

## External Pressures on the USSR: USA

### a. Long-Term: The Nuclear Arms Race

- Another pressure upon the Soviet Union was the massive cost of keeping up with the United States in terms of nuclear weapons.
- In 1961, the detonation of one nuclear bomb by the USSR unleashed the power of more than all of the weapons used throughout World War Two.
- By the early 1980s the policy of both the USA and the USSR was total retaliation if the other side launched a single nuclear missile.
- This policy, known as MAD ("Mutually Assured Destruction") would have guaranteed the destruction of civilisation.

Event	Significance
1945 – August USA drops two A-Bombs on Japan (Hiroshima, Nagasaki), bringing WW2 to an end; 70,000 people were killed instantly.	<p><b>The A-Bomb</b></p> <p>It was clear that the A-Bomb was the future of weaponry, but was massively expensive.</p>
1949 – USSR detonates its first A-Bomb	
1952 – USA detonates its first H-Bomb	<p><b>The H-Bomb</b></p> <p>1000 times more powerful than A-Bomb that destroyed Hiroshima</p>
1953 – USSR detonates its first H-Bomb	
1955 – USA launches its first intercontinental bomber, the B52 Stratofortress.	<p><b>Intercontinental Bombers</b></p> <p>This meant that atomic weapons could be dropped on mainland USSR / USA</p>
1956 – USSR launches its first intercontinental bomber, the TU20 Bear.	
1957 – USSR launches its first ICBM (Intercontinental Ballistic Missile) – a nuclear warhead which can hit USA from within USSR	<p><b>Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles</b></p> <p>This meant that USA / USSR could now attack each other with nuclear weapons launched from within their own territory</p>
1959 – USA launch its first ICBM, the Atlas	
1957 – USSR launches the first satellite into space, Sputnik 1	<p><b>Satellites</b></p> <p>These satellites raise fears of a nuclear attack from space</p>
1958 – USA launches its first satellite into space	
1979 – USSR replaces its outdated ICBMS with new SS20 missile in Europe.	<p><b>New ICBMs</b></p> <p>The development of the SS20s and the CRUISE missiles started a new, tense chapter in the nuclear arms race.</p>
1979 – USA responds by deploying new CRUISE missiles in European bases such as Greenham Common in UK.	
1980 - USA had 8000 ICBM's and 4000 nuclear bombers; USSR has 7000 ICBM's and 5000 nuclear bombers.	<p><b>Nuclear Arsenals</b></p> <p>The cost of maintaining these massive nuclear arsenals was damaging the economies of both the USA and the USSR.</p>

### Task 1: Structured Questions

1. In no more than 100 words, outline the main developments of the nuclear arms race.
2. Why was the nuclear arms race so damaging for the Soviet Union? (TIP: use your previous notes on the weaknesses of the Soviet economy to help you answer this question)

### Task 2: Research on the Cuban Missile Crisis

The closest that the USA and the USSR came to outright nuclear confrontation was the Cuban Missile Crisis. Conduct your own research on this event and produce a short presentation for the class covering:

- Causes of the Cuban Missile Crisis
- Course of the Cuban Missile Crisis
- Consequences of the Cuban Missile Crisis

### Task 3: Films

The nuclear arms race has been the subject of a number of major films which your teacher may have available for borrowing. Choose one to watch and then feed back to the class with the main points it makes:

#### Examples

- The Fog of War
- Where the Wind Blows
- The Day After Tomorrow
- Dr. Strangelove
- Thirteen Days
- Threads
- Protect and Survive

#### Recommended Feature Films:

- a. "Thirteen Days" centres around the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, when the world was brought to the verge of nuclear catastrophe.
- b. "The Fog of War" is a gripping documentary based around a series of interviews with Robert McNamara, who was a key advisor to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War.

