



Assessing US–Russia strategic arms reduction: From Salt to the demise of New START

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Abstract

This paper provides a comprehensive assessment of the bilateral strategic arms reduction framework between the United States and the Russian Federation. By analysing key historical treaties—from the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) to the implementation and subsequent five-year extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START)—this study examines the mechanism of modern nuclear diplomacy. Drawing on official data exchanges, compliance reports, and institutional fact sheets, the paper evaluates how rigorous monitoring, data sharing, and verification regimes have successfully managed strategic stockpiles. Finally, it addresses contemporary challenges to the non-proliferation architecture, examining how rising geopolitical friction, compliance disputes, and treaty erosions threaten the future stability of bilateral strategic stability.

Keywords: Strategic arms reduction, New START, US–Russia relations, nuclear non-proliferation, arms control verification

Introduction

The use of nuclear weapons on two cities of Japan by United States in 1945 had shown an extraordinary destructive power of nuclear weapons, loss of lots of people and wealth. Establishment of the NATO (1949), US military deployment was followed by political commitment enshrined in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato), the main article of the treaty “an attack on one member would be treated as an attack on all”, principle of collective self defence according to “article 51 of the UN Charter” and the rearmament of the federal Republic of Germany in 1954 led to the creation of WARSAW Pact (1955), these two divided the world into bipolar blocs after the WW2. During the cold war period, there is growth of powerful intelligence organizations, Crises in Berlin (1961) and Cuba (1962), Arab Israeli War (1973), Exercise Able Archer (1983), marked as the most dangerous moments of the Cold War. If we talk about the nuclear power there is primarily bipolar competition between the United States and USSR. Today there are nine countries that have nuclear weapons because of the growth in nuclear arsenals or in some sense Arms Race, increase in nuclear stockpiles. These nuclear weapons states and the year when they tested nuclear weapons are – United states (1945), Russia(1949), Britain(1952), France(1960), China(1964), India(1974), Pakistan(1998), North Korea(2006). Because of their explosive capacity, these weapons considered as weapons of mass destruction (Chemical, biological, radiological weapons and anti ballistic missiles).

Five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council were recognized as nuclear weapons states, under the NPT. Growing concerns for the “proliferation of nuclear weapons” led to negotiation of the “Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968”, wherein states that had nuclear weapons committed themselves to halting the arms race, while those that did not promised to develop them. The question for monitoring and compliance, however also continually debated. Monitoring and ensuring of countries those have signed the NPT is done through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) so that these countries do not divert fissile material (necessary to generate nuclear

energy- Plutonium and Uranium, through either Fission or Fusion) from nuclear power plants to nuclear weapons.

If we question why do states build nuclear weapons so there is number of reason to do so it could be security, political economy, domestic politics, norms, leader psychology, and strategic culture. There are numbers of treaty which has taken place to control this and to create a safe environment. Each of the treaty took place in a different political environments and different technical environment, with different purpose or in some sense each treaty is a more active step to the earlier one. Efforts to limit the proliferation of nuclear weapons have taken a somewhat different form and followed a distinct timeline.

Geneva Convention or Protocol (1925) which prohibited the use but not development or possession of chemical and biological weapons. This treaty entered into force 1997 and administered by Organization for the Prohibition of chemical weapons (OPCW), work for the destruction of the chemical weapons. In 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis brought world close to nuclear war, after this crisis great powers such as United States, Soviet Union and UK signed Partial Test Ban Treaty (1963), which focus on the control or ban of nuclear tests in atmosphere, outer space or underwater, the tests are allowed only underground nuclear tests. However, whenever we have talk for nuclear weapons, the centerpiece is considered Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (1968) for discussion. This treaty classified two categories – nuclear weapon state or non nuclear weapons state. The nuclear weapon states to moves to complete disarmament or elimination of their arsenal. The non nuclear weapons states comply with forgo developing or acquiring nuclear weapons. It basically focusing tenets of NPT is Non Proliferation of the weapons, Disarmament, peaceful use of energy. In short its limits spread of nuclear weapons in world. Biological weapons convention (1972), bans production and use of Biological agents and toxins, Weapons, equipment, and delivery vehicles. SALT I Treaty (1972) purpose of the treaty is to limits strategic arms. ABM Treaty (1972) purpose of the treaty to limits anti ballistic missiles. SALT II TREATY (1979) the purpose of this treaty is to limits strategic arms. INF TREATY (1987)

