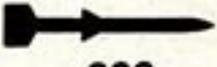
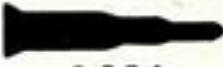
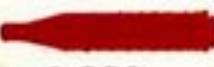
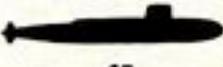


The Issue of the Nuclear Arms Race

 U.S.	NUCLEAR LIMITS	 U.S.S.R.
 200	ABM	 200
 1,054	ICBM	 1,550
5,700 (MIRV)	WARHEADS	5,700 (MRV)
 41	NUCLEAR SUBS	 42

Following the development of nuclear weapons at the end of the Second World War, nations, particularly those already in possession of nuclear warheads, have sought to prevent nuclear proliferation. The USSR's development of a nuclear weapon in 1949 ended the US monopoly on atomic weapons, and since then an arms race has commenced, resulting in the development of bigger and better warheads and means of delivery, as well as nations such as the UK, France, China, India and Pakistan, becoming nuclear states. Atomic warheads were replaced by newer, more powerful hydrogen warheads, while missile size and range increased due to the development of advanced intercontinental ballistic missiles. In order to prevent a nuclear "First Strike", numerous nuclear powers on both sides of the Cold War developed a submarine-borne nuclear presence, allowing for a retaliatory strike even after a devastating, otherwise incapacitating nuclear strike against command and control facilities.

However, the rise in the number and power of nuclear weapons has led to considerable unease, on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The increasingly elaborate system of early warning systems, automated firing response systems and isolated nuclear weapons relying on local initiative has massively increased the chance of an accidental launch, which could in turn lead to a nuclear war, with billions killed, including the possibility of a “nuclear winter” in which all life on earth is eventually destroyed by radiation poisoning. Near misses such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, as well as the increasingly centralised control of such weapons, has sparked fear of a nuclear strike occurring more by accident than on purpose. Proxy wars in Indochina and South-Central Africa have increased tensions between the West and the Communist bloc, further increasing the likelihood of a possible nuclear war.

As a result, nations on both sides of the Iron Curtain have agreed to limit the acquisition of new weapons, discuss the disposal of old ones and to find other ways of rendering a nuclear war impossible. While both sides would be willing to completely disarm, neither is willing to risk being rendered defenceless. The theory of Mutually Assured Destruction has so far kept the spectre of nuclear war at bay, and should one side destroy its nuclear deterrent it would be rendered helpless against a nuclear power.

