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## *The Rogue State Doctrine and National Missile Defense*

by Ivan Eland with Daniel Lee

### Executive Summary

The Clinton administration underestimated the technological ability of several of the “rogue” states to develop long-range missiles and politicized its intelligence estimate. However, missile threats to the United States from any one of those states also depend on the intentions of that state and political developments that might affect those intentions.

Since early 1999 significant positive political developments have occurred in the “rogue” states most likely to develop long-range missiles. The United States has agreed to lift some of the economic sanctions against North Korea—the nation that would first have the technological capability to threaten the United States with missiles—in exchange for a suspension of its testing of missiles. North Korea is rapidly improving its relations with South Korea and the West. Iran—the next most capable

“rogue” nation in missile technology—is haltingly liberalizing at home and improving relations with its neighbors and the West. That thaw could eventually lead to improving relations with the United States. Iraq’s missile capability continues to be hampered by the effects of wars and embargoes on military technology.

Such positive political developments would allow the Bush administration to slow the development and deployment of a limited land-based national missile defense. More time can be taken to thoroughly develop and test under realistic conditions the most technologically challenging weapon ever built (so far test results have been mixed). Even if, despite favorable international developments, the threat arises quickly, rushing deployment of missile defense will ultimately delay the fielding and increase the cost of a system that actually works.

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## **Introduction**

The release of the 1998 Rumsfeld commission report, which suggested that the missile threat was much greater than previously estimated,<sup>1</sup> heightened concern about missile threats from North Korea, Iraq, and Iran. (Other states—Libya, Syria, Cuba, and Sudan—pose much less of a threat of developing long-range missiles that could hit the United States.) In August 1998, shortly after the release of the report, North Korea tested the three-stage Taepodong-1 missile over Japan—surprising many analysts in the United States. In response to that test, many members of Congress called for the immediate deployment of national missile defense to guard against what appeared to be a growing threat.

After years of resistance, the Clinton administration finally succumbed to political pressure and supported a limited national missile defense system. In 1999 President Clinton signed into law the National Missile Defense Act of 1999. In a statement accompanying the bill, Clinton cited four criteria to use in deciding whether or not to deploy a national missile defense (NMD) system. One of those four criteria was that a legitimate and urgent threat to U.S. security must exist. In the Cato Institute's Foreign Policy Briefing, "Ballistic Missile Proliferation: Does the Clinton Administration Understand the Threat?" Timothy Beard and Ivan Eland explored the emergence of "rogue" states as potential threats to U.S. national security.<sup>2</sup> They found that flawed intelligence estimates yielded an inaccurate assessment of ballistic missile threats to the United States and argued—in support of the Rumsfeld commission report—that the Clinton administration had underestimated the technical ability of "rogue" states to develop long-range missiles and had politicized its intelligence estimate.

However, missile threats to the United States also depend on the intentions of the threatening states and political developments that might affect those intentions. (After all, no U.S. policymaker believes that the nuclear forces of France and the United Kingdom

threaten U.S. security.) Several significant positive political developments in rogue states have occurred since Beard and Eland's wrote in early 1999. North Korea is beginning to engage the international community and pursue détente with its southern neighbor. Iran is beginning to show signs of constructive engagement with the West and neighbors in the Persian Gulf and is haltingly instituting democratic reforms in its government. Iraq will remain under strict sanctions that severely impede its acquisition of the technology necessary to carry out a serious missile program. Overall, the international security environment is changing favorably as so-called rogue states are starting to act less roguish.

Those recent positive trends undermine the claim that the ballistic missile threat from such states as North Korea, Iraq, and Iran justifies the immediate deployment of an NMD system. Although legitimate grounds may exist for the eventual deployment of a limited NMD system, the prevailing paradigm of post-Cold War American foreign policy, known as the "rogue state doctrine," should not be one of them.

