Rarely have scholars of international relations been witness to such a flux and upheaval in the international system as is apparent in the period following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Previous assumptions have to be discarded, and new ones formed without yet a clear picture to give them a rational basis. Analysts differ on whether the present international system is unipolar, multipolar or polycentric, with each formulation reflecting a particular view of the components that go into the definition of "power".

Obviously, the nuclear arsenal of the former Soviet Union did not automatically ensure it a continuing status of a world power, as it's economy and way of life could not keep up with the onward rush of world events and changes. Japan on the other hand, spurning such weapons is in a position to move events, while Germany – united and at the centre of Europe, is now acknowledged as the engine of European unification.

With this redrawing of power equations and the pecking order in the world has come a like reappraisal of what constitutes security. To some extent, the meaning of security remained at its most basic level in most developing states – beset as they were with acquisitive neighbours and disputed borders. To them security still had overwhelmingly military connotations, with the ability to defend the country against inimical forces remaining upper most. In the process they tried to acquire or develop the weapons that they needed for the purpose – be it tanks, aircraft, or to those more technologically capable, missiles as well.
Elsewhere in the industrialized world, a reevaluation of what constituted “security” was being carefully and conservatively conducted. To the countries who formed part of the most successful security organization in the world – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization – this reevaluation was certainly forced upon them. For a swirling, fast pace of events had caused the disintegration of their foremost security threat – the Soviet Union. Created to offer military resistance to the threat from the “Reds”, the process of disarmament and the slow reduction of tensions across Europe led to a dismaying and often acerbic debate on the need for a security organization that no longer had a threat to confront. At another level, policy makers were forced to confront the demand for a “peace dividend” in the form of reduced defence expenditures. By 1990 itself, it appeared that NATO itself was under threat from within, even as it faced no particular enemy from without.

The subsequent debate was to prove that NATO had been, and continued to be, more than just a alliance crafted to defend against a Soviet invasion. Europeans, quarreling over possible action in the former Yugoslavia were forced to acknowledge that NATO was capable of delivering “leadership” when required, and that a trans-Atlantic coupling served to deliver cohesion and internal harmony. As Germany united, and appeared to exercise its muscle in foreign policy, it became even more apparent that NATO was also an instrument of preserving the balance of power within Europe – where Germany was contained militarily even as she increasingly provided the pivot around which Europe sought to unite.
However, while these were formed one strand of the underlying reasons for NATO's past and continuing rationale, in the changed political environment these functions were hardly amenable to being portrayed as security threats.

As the Soviet Union disintegrated, security experts and policy makers were talking about a "period of uncertainty", and the threat from "ethnic conflict" and the uncontrolled movement of refugees. However, it began to be clear, that while a military alliance as large as NATO could prove useful and effective in dealing with these "threats", it was extremely unlikely that parliamentarians and budgeting agencies would allot funds for the maintenance of a large and expensive fighting force. Nor could industry hope that defence expenditures would continue to remain at a level where their wares would continue to find buyers.

As the experiences of "Desert Storm" began to filter through Europe, a new attention began to be paid to those analysts across the Atlantic who had been warning of the spread of missile capabilities across the world. Reports of testing of new such weapons, and the undoubtedly difficult days that Israelis had to pass through became the subject of much analyses. In the United States, the spectre of a rogue state using its missiles to deliver weapons of mass destruction on US soil or against US troops became a subject of congressional debate and discussion. The Strategic Defence Initiative Organization, built to provide the ultimate shield against Soviet missiles was renamed as the Ballistic Missile Defence Organization, with a
stated objective of protecting America and her troops against accidental launch of Soviet missiles, and as the debate gathered steam, against rogue missiles from developing countries. Needless to add, this provided an organization that was clearly a relict of the cold war, with a new lease of life.

By 1994, the threat of rogue states using ballistic missiles was being projected to allies as the ultimate threat that NATO countries would have to contend with. An organization that since 1991 had already begun the process of restructuring and change to be able to project power more effectively, was able to tie in this new perception of threat into formal policy. By 1994 NATO was declaring the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and delivery vehicles, in the hands of developing states as a threat to itself, even as the Security Council declared this as a threat to international security.

This move is one that is obviously fraught with considerable implications for the developing world who are perceived as the main proliferators, led by unstable regimes prone to taking illogical decisions. On the other hand is the reality, that for many developing countries a missile force is about the one weapon that could stand between them and an intervening foreign power. Thus there are two parallel developments each antithetical to the other. On the one hand the search for a defence by states that see an evolving international system of “interventional action” where state sovereignty appears to be increasingly under threat, and on
the other the ambitions and priorities of an Organization that seeks to perpetuate itself by impinging on the sovereign rights of states to defend themselves, and regarding the right of states to choose their own weapons for that purpose as a threat per se.