purpose of this treaty is to ban two categories of land-based missiles. START I TREATY (1990) came up with the purpose to reduce strategic arms. START II TREATY (1993), this treaty bans multiple independent re-entry vehicles MIRVs. COMPREHENSION NUCLEAR TEST BAN TREATY (1996), this treaty bans all nuclear test explosions in all environments.

Recent New START treaty is a long continuum of strategic arms reduction treaties well actually started since some strategic arms limitations treaties back in 1970s but START entered into force 1994 to actually reduce and eliminate not just limit nuclear weapons for that reason it is called Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. As we know Russia and United States shared very low relationship.

The first formal agreement between United States and Russia was signed is SALT I in 1972 to limiting nuclear offensive and defensive weapons in the era of rapprochement. The purpose of the treaty was to maintain all existing nuclear weapons (offensive). The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) produced two agreements: the Interim Agreement on Certain Measures with reference to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (Interim Agreement) and also the Treaty on the Limitation of "Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems" (ABM Treaty). The parties paired these two agreements, in part, to forestall an offense-defense race, where increases within the number of missile defense interceptors on one side would encourage the opposite to extend the quantity of missiles needed to saturate those defenses, so that's why limitation of defensive missile also required. The US also sought to limit the amount of enormous ICBMs within the Soviet offensive force, a neighborhood where the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had a plus over the US. As a result, the Interim Agreement imposed a freeze on the quantity of launchers for ICBMs that the US and therefore the Soviet Union could deploy. In beginning the US had 1,054 ICBM launchers and therefore the Soviet Union had 1,618 ICBM launchers^[1]. The 2 countries also agreed to freeze their number of SLBM launchers (800) and modern missile submarines, though they might add SLBM launchers if they retired old ICBM launchers. Although the Interim Agreement limited the amount of Soviet ICBM and SLBM launchers, it failed to restrain the expansion within the number of warheads carried on the missiles deployed in those launchers. After signing the agreement, both nations expanded the quantity of warheads on their missiles by deploying missiles with multiple warheads (MIRVs). The Soviet deployment of MIRVs led to a pointy increase—from around 2,000 to over 6,100—in the quantity of warheads on ICBMs and SLBMs between 1972 and 1979.

The second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II) sought to curb this growth by limiting the quantity of missiles that might carry multiple warheads. The treaty would have capped all strategic nuclear delivery systems at 2,400 and limited all sides to 1,320 MIRVed ICBMs, MIRVed SLBMs, and heavy bombers equipped to hold nuclear-armed, air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs). The treaty wouldn't have limited the overall number of warheads that might be carried on these delivery vehicles, while the parties agreed that they'd not deploy MIRVed ICBMs with over 10 warheads each and MIRVed SLBMs with quite 14 warheads each.

SALT II proved to be highly controversial. Some analysts argued that it might fail to cut back nuclear warheads or

curb the race, while others argued that the treaty would allow the Soviet Union to keep up strategic superiority over the US. With its force of huge, heavily MIRV led land-based ballistic missiles. Shortly after the state invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, President withdrew the treaty from the Senate's consideration. Reagan cited two violations by the Soviets and said their noncompliance with the treaty was the basic reason for the change in U.S. policy. The two violations he cited:

"Soviet deployment of the SS25, a land-based intercontinental ballistic missile. The 1979 treaty permits each side to deploy only one "new missile," and Moscow previously declared that the SS24, a separate weapon, is its "new missile." Thus the SS25 would be a second "new missile." The Soviets insist, however, that the SS25 is a modification of an earlier weapon, the SS13, and thus it permitted under SALT II".

