. national interests." And it opposes arms control agreements that might impair American ability to "conduct research, development, testing, and operations, or other activities in space."

The blunt words of the policy cemented concerns that the United States "intends to use force both in space and from space," Hitchens says, and they were met with dead silence

from America's closest allies. An editorial in *Aviation Week and Space Technology* called the policy "jingoistic," and *The Times* of London described it as "comically proprietary in tone about the U.S.'s right to control access to the rest of the solar system." Administration officials responded flatly that the policy is "not about developing or deploying weapons in space," but the language of the new policy "muddied the waters," Hitchens maintains.

The Bush policy is more a beginning than an end, in Berkowitz's view. It's virtually inevitable that America's freedom of action in space will be forcibly challenged, he says, and national leaders must "undertake serious preparations to preserve" U.S. rights to operate in space without interference. "It may not be a choice for U.S. policy-makers to decide whether or not space will be made a battlefield; that decision could be made by an adversary." The United States is already party to agreements that limit its activities in orbit. These pacts bar the deployment of weapons of mass destruction, detonation of nuclear weapons, and interference with methods used to verify arms treaties. Further treaties, Berkowitz contends, would not be "verifiable, equitable, effective, or compatible with the nation's security interests."

Already, he says, enemies have attempted to cripple U.S. combat effectiveness by jamming global positioning signals and blinding reconnaissance satellites. Developing "active and passive defense measures" to

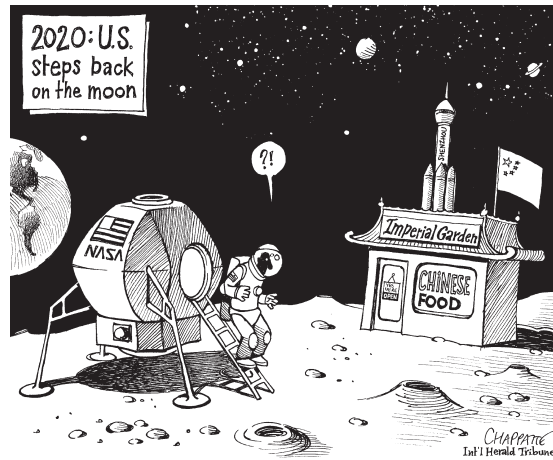
protect America's "assets" in space is merely prudent, he writes. The danger of "inciting an arms race" is considerably less than the risk involved in leaving the nation with an "Achilles' heel."

America's space vulnerability was made clear in January, when, three months after the release of Bush's National Space Policy, the Chinese launched a missile that rose 537 miles and slammed into an obsolete weather satellite, turning both missile and satellite into 900 chunks of space debris. Was this a shot over the bow in reaction to the new space policy, a ham-handed effort to demonstrate

Kueter says: taking a wait-and-see attitude rather than risk overreaction, changing its mind about treaties and using negotiation and diplomacy to ban the introduction of weapons into space, or adopting an "active defensive posture"—Kueter's recommendation. "The industrial and academic base on which U.S. space prowess depends is not currently capable of surging production of existing systems or developing new ones to meet such demands," he says. This capacity needs to be built up. An "active defensive posture" might well require investing in the development of small satellites and rapid launch capabilities so that satellites could be speedily replaced. Moreover, he says, Washington needs to sort out who within the government is in charge, talk frankly about threats and potential responses with its allies, and stop the shrinkage of the pool of rocket scientists.

One more uncertainty: Two researchers argue in *Foreign Affairs* (May–June 2007) that the true explanation for China's satellite-destroying stunt might be that it was a rogue action of the Chinese army. The right hand of the Chinese foreign-policy establishment—which has built up a "peacefully rising" image of its nation as a "responsible great power"—may not know what the other hand of the Chinese military is doing.

The military has kept information from others in Beijing before, such as when a Chinese fighter jet and a U.S.



The Chinese plan to launch their first mission to the moon this year.

Chinese space prowess, or an attempt to stamper the United States into a treaty to ban space weapons?

Whatever the Chinese motivations, Kueter writes in *The New Atlantis*, "China is now unquestionably a first-tier space power, comparable to the United States and Russia." China put its first satellite into orbit in 1970, and sent up its first astronaut in 2003. It plans an unmanned lunar orbiter mission this year.

America has three options,