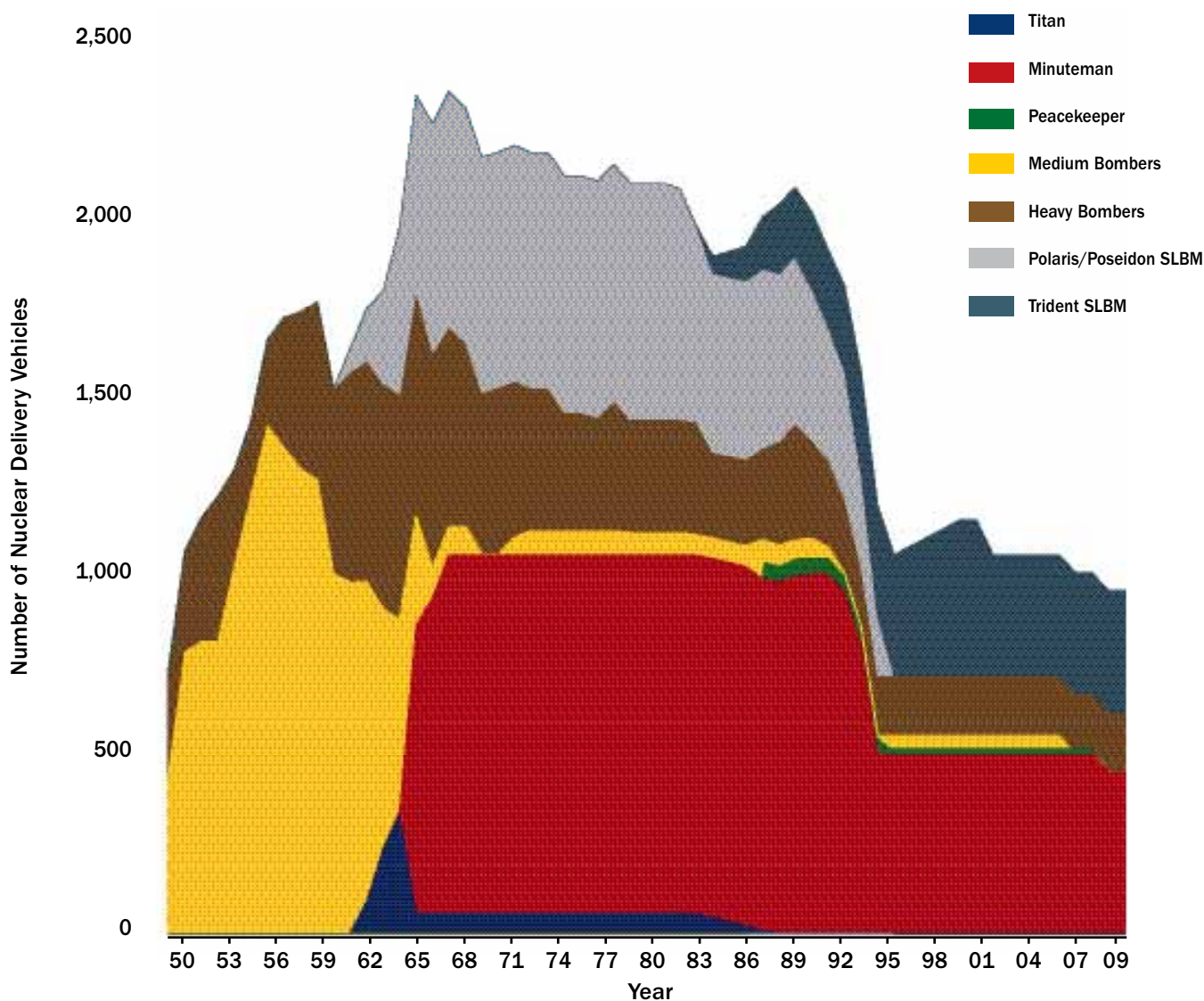


The Bomber Squeeze

Over six decades, the US strategic nuclear deterrent has undergone dramatic change. The post-Cold War years saw the number of delivery systems drop from 2,000 to under 1,000. Equally significant, but less remarked, has been the long decline of the manned bomber. Today, the US has 450 USAF Minuteman III ICBMs and 336 Navy Trident D-5 SLBMs, but fewer than 120 nuclear-capable bombers—20 B-2s

and 94 B-52s. That marks an enormous change from the 1950s, when USAF's 1,700 bombers comprised 100 percent of the deterrent. In light of DOD's failure to modernize the bomber force, many wonder about its future nuclear role. In the words of a new report from the Mitchell Institute for Airpower Studies, "The US ... may be moving to a 'de facto dyad'" of ICBMs and SLBMs.

Evolution of the US Strategic Nuclear Deterrent



Source: "Triad, Dyad, Monad? Shaping the US Nuclear Force for the Future," p. 17, Dana J. Johnson, Christopher J. Bowie, and Robert P. Haffa, published by the Mitchell Institute for Airpower Studies, December 2009.