CONCLUDING REMARKS

The portrait that emerges from the foregoing chapters clearly substantiates the fact that the nation's ability to ensure its own security is to conduct an independent foreign policy is ultimately dependent on the degree to which it is self-reliant in defence. India's ballistic missile and nuclear weapons programmes are to be seen in the light of this perspective.

Despite its commitment to World Peace, Disarmament and Non-alignment Movement, India has given high priority to military security in its post-Cold War security agenda. Particularly important has been India's ballistic missile programme which was added an immediacy in early 1990s. There are several reasons for this.

The first is the sharply deteriorating regional security environment, which India confronted in 1990s, Pakistan's determined effort to develop a nuclear weapon and China's abatement of this programme and Beijing's transfer of ballistic missiles to Islamabad made India particularly worried. Secondly, with the end of the Cold War, India's policy of non-alignment lost its importance. Moreover, as 1990s progressed, India's traditional developing country support had evaporated. The third reason is the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The USSR provided India both diplomatic and security backing until its dissolution in 1991. The Soviet disintegration made India extremely insecure and vulnerable to external pressure.

An uneasy relationship with the USA, an eroding prospect of disarmament and the fear of marginalisation in the post-Cold War world are some other reasons which added an immediacy to India's ballistic missile programme.

Today, India is a world leader in both solid and liquid propellants and has the most broad based missile capabilities after the P-5 states. The SRBM Prithvi and the IRBM Agni are the two ballistic missiles developed under
India's Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme. The *Prithvi* has three versions. The *Prithvi-I* or the Army version with a range of 150 km and a warhead capacity of 1,000 kg, the *Prithvi-II* or the Air Force version with a range of 250 km and a warhead capacity of 500 kg and the *Prithvi-III* or the Naval version with a maximum range of 350 km and a payload capacity of 500 kg. The *Agni* is an intermediate range ballistic missile and has two versions: the *Agni-I* which has a range of 1,000 km and a payload capacity of 1,000 kg and *Agni-II* which has a range of 2000 km and a payload capacity of 100 kg. Since both *Prithvi* and *Agni* are nuclear capable, with India's decision to go nuclear in May 1998, they will serve as the country's actual weapons delivery system.

As India has emerged a world class missile power, its ballistic missile programme has attracted considerable national and international attention. The national perception has been more of a favourable response where majority of the Indian defence scientists, politicians and common masses applaud India's admission into the missile club. The opposition leaders and the economic planners, however, for different reasons, have been critical of India's missile programme.

The international response has been on predictable lines. While the US, Pakistan and China have been very critical to India's ballistic missile programme, the USSR/Russian Federation has tacitly supported such a programme. The perceptions of these countries have been shaped more by their geo-political and security interests and less by the understanding of India's security concerns.

The growth and sophistication of India's ballistic missile programme has led to the initiation and strengthening of the supplier cartel regimes, such as the MTCR. India considers the MTCR as a discriminating regime like the NPT. It implicitly (and in case of NPT explicitly) allows some nations to have certain classes of weapon systems that others are forbidden to possess. By seeking to control the transfer of certain dual-use technologies,
MTCR impedes the ability of Third World countries to have access to non-military technologies that are vital to their socio-economic progress. India also objects to the self-righteous attitudes of developed countries, characterised by the attempt to apply arbitrary norms embodied in MTCR to states that were not party to the establishment of the norms. Besides, it were the Western nations that transferred dangerous technologies to Iraq. Why should MTCR members expect India to adhere to a regime which they themselves violate?

India's refusal to abide by the MTCR guidelines has invited sanctions. But India is already a missile power and sanctions can no longer do more than slightly delay its missile and space programmes. As the Donald Rumsfeld led US Congressional Commission has concluded, India has already arrived as a missile power and its capabilities are now so "sufficiently advanced that supplier control regimes can affect only the rate of acceleration in its programmes". The sooner the MTCR members realise this, the better it is for them.

India's ballistic missile programme received a boost when it was decided to go nuclear in May 1998. Because powerful missiles serve as instruments of deterrence only when they carry weapons of mass destruction. But missiles and nuclear tests by themselves will not give India its nuclear deterrent, although they serve as important tools in the weaponisation drive. India has still a long way to go before acquiring a credible nuclear deterrence. *Agni* and *Prithvi* will have to be further tested and produced, weapons will have to be fabricated, missiles will have to be coupled with nuclear warheads, a strategy for the use of weapons will have to be defined and a command, control and intelligence system will have to be put in place. Finally will come deployment of missiles tipped with nuclear warheads.

India's SRBM *Prithvi* and IRBM *Agni* developed under the IGMDP could have been allotted an individual programme. But the tactical and strategic missiles were bracketed together and the government approved and
combined budget of Rs.7 billion (US and 300 million) for all the five missiles. There are two principal reasons. First, its integrative character is indicative of the fact that in future Indian strategy, a range of missiles serving different tasks would be a part of the overall military strategy. The second reason is that had these missiles been under development in individual programmes, funding may have been curtailed. This strategy appears to have worked quite well.

But, India's missile programme followed under successive Governments is not flawless. Lack of funding, slow and inconclusive nature, lack of clarity of intent, voluntary adherence of the MTCR, viewing national security from partisan party calculations and determination of the performance parameters of the new missile systems not by actual users but by bureaucrats have seriously affected India's missile programme. So, there is an urgent need for India to articulate a clear ballistic missile policy free from all pitfalls on the strength of its indigenous capability.