## **The Rogue State Doctrine**

The vacuum in U.S. foreign policy left by the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in the pressing need to create an alternative justification for the widespread presence of American forces throughout the world. One such justification is the rogue state doctrine—originally formulated by Secretary of State Colin Powell, then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and later adopted by the administrations of George Bush and Bill Clinton. As Professor Michael Klare of Hampshire College notes, the rogue state doctrine was intended to be only an interim measure to justify Cold War-level defense expenditures in the post-Cold War era. He notes, however, that the doctrine has become the "defining paradigm for American security policy" even though the evolving international security environment has rendered it increasingly irrelevant.<sup>3</sup>

In a recent study, Paul Hoyt suggested that references to “rogue states” became more prominent in American foreign policy after 1993, the beginning of Clinton’s presidency, and reached a peak in February 1997.<sup>4</sup> In short, the rogue state doctrine has become an essential element of post–Cold War U.S. foreign policy.

The doctrine posits that military resources should be directed against a small number of hostile powers in the Third World—such as North Korea, Iraq, and Iran—rather than against an emerging superpower. The doctrine assumes that the United States has emerged from the Cold War as the sole superpower. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the stability of a bipolar global structure has given way to an uncertain and potentially more dangerous world in which hostile countries may acquire offensive weapons technology with relative ease.

According to the doctrine, because the greatest dangers in the post–Cold War world are posed by those hostile states, the United States must focus its efforts on defending against possible attacks using weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile technology. Moreover, the rogue state doctrine is predicated on the claim that those states act irrationally, and therefore cannot be deterred with America’s offensive nuclear arsenal—as was the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Armed with ballistic missiles, such unpredictable states may strike the United States at any time. Therefore, the argument goes, the United States must deploy an NMD system at the earliest possible date for protection against such contingencies.

Indeed, the current debate on the NMD system reflects the almost dogmatic and unquestioned acceptance of the rogue state doctrine as a canon of post–Cold War American foreign policy. The doctrine has been embedded in recent intelligence estimates of ballistic missile threats from other countries. Avid proponents of the NMD system cite the increasing threats to national security and global stability posed by “rogue” states armed with weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles. In his statement on the National Missile Defense Act of 1999,

President Clinton explicitly acknowledged “the growing danger that rogue nations may develop and field long-range missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction against the United States and [its] allies.”<sup>5</sup> Even Russian officials—who contend that American attempts to construct an NMD system will violate the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty—concede the threats posed by some Third World states and, hence, indirectly accept the rogue state doctrine.<sup>6</sup>

In light of recent positive changes in the international security environment, is this excessive reliance on the rogue state doctrine warranted? That question requires further examination—given its potentially serious implications for the current debate on NMD.

## Challenging the Doctrine

The rogue state doctrine has become an article of faith with many foreign policy analysts. Although some caution is advised on being too optimistic about recent developments in those states, a brief examination of them should be sufficient to raise doubts about their irrationality and recklessness. In June 2000 North Korean leader Kim Jong Il invited his southern counterpart, President Kim Dae Jung, to Pyongyang for an unprecedented summit meeting aimed at improving relations between the two countries. The summit was more successful than outside observers thought possible.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, since September 1999, North Korea has observed a moratorium on missile tests. Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein has invited former United Nations arms inspector Scott Ritter and a documentary film crew for an interview and granted them full access to weapons facilities in Iraq.<sup>8</sup> In Iran reformist president Mohammed Khatemi continues to improve ties with the West and is attempting to institute democratic reforms in Iran’s political system. Indeed, recognizing that the so-called rogue states are acting less roguish, the U.S. Department of State has proposed replacing the term “rogue state” with the less-abrasive

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term “states of concern,” or SOCs for the purposes of this paper.<sup>9</sup>

Although the U.S. government’s moniker for such states has changed, the rogue state doctrine remains a cornerstone of U.S. policy. The attempt to classify a number of countries as rogue states creates significant problems for U.S. strategy and policy. Robert Litwak of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars argues that the “rogue state” label limits policy alternatives and restricts America’s flexibility to deal with changing circumstances in the international security environment. According to Litwak, the doctrine breeds a “one-size-fits-all strategy of comprehensive containment and isolation.” Consequently, with the rogue state doctrine in place, it becomes very difficult to pursue an alternative policy of constructive engagement.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, the “rogue state” label unnecessarily antagonizes countries that are beginning to show signs of willingness to cooperate with the United States and adhere to accepted norms of international engagement. A statement by James Rubin, former spokesman for the State Department, shows the importance of removing the label: “When the United States speaks, the world listens... so it matters what language the United States uses.”<sup>11</sup> That label perpetuates the demonization of those nations and, in effect, creates a self-fulfilling prophecy by suggesting that specific countries will certainly behave in a hostile manner.