"Soviet encoding, or encryption, of electronic data from ballistic missile tests in excess of that permitted by the SALT II treaty. The Soviets insist that the encoding they are doing is permitted."^[2]

Start Treaty

Start I

The SALT treaty is renamed by the president Ronald Reagan into START and it is considered as successor, he proposed that radical reduction rather than merely limitation is required from both the countries in the stockpiles of missiles and warheads. START I was signed in July 31, 1991, and came in force 1994. However this treaty is continuation of the SALT treaty. It limited strategic nuclear arsenals of Russian federation, and also out of Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus after the collapse of USSR, to reduce or eliminate from the US and RUSSIAN side. At time each side have approximately 12000 deployed nuclear warheads on strategic nuclear delivery vehicles.

Stipulation made in START I -. Under this treaty they are going to limit warheads to 6000 and limit ICBM (rocket launcher) to 1000 and limited both sides to 1,600 strategic delivery vehicles. Both obligates the Parties not to transfer strategic offensive arms subject to the Treaty to third states. It underscores the right to raise for consideration in the Joint Compliance and Inspection Commission, in accordance with subparagraph (c) of Article XV of the Treaty.

Start II Treaty

Soviet Union and United States accepted that further reductions should be done therefore they agreed on the outline of it between George H.W. Bush and Russian Pres. Boris Yeltsin. A new kind of technology emerged that is MIRV- a kind of missiles which reach to destination than its split into many small missiles. START II talks were rectified to limit this kind of missiles. However in 2002 Russia pulled out of it treaty because in 2002 same year United States pulled out from Anti Ballistic Missile treaty. So the Start 2 was not effective, START II never actually came into force. The U.S. Senate didn't ratify the treaty until 1996, largely because the parallel process was moving so slowly within the Russian Duma. There the treaty became a hostage to growing Russian irritation with Western policies within the Persian Gulf and therefore the Balkans then to concerns over American attitudes toward the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. The Russian preference would be for much lower final levels, as Russia lacked the resources

to exchange many of its aging weapons systems, but achieved at a slower pace, because it also lacked the resources for quick decommissioning. "In 2000 the Duma linked the fate of START II to the ABM Treaty, and in June 2002, following the United States' withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, the Duma repudiated START II".

SORT treaty (Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty) also known as Moscow treaty were signed 2002-2011, it's a political maneuvering because America wanted support from Russia against Afghanistan invasion of 2001. The talk for the OPERATIONAL LIMITATION started.

New Start Treaty

Problems we already seen this in particularly in European context and the European arms control, European confidence building measures and other things like Chechnya. So new start was kind of an attempt to be careful but try to get things going. Presidents Obama and Medvedev signed this treaty. However talks were started in 2009 and signed in 2010. New START has replaced the 1991 START I treaty, which expired December 2009, and superseded the 2002 "Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT)", which terminated when New START entered into force. Both parties cannot have more than -700 ICMB, 1550 warheads, 800 launchers. It will lapse in February 2021 unless extended for a five-year period. New start treaty process have advantage of technology compare to earlier treaty to work fast negotiation like email etc. And as we know in 2019 Donald trump pulled out from INF treaty. After invasion of Georgia, in 2011 Russia exposed deficiencies in its military capabilities so that it launched a "\$700 billion modernization initiative that includes advancements in its nuclear triad", the procurement of ballistic missile submarines, the construction of new ICBMs, and the construction of naval bases around the Arctic Circle. In 2018 PUTIN announced that Russia is developing new types of nuclear system which includes - a heavy ICBM with the ability to carry multiple warheads, a hypersonic glide vehicle, "an autonomous underwater vehicle", and "a nuclear-powered cruise missile". The hypersonic glide vehicle carried on an existing long-range ballistic missile, entered service in late 2019.

Points which talk about the need for this treaty - asymmetrical modernization cycle of the world. This is last Barrier to contain Russia. Avoiding/ keeping strategic re-orientation of weapons. This treaty provides binding framework for talk. This provides transparency regime or regime of verification. This treaty provides Dual track nuclear diplomacy.

