

# The Academy of Political Science

475 Riverside Drive · Suite 1274 · New York, New York 10115-1274  
(212) 870-2500 · FAX: (212) 870-2202 · [aps@psqonline.org](mailto:aps@psqonline.org) · <http://www.psqonline.org>

## POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY

---

Volume 117 · Number 2 · Summer 2002

---

No part of this article may be copied, downloaded, stored, further transmitted, transferred, distributed, altered, or otherwise used, in any form or by any means, except:

- one stored electronic and one paper copy of any article solely for your personal, non-commercial use, or
- with prior written permission of The Academy of Political Science.

*Political Science Quarterly* is published by The Academy of Political Science. Contact the Academy for further permission regarding the use of this work.

---

*Political Science Quarterly*  
Copyright © 2002 by The Academy of Political Science. All rights reserved.

it would deter not only the launch, but also the construction of rogue-nation ICBMs. The terrestrial boost-phase interceptors could not function at all against Chinese or Russian ICBMs, and those nations are estimated by the government's published National Intelligence Estimate to have effective countermeasures so that the midcourse system would not work either.

The authors judge that "Russia's refusal to renegotiate the ABM Treaty reflects the fact that thus far the United States has not given it a reason to agree" (p. 120). Key political supporters of the Bush administration had as a primary goal the elimination of the ABM Treaty, in preference to a treaty-compliant NMD system, even if it would be effective. They have achieved their goal, with the President's announcement in December 2001 giving the required six-month notice of ending U.S. adherence to the ABM Treaty.

The authors' recommended small deployment for a boost-phase interceptors and 20-25 midcourse interceptors makes political sense. It faces, however, twin perils—that it will lull the political leadership into a false belief that it provides real protection; and that once begun, it will be an enormous sink of funds better spent in conquering more serious threats to U.S. security. The principal downside of the midcourse system is that it will result in China's expansion of its current twenty-some ICBM force to a level of 200 or so, greatly increasing the peril to the U.S. homeland.

The reader will learn much from this book, with its helpful compendium of treaty texts, threat assessments, and the like.

RICHARD L. GARWIN  
*Council on Foreign Relations*

**Hit to Kill: The New Battle Over Shielding America From Missile Attack** by Bradley Graham. *New York, Public Affairs, 2001. 414 pp. Cloth, \$27.50; paper, \$26.00.*

Although many public policy issues are controversial, few are approached with the religious intensity of the debate over national missile defense (NMD). Missile defense proponents believe that it is both irrational and immoral to permit the United States to remain vulnerable to a missile attack from so-called rogue states. They note that deterrence may fail, especially when confronting the homicidal, maniacal, or suicidal regimes that are acquiring or are attempting to acquire nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons and long-range ballistic missiles. Given the strategic and technical opportunities that have emerged in the aftermath of the cold war, proponents note that defenses are a logical response to a changing threat environment. Opponents argue that missile defenses would undermine arms control by destroying its cornerstone, the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. They also contend that NMD would undermine non-proliferation efforts by demonstrating to friend and foe alike that the United

States is preparing to live with, not roll back, the spread of nuclear weapons. Opponents often claim that a U.S. national missile defense program is likely to be both an expensive technical failure and a political disaster that antagonizes important allies and energizes potential foes.

The September 11 terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon broke the log jam in the NMD debate. In December 2001, the Bush administration announced its intention to withdraw from the ABM Treaty, setting the stage for a new chapter in the story of the U.S. effort to construct missile defenses. But as Bradley Graham notes in this outstanding study of the personalities, events, technologies, and politics that fueled the NMD debate, the treaty's days were numbered by the late 1990s. *Hit to Kill* offers a fascinating and even-handed account of the forces that drove a reluctant Clinton administration to prepare to field a missile defense system.

According to Graham, many members of the Clinton administration realized that the ABM Treaty had been overtaken by strategic events. Yet, as staunch arms control advocates, they could not bear to abandon the treaty. Many in the administration also hoped that some sort of miracle—a technical failure, a diplomatic windfall, or a significant shift in the domestic political constellation favoring defenses—would allow them to delay construction of an X-band radar in Shemya, Alaska, the “long pole” in the NMD tent that would be the first (literally) concrete violation of the ABM Treaty. When a ten-year old part on a surplus Minuteman booster failed during a July 2001 test of the interceptor, the administration was provided with enough justification to leave the deployment decision to the next administration.

Graham does a fine job of weaving both technical and political issues into this balanced account of the NMD debate. By describing the workings of government and the influence of unresolved issues that give life to public policy, his work follows in the footsteps of other classic studies of the arms control and defense procurement processes; John Newhouses's study of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, *Cold Dawn*, comes to mind. Although parts of *Hit to Kill* are bound to make both staunch supporters and opponents of NMD cringe, Graham sheds light on the often hidden ways that governments undertake a gradual yet fundamental shift in policy. He illustrates the interagency process at work as senior officials struggle to come to terms with uncertain threats and unperfected technologies. To a fault, Graham is true to the issues and events he describes. One is left to wonder not only what he really thought of the entire NMD issue, but also about the way the Clinton administration began to confront the possibility that there might be real threats to national security lurking over the horizon.

JAMES J. WIRTZ  
*Naval Postgraduate School,  
Monterey California*