Central to the rogue state doctrine has been the assumption that so-called rogue state actors are irrational and thus “undeterrable.”<sup>12</sup> However, some critics note that the rationality criterion applied to states such as North Korea, Iraq, and Iran is much stricter than the criterion applied to most other states, including the one applied to the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Some observers—such as Litwak—speculate that this approach has been part of an elaborate strategy to demonize those countries in order to justify the development of NMD. Others—such as Robert Joseph—argue that the attempt to classify rogue states as irrational reflects the perceived lack of mutual understanding needed for deterrence to work

effectively between states armed with weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles.<sup>13</sup>

Although SOCs are often ruthless, no valid reason exists to suppose that they are immune from the logic of deterrence or are less rational than other states in an anarchic international framework. On the contrary, those states have repeatedly demonstrated their ability to deal rationally with other states, including the United States. For example, the United States negotiated the Agreed Framework for nuclear inspections with North Korea back in 1994. According to the framework, North Korea agreed to freeze its nuclear program in exchange for two (more proliferation resistant) light-water reactors provided by the United States under the auspices of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization. More recently, North Korea’s participation in talks with the United States on its missile program reflect negotiating behavior that is rational.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, the leaders of SOCs are very concerned about self-preservation and therefore probably would not engage in any action that would potentially threaten their precarious hold on power—such as initiating a missile attack on the United States.<sup>15</sup> Granted, the SOCs sometimes demonstrate a propensity for high-risk diplomacy and brinkmanship, but their actions are indicative of an outcome-oriented, self-interested rationality.

In general, American assessments of what constitutes rational behavior, as opposed to rogue behavior, are remarkably myopic. The ballistic missile programs of SOCs should be examined using the model of a rational state actor.<sup>16</sup> Two conclusions emerge from such an examination: (1) SOCs developing ballistic missiles are exhibiting rational behavior; (2) the primary motive of SOCs for developing such missiles is probably not to launch a first strike against the United States.

## **The Motives behind Missile Programs of SOCs**

If the SOCs are acting rationally, then what explains their development of ballistic mis-

siles? Many countries view ballistic missiles as cost-effective weapons that can be used as coercive tools for diplomacy and as prestigious symbols of national power.<sup>17</sup> A more careful examination of the technical capabilities of the missiles being developed in North Korea, Iraq, and Iran suggests that those and other motives are driving their missile programs.

Ballistic missiles can be used effectively as a coercive tool of regional politics. Indeed, most of the missiles currently deployed or being developed in the SOCs are probably intended for regional use, since they have limited flight ranges that make them useful in only a relatively localized region. Consequently, those missiles would be most effectively used as a deterrent force against neighboring countries. Presenting a threat to the United States with those short- and medium-range missiles would be more difficult.

In general, regional rivalries between states seem to drive the development of ballistic missiles; SOCs are not exempt from this general observation. For instance, Iran and Iraq, respectively, used Shahab-1 missiles and Scud-B and Al-Husayn missiles against each other during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s. Indeed, the regional rivalry between those neighboring countries explains much of the current drive for the development of ballistic missiles with longer ranges. For example, Iran's recent unsuccessful test flight of the Shahab-3D medium-range ballistic missile is part of a domestic arms development program initiated in part by the war with Iraq.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Iraq's recently flight-tested short-range (less than the UN restriction of 150 kilometers) Al-Samoud missile seems to be intended for use in local defense, particularly against Iran. Significant technical problems with the missile's engines and guidance systems—as well as its limited range—suggest that the threat to the United States is limited.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, North Korea's No-Dong and Taepodong-1 medium-range ballistic missiles are capable of reaching South Korea and Japan, both of which are considered enemies by the North Koreans.