The present study on “Missile Proliferation and NATO’s Response” is placed in the above context, and seeks to understand the direction that is being taken by the foremost security organization in the world, and the impact this would have on international security. This becomes particularly important when it is considered that NATO is now formally moving out of area, and indeed increasing even the extent of its given “area” – that is from a purely West European based entity to one that is now called an pivot of “Euro-Atlantic security” - a move that demands the closest attention. Clearly, proliferation of missiles within this highly extended and ambiguous area is considered a clear threat to NATO countries, though it also notes that proliferation world wide could constitute a significant security threat. This threat perception is outlined at a time, when NATO has refused to give up its doctrine of “first use” of nuclear weapons, and indeed as the United States continues to research and field new missiles and nuclear weapons.

Thus at one level this study will examine the path of “threat selection” on both sides of the Atlantic and the response to that threat. Since the response is purely a military one - since NATO is primarily a military organization even if its highest councils continues to talk of the
primacy of diplomacy – the role, area and weapons selection will be of considerable importance. This also provides interesting inputs on the various motives and incidents which together led to the enunciation of a threat from outside NATO as directly impinging upon itself and detrimental to the “interests” of its members.

The main “threat” will be examined as to its lethality, and possible fall out. In short, we examine whether in fact there is a process of proliferation, and the extent and nature of this phenomenon. Are missiles a weapon of choice in the developing world? Who has them and to what degree of lethality? This study also looks to answers to some additional questions. What is NATO’s proliferation policy meant to achieve – simply the enunciation of a threat or the active pursuance of it? Will it push countries further towards proliferation, and thus lead to instability? What is the actual threat from Third world proliferants, and indeed who are they, and what sustains the cycle of proliferation.

In pursuing the present study some basic assumptions have been made.

1. NATO would for the foreseeable future try to keep its position as the dominant security alliance in Europe and the world. This will require it to stabilize itself with a new role and relevance

2. Within the Alliance, the United States will act to retain its dominant position.
3 Other members of the Alliance have an interest in retaining NATO as an instrument to ensure their own security interests.

4 Missile will continue to be the preferred weapon of strategic choice among a wide variety of countries.

5 Security will continue to be defined in a military – industrial framework, with each nation seeking the maximum possible capabilities for both.

Since NATO as a body has evolved over time, it is necessary to first examine it in a historical context. Therefore chapter one will deal with the functions of NATO during the cold war. Since the period covered is a vast sweep of over 45 years, the chapter does not offer a detailed analysis, but highlights those facets of NATO that are the most important to the study. It also serves to underline the basic and continuing rationale for NATO, a legacy quite apart from the Soviet threat. Thus it traces events from the day of NATO formation, the dominance of the US in the Alliance, and the evolving concept of what constituted "NATO area" and it's doctrine of offense and nuclear preparedness against the Soviets.

Chapter two examines the extent of the role of the United States in shaping the threat perception and the dialogue on proliferation. This chapter traces the beginning of the "rogue state doctrine", the various inputs that led to it becoming the main threat around which the United States based it defense policy, and the results of this adoption of the threat
– namely missile defense and a continuation of the nuclear and conventional offense.

Chapter three focuses on the slow adoption of the threat in NATO policy making. The restructuring of NATO to meet this threat, as well as its own efforts to perpetuate itself with an expanded area and a new role are detailed here. The resulting changes in doctrine of both the organization as a whole, and the most important individual members is reviewed, with the emphasis on force structure and nuclear doctrine.

Chapter four charts the nature of missile proliferation from 1945 to the present, with special emphasis on proliferation in the 1990’s. The actors, beneficiaries and the inputs that lead to proliferation are detailed, focussing on the outlining the nature of the threat, which have contributed to it being perceived as a danger to NATO members.

Chapter Five begins with the examination of the threat in detail, beginning with the “first circle” of NATO interests – the Middle East. The proliferation ambitions of Iran, Iraq, Israel, Syria, Egypt and Libya are examined with an eye to the main actors involved in perpetuating the proliferation cycle. It also deals with the actual capabilities of each.

Chapter Six, examines in a similar fashion, the proliferation in South Asia.

Chapter Seven draws “lessons” from the above two chapters, and deals with the main proliferators – China, North Korea, Russia and the
United States. The capabilities of each in nuclear and missile arsenals are tabulated for the purpose of drawing a comparison between the "threat" and the initiator of the threat.

Chapter Eight essentially draws together the findings of all these chapters and presents the observations of the present study.