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## SECTION I - ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

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### 1. THE ABM TREATY

#### Background

The SALT I Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and the Interim Agreement on Strategic Offensive Arms were signed by Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev and US President Nixon on 26 May 1972. The SALT negotiations began in November 1969. Since they were unable to reach final agreement on strategic offensive arms limits, the parties agreed to make the ABM Treaty separate and of unlimited duration, while signing an interim agreement on offensive arms limitations.

Both the Soviet Union and the United States undertook ballistic missile defence (BMD) programmes during the 1960s. In the United States, the BMD issue sparked a prolonged public debate. The advisability of developing BMD centred on two main concerns: the ease with which the defences could be overcome by large numbers of cheaper offensive missiles, and the possibility that BMD deployments might destabilize deterrence based on the concept of mutual assured destruction. This concept, which had become the basis of nuclear deterrence, assumes the impossibility of an adequate defence against nuclear weapons.

The ABM Treaty prohibits both sides from deploying a nation-wide BMD and limits each to two ABM deployment areas (this was amended to one area on 3 July 1974). The intent of the Treaty is outlined in Article I (2):

Each Party undertakes not to deploy ABM systems for a defence of the territory of its country and not to provide a base for such a defence, and not to deploy ABM systems for defence of an individual region except as provided for in Article III [establishing two specific deployment areas] of this Treaty.

Extensive verification measures are provided for in the Treaty, which also established the Standing Consultative Committee (SCC) to deal with