SOCs may, however, be nervous about the presence of American troops within their

regions. In particular, Iraq and Iran are concerned about the presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia; North Korea is concerned about American forces in South Korea and Japan. Short-range ballistic missiles can be used to deter those American forces from initiating an attack. Any SOC development of long-range missiles aimed at the United States is in response to the possibility of American intervention in their regions. Indeed, the authors of the 1999 "National Intelligence Estimate" point out that the "growing missile capabilities [of rogue states] would enable them to increase the cost of U.S. victory and potentially deter Washington from pursuing certain objectives."<sup>20</sup> If American forces were less likely to intervene—using forces near their borders or from afar—those nations would have less incentive to develop long-range missiles and much less reason to target them at the United States. In U.S. policy circles, there has been much handwringing over the proliferation to SOCs of weapons of mass destruction and the long-range missiles needed to deliver them to the United States. But that same policy community chooses to ignore an important cause of that proliferation—U.S. intervention around the world in conflicts that do not involve U.S. vital interests.

Ballistic missiles with longer ranges can also be used to improve a country's bargaining position in global politics. The most prominent historical example of using longer-range missiles for such purposes is Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's decision to deploy medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Cuba in 1962. Indeed, Graham Allison's classic study of the Cuban missile crisis suggests that the Soviet leadership may have decided to deploy missiles in Cuba to bargain with the United States for the withdrawal of American Jupiter missiles deployed in Turkey.<sup>21</sup>

A similar logic can be employed to explain the current ballistic missile programs in SOCs. Because they offer implicit or explicit threats of attack, those missiles can be used as coercive tools of high-risk diplomacy. For example, North Korea tested the Taepodong missile in August 1998 during negotiations with the

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United States when Pyongyang's threats were losing credibility. That brinkmanship reasserted North Korea's bargaining leverage with the United States.<sup>22</sup> North Korea's successful use of the missile threat as a bargaining strategy may be one important driving force behind the possible development of long-range ballistic missiles in Iraq and Iran.

Finally, SOC's pursue ballistic missile programs because they view them as signs of national prestige and strength. That motive is not unique to those states. The vigorous missile programs in India and Pakistan reflect the importance of those weapons to nationalist political programs.

There is sufficient reason to challenge the belief in the irrationality of SOC's. Moreover, the claim that the ballistic missile programs of those states are intended primarily to provide a first-strike capability against the United States is simply misleading.<sup>23</sup> The implication of those conclusions for the debate on NMD is particularly noteworthy. Because recent public discourse on NMD has relied heavily on the assumptions of the rogue state doctrine, has linked the technical capabilities of such states with nefarious motives, and has ignored recent favorable political trends within those states, the rush to build a missile defense system assumes a worst-case scenario that focuses on the possibility rather than the likelihood of an attack by a "rogue" state.

## **How Serious Is the Rogue Missile Threat?**

Recent analyses—such as the 1998 Rumsfeld commission report and the 1999 "National Intelligence Estimate"—evaluate the ballistic missile threat to the United States almost entirely in terms of technical capabilities and discount other salient sociopolitical and economic factors, which would mitigate the technical threat.<sup>24</sup> According to Joseph Cirincione of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, assessments of the SOC missile threat that rely solely on technical capabilities (such as the 1999 "National Intelligence

Estimate") may overestimate the threats from Iraq, Iran, and North Korea.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, those assessments of the ballistic missile threat in the post-Cold War era probably inflate the threats from SOC's and perpetuate the questionable rogue state doctrine.

Four documents released since 1995 have estimated missile threats from "rogue" states. Starting with the "National Intelligence Estimate" of 1995, the documents illustrate a change in the methodology used to evaluate threats from foreign missiles. The 1995 estimate reports that "no country . . . will develop or otherwise acquire a ballistic missile in the next 15 years that could threaten the contiguous 48 states and Canada."<sup>26</sup> Less than four years later, the "National Intelligence Estimate" of 1999 described a vastly changed world: "We project that during the next 15 years the United States most likely will face ICBM threats from . . . North Korea, probably from Iran, and possibly from Iraq."<sup>27</sup> This radical shift in official intelligence estimates reflects the influence of the Rumsfeld commission report of 1998, which takes into account the more aggressive missile programs of "rogue" states.