Points which goes Against New START - china remains an issues, china says we have not developed competing level of weapons like US and RUSSIA. China has over all 300 warheads. Second point which is against this treaty is that non strategic nuclear weapons are not included. Third problem is verification issues.

Technical Problems

There are verification problem with the treaty, when a treaty is done there are a lot process to do like, text or draft treaty text to work, plenary meetings, plenary statement were read and discuss. One first develop the treaty text and then other follow the treaty text to work together it is called emerged

treaty text .US position and Russia position were discussed on similar issue and merged them as text and then used a series of footnotes, to identify different position and the positions on these countries were not agree were in brackets in the text, Establish working group, there is discussion by paragraph or paragraph and find out how we could agree. Negotiation should be pay more attention to the idea and concepts, in do to the specific word which is given in the text. Defence, deterrence, and democracy all concepts if they all interact look like everything is connected to everything. We use different tool to solve the issue of how to maintain a balanced triad under different treaties and they all work fairly well. Other problems like, Cultural relationship ,objectives transparency , level of vigilance ,level of confidence ,when confidence goes up to a certain level then vigilance go down that's why it called confidence building measure. Challenges compare to earlier or now, now we have advent of electronic mechanism delegation. But the questions like how you organize or how you prioritize the treaty still remain as an important issue. Strategic equation of both sides.

New start treaty 2021

"By president Biden there is Extending the New START Treaty ensures we have verifiable limits on Russian ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers until February 5, 2026" ^[1]. Extending the New START Treaty makes the US and U.S. allies and partners, and also the world safer. An unconstrained nuclear competition would endanger us all.

President Biden has made clear that the New START Treaty extension is just beginning of our efforts to handle 21st century security challenges. The US will use the time provided by a "five-year extension" of the New START Treaty to pursue with the Russia, in consultation with Congress and U.S. allies and partners, restriction that addresses all of its nuclear weapons. We are getting to also pursue limitation to cut back the risks from China's modern and growing nuclear arsenal. The US is committed to effective restriction that enhances stability, transparency and predictability while reducing the risks of costly, dangerous arms races.

It look areas new technologies that are outside the arms control regimes, it looked a doctrine military strategy, lack of trust between both countries, and finally it also look towards the future of new arms control architecture. It provides Interaction between offensive & defensive, conventional versus nuclear. It's a matter of trusting the process rather than people. There is question how to expand the conversation and actually make it more substantive in coming days. The number of issues also grown in this treaty compares to earlier dialogues such as space, AI & cyber and hypersonic glide vehicles.

what the treaty does to reduce continue to reduce and eliminate force structures and missiles like intercontinental ballistic missiles and submarine launch ballistic missiles are limited to 700 under the treaty. Its limit the launched vehicles that they carried out 800 deployed and non deployed launched vehicles and its limit the number of warhead that can be deployed on strategic nuclear weapons system to 1550.

New Start Treaty Annual Implementation Report
New Start Treaty Aggregate Numbers Of Strategic Offensive Arms ^[2]

Category of Data	United States of America			Russian Federation		
Deployed Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles(ICBMs), Deployed Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs), and Deployed Heavy Bombers	2011	2017	2020	2011	2017	2020
	882	681	675	521	508	510
Warheads on Deployed ICBMs, on Deployed SLBMs, and Nuclear Warheads Counted for Deployed Heavy Bombers	2011	2017	2020	2011	2017	2020
	1800	1367	1457	1537	1796	1447
Deployed and Non deployed Launchers of ICBMs, Deployed and Non-deployed Launchers of SLBMs, and Deployed and Non deployed Heavy Bombers	2011	2017	2020	2011	2017	2020
	1124	848	800	865	847	764

Each Party's aggregate numbers of strategic offensive arms as counted in accordance with the treaty don't exceed: 700 for deployed ICBMs, deployed SLBMs, and deployed heavy bombers; "1,550 for warheads on deployed ICBMs, warheads on deployed SLBMs", and nuclear warheads counted for deployed heavy bombers; and "800 for deployed and non deployed ICBM launchers, deployed and non-deployed SLBM launchers, and deployed and non-deployed heavy bombers".

