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Q) How do the Nature and possible prospect of US-Russia strategic nuclear deterrence change with Enforcement of New START treaty of 2021? What could be the treaty's implications on Pakistan's nuclear programme, keeping in view its defence policy? (CSS-2023)

Introduction:-

The New START treaty of 2021 between US and Russia is a pivotal agreement aimed at limiting the number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons on both side. The treaty, which build upon previous arms control agreements has significant implications for the nature and prospect of US-Russia strategic nuclear deterrence.

The implication of the New START treaty on Pakistan's nuclear program are primary indirect as Pakistan is not party to this treaty. However, there are several ways in which this treaty can indirectly affect Pakistan nuclear program.

Nature of Deterrence of START Treaty
1) Reduction of Strategic Weapon:-

The treaty-

emphasizes and set limit on the number of deployed nuclear weapons, including ICBMs and nuclear submarine.

According to sources, first START treaty limited warheads 6,000 each other.

The 2nd treaty set limit 3500 warheads for both side.

The 3rd START in 2010 set limit on 1550 warhead each side.

The treaty limited to 1600 ICBMs, Second treaty reduce 650 ICBM.

2) Both Nation Modernize Weapons:-

with limitations on deployed systems, both nations may prioritize modernization of their ~~remaining~~ remaining nuclear forces.

For Example:- START treaty is the development of new ICBMs. The USA is developing a new ICBM called Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) which is replace Minuteman 3 ICBM in early 2030s. And Russia is also developing new ICBM called Sarmat.

Another Example:-

The United States is developing a new SLBM, called the W87-1 which replace the W78 SLBM in 2030. Both country are also developing new hypersonic weapons.

Robust Verification Measure of START:-

New START includes robust-verification measures, promoting transparency and confidence building between US-Russia. The transparency reduces the risks of misunderstandings and unintended escalation.

- 1) Both Countries are More frequent or more detailed data exchanges on strategic offensive arms.
- 2) More on-site inspections of strategic forces.
- 3) Increased Cooperation between the USA and Russia on strategic arms control.

Prospect of Deterrence

1) Stable Nuclear Balance:-

The treaty aim to maintain a stable balance of nuclear forces between USA and Russia by reducing the incentives for costly arms race. One of the example of START treaty contribution is a stable nuclear balance is the way it limits the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads. The New START treaty also establishes a verification regime to ensure that both sides are complying with the treaty's limit. The verification regime includes on-site inspections of strategic forces.

2) Significant Nuclear Deterrent:-

While the treaty reduces some aspects of the nuclear arsenals, both countries will retain a significant nuclear deterrent. This ensures that they can still deter aggression and respond effectively to any nuclear threat. The treaty's limit on deployed strategic nuclear warheads help to ensure that neither side has the capability to launch a first-nuclear attack that could overwhelm the other side's defense. The treaty's limit on ICBM launcher and SLBM launchers help to ensure that neither side has the capability to launch a large-scale nuclear attack the other side's nuclear deterrent. The treaty's verification regime helps to build trust and confidence between the United States and the Russia. It also helps to reduce the risk of miscalculation.

3) Framework of Negotiation:-

New START creates a framework for future arms control negotiation, providing opportunities to further reduce nuclear arsenals and enhance strategic stability. The current START is expire in 2026, both countries could negotiate to extend the treaty.

Implications for Pakistan's Nuclear Program

1) Regional Dynamics:-

The New START treaty does not directly impact Pakistan's nuclear program, as it is not a party to the treaty. However, it indirectly influences regional dynamics. If US-Russia relations improve due to arms control efforts, this could indirectly affect the Pakistan nuclear program. There are some indirect implications on Pakistan nuclear program.

1) START treaty reduces the risk of nuclear war between two great powers. It emphasizes free nuclear weapon world which has direct impact on Pakistan and India.

2) The START Treaty ensure the transparency of nuclear weapons between both countries. Therefore, it create check and balance system for the rest of world, especially Pakistan and India.

2) Minimum Credible Deterrence:

Pakistan has traditionally pursued a policy of "minimum credible deterrence" against its neighbor India. The treaty underscores the importance of strategic stability and arms

control which aligns with Pakistan interests in regional stability.

3) Arms Control:-

Pakistan's nuclear program has been driven by its perceived security needs, particularly India. If a New START Treaty contributes to a reduction in the overall nuclear arsenals of major nuclear powers, it may indirectly influence Pakistan's perception of its nuclear requirements.

Conclusion:-

The New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) of 2021 has changed the nature of US-Russia strategic nuclear deterrence by reducing deployed nuclear weapons and enhancing transparency. Its direct impact on Pakistan's nuclear program is limited, but it underscores the regional importance and arms control, potentially influencing Pakistan's defense policy.

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