But according to Cirincione, the authors of the 1999 "National Intelligence Estimate" shifted the evaluative criteria from probable threats to possible threats by employing what he refers to as the "could" standard. Intelligence officials were cited as complaining of political pressure and that this change skewed the results toward the most alarming assessment. According to one intelligence official: "We are writing in worst-case language. Frankly, from my perspective, this is nonsense."<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, Cirincione notes that the new methodology reduces the range of missiles considered serious threats. The methodology also changes the time line for the emergence of a threat from when a country *deploys* a missile to when a country could first test a long-range missile. Consequently, he concludes that the 1999 "National Intelligence Estimate" "may lead some observers to conclude that there has been a significant technological leap forward in Third World missile programs, when, in fact there has been only incremental development

in programs well known to analysts for years.”<sup>29</sup>

Equally important, Cirincione observes that previous intelligence estimates included political assessments of the nations with missile programs, but those assessments were absent from the 1999 estimate. He notes that the relevance of the “international political, diplomatic, and legal environments . . . to the prospects for global development of ballistic missiles” makes examination of recent political developments in so-called rogue nations crucial to the evaluation of the ballistic missile threat to the United States.<sup>30</sup>

### **North Korea**

According to Leon Sigal of the Social Science Research Council in New York, since the 1980s North Korea has been trying to establish better relations with the United States.<sup>31</sup> Granted, the path toward greater cooperation between the two countries has been rocky at times.<sup>32</sup> Also, past periods of thawing relations between the North and South have been followed by renewed tensions.<sup>33</sup> On the whole, however, North Korea has recently established better political ties with both the United States and South Korea—its two most bitter enemies—and continuing political rapprochement and engagement will probably yield even better relations in the coming years.

As noted earlier, in 1994 North Korea agreed to freeze its nuclear weapons program in exchange for two light-water reactors donated by the West. More recently, the reclusive North Korean regime has made a concerted effort to emerge onto the international stage. Pyongyang has established diplomatic ties with Australia, Canada, the Philippines, and Italy and begun talks with Japan. North Korea participated in a security forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which provided an opportunity for then-secretary of state Madeline Albright to meet with North Korean foreign minister Paek Nam Sun.<sup>34</sup>

The United States has lifted some of the economic sanctions against North Korea; those sanctions had been in place since 1950.

In return, North Korea has agreed to suspend tests of ballistic missiles. North Korea may export raw materials and goods to the United States, and air and shipping routes will be opened between the two countries.<sup>35</sup> Although the lifting of U.S. sanctions is unlikely to have any major practical effect on commerce or trade, the symbolic import of that move is that North Korea seems to be emerging from isolation.<sup>36</sup>

The unprecedented summit meeting between North and South Korea in June 2000 established the foundation for greater inter-Korean cooperation. The summit agreement established reunification as a major objective for both countries. The two countries have agreed to work on pressing issues, such as reuniting separated families<sup>37</sup> (200 families were allowed to visit their relatives across the border) and providing humanitarian assistance to the impoverished North. Moreover, both countries have agreed to tone down the harsh rhetoric directed at each other. In the South, government officials have offered to review the draconian National Security Law, which identifies North Korea as an enemy and bans praise of the North. The North and South have also agreed to the repatriation of North Korean prisoners held in the South. A new road and a rebuilt railroad across the heavily fortified border will connect the capitals of the North and South and be the first transportation link between the two nations since the beginning of the Korean War.<sup>38</sup>

If these positive trends continue, American policymakers must be ready to accept the reunification of North and South Korea and the consequences that would arise. Or the government of North Korea might collapse within the next decade—fundamentally changing the nature of the security environment.<sup>39</sup> Even if neither of those scenarios comes to pass and North Korea remains hostile to South Korea, the North’s war-making potential is limited. North Korea’s economy in 1999 (less than \$15 billion) pales in comparison with South Korea’s (\$407 billion). Also, North Korea’s defense

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expenditures (\$2 billion) are dwarfed by those of South Korea (\$12 billion).<sup>40</sup>

### **Iran**

Since the election in 1997 of reformist president Mohammed Khatemi, Iran has moderated some of its radical behavior in order to establish better relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors and the West.<sup>41</sup> Iran has sent formal military and political delegations to the Persian Gulf states and other countries to restore friendly relations with nations that it once targeted with its support of Islamic radicals. Iran has expanded relations with many nations, including Germany, Russia, Japan, and China. In addition, the Iranians are beginning to abide by accepted norms of international engagement.

