

### 3. NUCLEAR AND SPACE ARMS TALKS: DEFENCE AND SPACE ARMS

#### Background

The Defence and Space Talks began in Geneva on 27 March 1985, as part of the Nuclear and Space Arms Talks (NST) between the Soviet Union and the United States. The NST also deals with long-range strategic and intermediate-range theatre nuclear weapons control. The aim of the Defence and Space Talks is to prevent an arms race in outer space and in strategic defences. This issue has drawn considerable attention since the announcement by President Reagan on 23 March 1983 of the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI or, as it is often referred to, Star Wars).

SDI, in its most basic form, is a plan to provide defence against incoming ballistic missiles. As conceptualized at present, SDI calls for research, development and testing of new weapon technologies, many of which would be based in outer space. These weapons may include "exotic" technologies such as lasers and particle beams, as well as more conventional anti-satellite (ASAT) and anti-ballistic missile (ABM) weapons. Naturally, there is a close link between this project and the status and future of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty signed between the Soviet Union and the United States in May 1972.

The ABM Treaty itself was the result of increased interest in anti-ballistic missile defence, on the part of both the US and USSR, throughout the 1960s. In the United States, the ABM issue sparked a prolonged public debate, centered on two main concerns: the ease with which the defences could be overcome by large numbers of cheaper offensive missiles, and the possibility that ABM deployments might