

## THE NACD: DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE IN A POST-ABM WORLD

### I-The Missile Threat

The Bush administration's decision in December 2001 to withdraw from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) and to begin the construction of national missile defences (NMD)<sup>1</sup> reflects a fundamental loss of faith in the logic of deterrence underlying U.S. nuclear strategy toward the Soviet Union for most of the Cold War. It is potentially the most important change in global security since the advent of the nuclear arms race, with enormous implications for the international non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament (NACD) regime. Bush's decision was foreshadowed by twenty years of debate about missile defence in United States, but NMD gained a new relevance with the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001.

The attacks, unprecedented in method and impact, were almost wholly unanticipated by the advocates of missile defence. Still, the proliferation of ballistic missile technology internationally has been a growing concern for the United States over the past decade. That concern has been heightened by the news that China and Russia have sold ballistic missiles to a number of states in Asia and the Middle East, some of which, such as North Korea, have begun to manufacture missiles and related technologies for export. Anxieties increased when it became known that the states which bought such delivery systems were working on weapons of mass destruction (WMD).<sup>2</sup> North Korea, Iran and Libya now have missiles which could carry WMD, if not to North America at least to American allies in the Middle East and Europe. In the mid-1990s the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) charged that North Korea was reprocessing uranium to manufacture nuclear weapons. In response, Pyongyang expelled inspectors, threatened war, and denounced the IAEA. Then, in 1998 India and Pakistan tested nuclear weapons, further bolstering the position of missile defense advocates critical of the value of arms control agreements to international peace.<sup>3</sup>

During the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Iraq fired Scud missiles at Israel in order to push Tel Aviv into a military response and so break up the coalition between the Arabs and the Western states.<sup>4</sup> Whereas a 1989 study of the Asia-Pacific region dealt with the Soviet presence there and only peripherally with Chinese or North Korean ballistic missile capabilities, the experience of Iraqi missile strikes during the Gulf War discredited the traditional arguments against missile defense. It brought attention to the acquisition of missile technology by Third World states willing to use ballistic weapons in a regional conflict and possibly uninfluenced by the deterrent value of the American nuclear forces that had kept the Soviet Union at bay. Iraq was deterred neither from invading Kuwait by any rational calculation of American response nor from attacking Israel with ballistic missiles despite Israel's nuclear capacity and its reputation for swift retaliation. Henry Kissinger, a principal architect of the ABM Treaty, observed that in light of the Gulf War experience, "limitations on strategic defense will have to be reconsidered," because "no responsible leader can henceforth deliberately leave his civilian population vulnerable."<sup>5</sup> To the Washington policy community supporting the development of missile defenses, a decade's experience in post-Cold War international affairs has demonstrated two things:

- Deterrence theory applied by the United States to the Soviet superpower during the Cold War cannot be applied to emerging Third World states armed with ballistic missiles, not because their leaders are assumed to be less "rational" than that of the Soviet Union but rather because the mutual attention, communication, and understanding developed by