Adherence To and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments ^[5]

Arms control, "nonproliferation, and disarmament" agreements and related commitments contribute broadly to "transparency and stability" on a worldwide and regional scale. To evaluate any countries there are a numbers of factor like nature and precise language of the obligations undertaken within the context of jurisprudence, information regarding the country's activities, comes through "National Technical Means" of verification (i.e., intelligence collection), "cooperative verification measures", open-source information, and "diplomatic means" – and any information provided by the country in question. The same process is used to evaluate a country's adherence to politically binding commitments.

Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (The New Start Treaty or Nst)

Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs), started around 1991 or 1992, which can be a unilateral pledges are steps regarding reductions within the number and deployment of their tactical nuclear weapons. Since the time this pledges were made, both the countries have begun using the term "non-strategic nuclear weapons" (NSNW). And we need to reduce from non strategic nuclear weapons.

U.S. Compliance

Department of State or Department of Defense (DOD) plays a lead in this manner. In adherence and compliance report prepared by US department of state, April 2021. The United States has carefully reviewed the matter to confirm its actions were in compliance with its obligations under, (i)Treaty Between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START or NST); US actions were in compliance with its obligations. The United States has raised some implementation-related questions with the Russian Federation through diplomatic channels and within the

context of the Bilateral Consultative Commission (BCC) and Discussions of these questions were ongoing till December 31, 2019,(2020 REPORT ^[6]). All U.S. activities during the reporting period were consistent with the obligations set forth within the New START Treaty (NST). U.S. conversion procedures for "B-52H heavy bombers and Trident II SLBM launchers" fully comply with Treaty provisions, and thus the United States has met its "obligations under the Treaty" to remove these items from accountability.

Russia Compliance

On 21 April 2020, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a new military doctrine intended to replace or exchange the doctrine issued in 1993 and to elaborate on the military policies outlined within the new Russian national security concept, released in January, which addresses he implementation of arms control treaties, the threat posed by "illegal armed formations" within Russia, and thus the effective imposition of international sanction.

According to compliance report "Russia currently has an active stockpile of NSNW, which includes warheads for SS-21/Tochka-U/9K79-1 close-range ballistic missile (CRBM) system and nuclear-capable version of the SS-26/Iskander short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) system and another is SSC- 7/9M728 short-range cruise missile".

In response to the "2020 Compliance Report", Russia's Foreign Ministry published on July 8, 2020, "seven paragraphs of commentary", none of which addressed whether Russia adheres to the PNIs. However, during a May 22, 2020, interview, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov claimed "Russia's presidential initiatives have been fulfilled completely. The number of nonstrategic nuclear warheads has been reduced by three-fourths and all weapons of this nature have been moved to Russian national territory".

The United States assesses that Russia isn't adhering to any or all or any of its PNI commitments. Although Russia has consolidated its NSNW into "centralized" storage at fewer nuclear weapons storage sites, Russia's efforts to retain NSNW for its ground forces are inconsistent with its PNI pledge to eliminate "nuclear warheads for land-based tactical missiles". Despite this assertion, a 2014 statement by a Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) official that PNIs "are still administered by Russia," and other carefully worded statements by Russia that the PNIs are still "relevant" to Russia, the United States assesses, based on Russian activities, that Russia isn't fully adhering to its PNI pledge to eliminate all nuclear warheads for its ground-based tactical missiles.

For further proceedings cited that nuclear arms negotiation should be multilateral, and there is also a continuing lack of limits on nonstrategic nuclear weapons. But well it trying to limiting hardware and provide a window for dialogue on the table. We are moving at least step by step. We have to focus from unique strategic culture of dialogue to unique strategic culture of trust as well as confidence building measures.

India's Stand on Nuclear Weapons

India has gained recognition as a responsible and rational nuclear power with voluntarily complying with the international nuclear regions like NPT, CTBT. India adopted — “No First Use” doctrine to portray itself as a responsible nuclear power. Such a doctrine was also in consonance with the high moral ground taken by India on Universal Nuclear Disarmament in international form.

