

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NACD regime faces no inherent threat from the prospect of a national missile defence system now in development by the United States. Radical changes in the international security environment following the end of the Cold War make it impossible for the United States and its allies to rely on the principles of deterrence alone in order to avoid major military conflict. Due to the alarming proliferation of ballistic and cruise missile technology over the past decade, a combination of defence and deterrence offers the best prospect both of averting conflict and revitalizing multilateral non-proliferation commitments. Missile defences, at the strategic and theatre level, will increasingly become a fact of life in international security. Their technologies can make a contribution to international peace in the short term by ensuring the security of multilateral peace-support operations. Over the long term there is also the prospect that the surveillance technologies inherent in a strategic missile defence system could enhance transparency and confidence-building among potential adversaries --- with the net effect of reducing the appeal of offensive missile capabilities.