

OPINION



U.S. President Donald Trump, left, greets Prime Minister Mark Carney on May 6, 2025, at the West Wing entrance of the White House. Official White House photograph courtesy of Gabriel B. Kotico

Carney should reject Trump's Star Wars production

Canada's possible participation in the U.S.'s Golden Dome would overturn decades of resistance to southern neighbour's often extraordinary missile plans.

Douglas Roche

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EDMONTON—Two former Canadian prime ministers, Brian Mulroney and Paul Martin, rejected Canadian participation in "Star Wars," the United States' Ballistic Missile Defence program decades ago, but the newly arrived Mark Carney appears ready to embrace the updated U.S. missile defence system now known as Golden Dome.

"We are conscious that we have an ability, if we so choose, to complete the Golden Dome with investments and partnership,

and it's something that we are looking at," the prime minister said during a press conference in West Block on May 21. He added that these are "military decisions" the government will evaluate accordingly.

With that statement, Carney overturned decades of Canadian resistance to "Star Wars," a 40-year-old fantasy pushed forward by then-U.S. president Ronald Reagan that incoming missiles could be blown out of the sky before they landed. At that time, Canada upheld the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, based on the principle that defence systems against missiles only stimulate new offensive nuclear arms developments, thus setting off an unending nuclear arms race. In short, uncurbed technology makes peace impossible.

In the American quest for never-ending technological superiority, then-U.S. president George Bush in 2002 abrogated the ABM, and "Star Wars" was given new life. It has morphed into the Golden Dome, a next-generation missile defence shield costing hundreds of billions of dollars, and trumpeted by the erratic U.S. President Donald Trump. Canada's share of this payment is unknown, but it will certainly be in the billions of dollars—money

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that will be diverted from needed economic and social development programs at home and abroad.

Why is Carney heading down this road?

Does he really believe that Canada is threatened by Russia, North Korea, and China, as he said in his May 21 press conference, and that the government must "create protection for our cities"? Where is the evidence that the threat is real and the Golden Dome will work in protecting cities that are scattered 7,700 kilometres apart? Canada is already involved in NORAD, the binational military command established by Canada and the U.S. in 1958 to provide aerospace warning, aerospace control, and maritime warning for North America. Moving from NORAD to the Golden Dome is a quantum leap that anticipates space wars and ever more armaments to fight future wars.

For Carney to blandly assert that Canada joining the Golden Dome would make our country safer is—to put it gently—a perplexity. The statement demeans the vaunted high intelligence he has shown so far in the economic arena. The very man who advanced UN principles of human security in his book, *Value(s)*, has abruptly blown past the integrated agenda for peace that the UN (for which he was an adviser) has advocated for many years.

I ask again: What is Carney really doing here? Can he really be caving in to military thinking—which Brian Mulroney and Paul Martin bravely refused to do? Or has he found a way to reach two per cent of GDP for Canada's military spending and thus satisfy his critics? Has he decided to appease Trump by further integrating North American defence so that he will be freer to juggle Canada's economic relationships? Who knows. And what are we to make of his inscrutable

description of our new relationship with the U.S.: "Co-operation if necessary, but not necessarily co-operation." This is leadership?

By giving credence to missile defence instead of coming out strongly for arms control measures, Carney is clearly heading down the path already carved out by the military-industrial complex. Canadians have a right to expect their prime minister to work to solve the problems of war, not join in them.

It is deeply disturbing that political thinking at the highest level in this country takes for granted that a Golden Dome is a technological development that must inevitably be seized. The mantra is: stronger defences. The voice of those saying that missile defence systems (under whatever name) are inherently wrong because they provoke the development of new offensive nuclear arms systems can scarcely be heard.

There has been a detrimental mentality shift in the world. Far from receding as we thought would happen with the end of the Cold War, the prospect of war in its different guises has been normalized. It is as though humanity cannot make the transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace. International law is crippled, the UN belittled. World leaders are giving in to the frustrations which they themselves have created.

In the election of the Carney government, Canada has entered a new moment. But will the government rise to the challenge of proclaiming international law as the basis for policies in arms control and disarmament or will we sink into geographical expediency? I, for one, thought Carney would choose wisely.

Former Senator Douglas Roche's latest book is *Keep Hope Alive: Essays for a War-free World* (Amazon).

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