India has maintained “credible minimum deterrence” since its 1998 nuclear test. Any revision or update to India’s nuclear doctrine of credible minimal deterrence along with “No first use” policy, that was adopted after its second nuclear weapons test in 1998, need to take into consideration of its long term strategic implications and any possible jolt to its ground on international arena. India’s nuclear doctrine is laid on the twin principles of - No first use (NFU) policy and Massive retaliation in case of attack.

India has recently ratified the AP (Additional Protocol) of IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency). This step provide a monitoring in Indian civilian nuclear activities and way forward to ensuring transparency in nuclear energy production that India is looking forward to. The Additional Protocols to IAEA were added during early 1990s demonstration, in light of “nuclear program of Iraq and North Korea” that circumvented the IAEA protocols. The additional protocols allow IAEA to monitor that states should follow its international commitment for not using nuclear program for nuclear weapons and also monitor and inspect, import and export related to nuclear material. India though is granted freedom from inspection of military nuclear facilities. Thus AP doesn’t in any way infringe on the sovereign rights of Indian military.

The process of ratification can see as a “confidence building measure”. It might allow India to negotiate at the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) table to gain access to nuclear material. This remains a contentious area ever since Indo US 123 nuclear deal was signed. This agreement only affects civilian use not military.

“India possesses an arsenal of 130-140 plutonium-based nuclear warheads developed outside of the NPT, because it isn’t a signatory to the treaty”^[7]. Boosting of indigenous defence, developing nuclear weapons as deterrence yet being ready with a-grade conventional weapons for war situation, venturing of Indian Navy as blue water Navy (fighting pirates, conducting drills in all oceans etc.), taking tough stance regarding neighbors (esp. Pakistan’s not bringing 26/11 perpetrators to book) etc. are essential.

Conclusion

In SALT 1 we did not deal with warheads we deal with delivery system and bases and platforms, for example it limited number of submarines, it counted holes in the ground and tubes on submarines, in ABM treaty component of it, it counted bases why because that’s what you could count. SALT 2 tried to deal with warheads indirectly by trying to cap the number of warheads you could put on

multiple warhead missiles by the way SALT 1 did not deal with the bombers at all and SALT 2 dealt with them with very loose rules . In SALT 1 we wanted to discount bomber weapons because for a number of reasons having to do with stability and defenses and their conventional roles. But at the there is always problem of verification.

US proposed a bomber discount rule and soviet agreed to a compromise. In new start and that’s a very valuable tool for providing the stability that comes from diversity such as the triad and for the very important role that aircraft and bomber weapons play but now what does that mean well that’s mean is let’s take bomber weapons how would they have counted let’s say take the current force structure of 60 bombers and how would they counted in terms of accountable warheads under the various treaties. The answer is in SALT 1 they would not have counted at all because they were not in there in consideration. SALT 2 it would have been no practical limit but bombers were counted as one, it in START they would have been discounted to some number – 420 and under START 2 though they would have been as equipped and they would have counted as 1124 but in NEW START they counted as 60 .

However, the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, was able to slowed Russia’s nuclear modernization plans, and sharply reduced the amount of deployed warheads within the Russian military force. The 2010 New START Treaty work for “modest reductions” to the present record and still work as, to limit the size of the Russian nuclear force and maintain the transparency by the monitoring and verification provisions in the treaty.

The world today needs is cooperation, mutual respect, non interference and respect for territorial sovereignty of each other. Arms control treaty is a part of a broader geopolitical strategy. It’s a chance to communicate, it’s a vehicle for communicate that opens up ability where two countries might be at loggerheads but then begin a dialogue, begin discussion build relationships, open avenues for communication and that’s most fundamental level what it is because if we go back to the original treaties with the Russians- SALT, START, new START is the result now. This 40 to 50 years worth of relationship building trust, building communications, collaborations development of tools and experiential learning between the two sides. CTBT treaty provides especially relationship with china. CWC and BWC (effective verification), all this provide public forum for discussion, public forum for strategic dialogue in the nuclear sphere.

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