Although Iranian hard-liners still control many of the levers of power in the Iranian government, reformist politicians are increasingly coming into positions of influence. Reformist allies of President Khatemi won about three-fourths of the seats in recent parliamentary elections. The large majority may allow reform legislation previously blocked by the religious conservatives to be voted on by referendum.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, a moderate cleric, Ayatollah Mehdi Karubi, was elected the new speaker of the Iranian parliament—making him the third-ranking member of Iran's government.<sup>43</sup> If a gradual transition of political power to more liberal elements occurs, it may eventually lead to the establishment of better ties with the United States. Indeed, many of the reformist government officials in Iran, such as Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi, were educated in the United States.

Nevertheless, Iran's recent, albeit unsuccessful, test of the Shahab-3D missile and plans for an intermediate-range Shahab-4 missile are a legitimate cause for concern. Iran is rebuilding its military (but at a slower pace than anticipated) in order to reassert its position as the traditional locus of power in the Persian Gulf region—that is, as the “custodian of the security of the Gulf.”<sup>44</sup> The Shahab ballistic missile, probably directed at

Israel, can be seen as part of an overall military strategy to strengthen Iran's position in the regional balance of power in the Persian Gulf.

However, at the present time, Iran's missile program should not be considered a serious threat to the United States. First, Iran's 1999 gross domestic product (\$109 billion) is lower than Saudi Arabia's (\$141 billion) and much lower than the combined GDPs of the Gulf Cooperation Council states (\$253 billion).<sup>45</sup> Iran's defense expenditures (\$5.7 billion) are much less than those of Saudi Arabia (\$21.8 billion) and are dwarfed by the combined defense expenditures of the GCC (\$31.6 billion).<sup>46</sup> Iran would need to devote significant amounts of its limited resources to the military in order to build missiles with intercontinental ranges.

Second, a senior Pentagon official was quoted as concluding that Iran's ballistic missile program had problems and was “certainly not clicking along really fast.”<sup>47</sup> Third, Iranian defense policy is primarily regional in character, and Iran has no real global influence. Iranian foreign minister Kharrazi has claimed that Iran's missile program is “only for defensive purposes, which is the legitimate right of Iran.”<sup>48</sup> Whether that is true or not, the missiles currently deployed by Iran cannot reach the United States; an NMD system to guard against medium-range ballistic missiles launched from Iran would be superfluous.<sup>49</sup> Fourth, if Iran's halting positive internal political developments continue, hostility toward the United States will probably decline in coming years. American policymakers should reconsider the containment policy being applied to Iran; that policy is a significant cause of Iran's hostility toward the United States.

### **Iraq**

In a recent article in the journal *Arms Control Today*, former UN inspector Scott Ritter argues that Iraq has been effectively disarmed by UN Special Commission inspections.<sup>50</sup> Ritter challenges the conventional wisdom about Iraq's technical capabilities



and discourages further attempts to use aggressive monitoring tactics. Even if Ritter is wrong, an embargo on exports of military-related technology to Iraq lessens the chance that Iraq will be able to rapidly develop any missile or weapon of mass destruction that would threaten the United States.

U.S. officials were cited as agreeing that Iraq would pose no concrete threat to the United States while the embargo remained in effect.<sup>51</sup> Secretary of State Colin Powell recently indicated that the embargo on military-related technologies would probably remain in effect even if general economic sanctions against Iraq were curtailed. As Edward Peck, former U.S. ambassador to Iraq, notes, the United States talks with almost every other authoritarian regime, so why not Iraq?<sup>52</sup> The best course of action for the United States is to pursue negotiations on an agreement with Iraq to end general sanctions in return for a resumption of international inspections for weapons of mass destruction and the retention of the embargo on military-related technologies. The inspections and the targeted embargo may not be perfect, but they may slow the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to Iraq.

Wars and sanctions have drastically impaired Iraq's economy and war-making potential. Iraq's 1998 GDP (\$19 billion) is dwarfed by the 1999 GDPs of Saudi Arabia (\$141 billion) and the combined economies of the GCC (\$253 billion). Iraq's defense expenditures (\$1.4 billion) pale in comparison with those of Saudi Arabia (\$21.8 billion) and the combined defense expenditures of the GCC (\$31.6 billion).<sup>53</sup> Of the three aforementioned SOCs, Iraq is currently the least capable of developing long-range missiles that could hit the United States. (Other states, such as Libya, Syria, Cuba, and Sudan, pose much less of a threat of developing long-range missiles than those three SOCs.)

Like Iran and North Korea, Iraq would probably be somewhat less likely to develop long-range ballistic missiles if it didn't fear an attack from the United States. Even if those countries did develop long-range missiles,

they would be unlikely to target the United States if it did not pursue an interventionist foreign policy in the Persian Gulf and on the Korean peninsula. If left alone, those small poor states in remote parts of the world would have no quarrel with the United States.

Even if the hard-liners prevail in all of those nations and have hostile intent toward the United States, they are ruthless—rather than irrational—and are probably deterrable in most cases by the powerful U.S. offensive nuclear arsenal.

## Policy Implications

The most recent test failures of the NMD system caused the Clinton administration to postpone a decision on deploying the system (and even a decision on beginning construction of an NMD radar) until the next administration. That delay will allow the Bush administration more time to assess whether a missile defense should be deployed. Specifically, policymakers should carefully consider the following issues before making any decision about NMD.

The proposed target date of 2005 for deploying NMD is artificial and arbitrary. The original "3+3" plan proposed by the Clinton administration projected that NMD would be deployed in 2003. Fears of a "rush to failure" led to the postponement of deployment until 2005. As policymakers realize the technical difficulties and engineering problems associated with developing missile defense technology, the timetable for deployment may be extended by as much as two more years.<sup>54</sup> Recent test failures and delays in developing the booster rocket that lifts the warhead-killing payload into space may delay deployment until 2007 or later.

According to Stephen Young, deputy director of the Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers, the 2005 date was derived from the earliest date that an NMD system could be fielded—not from the 1999 "National Intelligence Estimate," which predicted only the probability that North Korea would be

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able to threaten the United States sometime during the next 15 years.<sup>55</sup> But North Korea—the nation with the most advanced missile technology—has agreed to suspend missile tests and talked about negotiating an end to its missile development program. That suspension should delay the onset of the North Korean missile threat to the United States.

Even if the North Korean threat does emerge in 2005, rushing to deploy NMD by that date is likely to delay the fielding of a system that actually works. As one of the authors stated in an article in *Nexus* law journal, “Taking the time to get NMD right will be quicker than fixing a flawed system.”<sup>56</sup> Moreover, NMD would be pointless if it did not work properly. Policymakers should be committed to thorough testing of the system against realistic countermeasures by an adversary to ensure the effectiveness of the technology and avoid what a report by an independent panel headed by Gen. Larry Welch called the “rush to failure.” So far, test results have been mixed.

To be sure, testing of the NMD system would be costly. Even for the administration’s most basic and limited proposal for a land-based NMD system, the testing alone would cost more than \$2 billion.<sup>57</sup> But costs would rise even further if the system was not tested properly before deployment.

Policymakers should rely less on the rogue state doctrine to justify missile defense and concentrate more on the problem posed by small accidental launches. SOCs are probably deterrable by massive U.S. nuclear retaliation (much as the great powers have been); U.S. allies without nuclear forces could deploy missile defenses against SOCs or create their own nuclear arsenals to deter them (concerns about nuclear proliferation should be eased by the responsible nature of the allies). But accidental launches by SOCs are almost impossible to deter. Nations with newly acquired nuclear weapons and the long-range missiles to deliver them may have inadequate nuclear doctrine, early warning, nuclear safeguards, and command and control over their weapons.

Thus, a limited land-based NMD should be considered a back-up system to guard against the remote threat of an intentional launch by an SOC or as the first line of defense against an accidental launch.<sup>58</sup>

## Conclusion

Policymakers must examine closely the changing nature of the international security environment before making any decision to deploy a limited land-based NMD. Given the importance of political factors in the international security environment, policymakers must take into account recent changes in so-called rogue states. Looking only at the technical capabilities of those states is insufficient. Positive developments in the nations most likely to develop long-range missiles—North Korea, Iran, and even less-capable Iraq—should give the United States more time to develop and test an NMD system, which would be the most technologically challenging weapon ever built, to address only a narrow range of threats.

## Notes

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2. Timothy Beard and Ivan Eland, “Ballistic Missile Proliferation: Does the Clinton Administration Understand the Threat?” Cato Institute Foreign Policy Briefing no. 51, February 11, 1999.
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