

lack of incentives for launching a disarming first strike against the adversary's retaliatory forces, while the Soviet Union regarded preponderant first strike forces as enhancing stability. Hence, the US maintained a preponderance of its strategic offensive forces at sea, while the Soviet Union relied on land-based ICBMs. Furthermore, strategic parity became a corollary of strategic stability – i.e. that the strategic balance could be stabilized under conditions of strategic parity or essential equivalence. The Soviet Union sought to preserve strategic stability by initially freezing the current levels of nuclear weapons, leading to a radical reduction.⁵² In favouring enhanced arms race stability, the Soviet Union pursued a policy of strategic equilibrium that entailed three benefits: first, it ensured the futility of nuclear war; second, it created the necessary conditions for stability at lower levels of nuclear weapons while strictly adhering to the principle of equal security; and third, it was an essential prerequisite for lessening East-West tensions. Thus, arms race stability facilitated equal security and by extension undiminished security (taking into account the asymmetrical defence requirements of the Soviet Union and the US).

In START, the US aimed to reduce the first strike potential of the Soviet Union by limiting and then eliminating "heavy" (MIRVed) ICBMs, and encouraging greater reliance on "slow-flying" strategic bombers and cruise missiles. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, favoured an approach on reducing both strategic nuclear delivery vehicles (SNDVs) and warheads across the triad, and it linked an agreement on strategic offensive forces to one on space-based weapons. As the US persisted in its interest in strategic defences, the Soviet Union insisted upon a commitment by both sides not to withdraw from the ABM for at least 15-20 years and to adhere to that Treaty's ban on space-based ABM systems.

Under President George H. Bush, the US focus shifted to strategic stability through predictability and transparency, which relied on intrusive and reliable verification measures – the foundation for which had been laid in the 1987 INF Treaty through the elimination of an entire class of nuclear delivery systems, and the policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost* implemented by President Mikhail Gorbachev. START I halved the number of the most threatening weapons – heavy ICBMs – and reduced the nuclear attack potential of both sides, thus enhancing both crisis and first strike stability. START II characterized the end of the nuclear arms race and set lower equal numerical ceilings to be achieved in two stages, and enhanced strategic stability by eliminating all MIRVed ICBMs.⁵³ Earlier, in September 1991, following the unsuccessful coup in Moscow, the US unilaterally pledged to reduce by one-third its non-strategic nuclear forces. The following month, the Soviet Union made a similar pledge to reduce by one-half its holdings on non-strategic nuclear forces.

The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of 1991 and START II signified the end of the Cold War nuclear arms race between the US and the Soviet Union/Russian Federation, the two sides broke the lockstep of matching weapon for weapon and ushered in a new period whereby neither regarded the other as an enemy and put in place strategic stability based on lower negotiated numerical and qualitative ceilings buttressed by transparency and verification measures.

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⁵² "Brezhnev: USSR is Ready for Arms Talks," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* (16 June 1982).

⁵³ START II has not yet entered into force. Following Russian ratification in April 2000, the US Senate still has to ratify the changes to the treaty stretching out the destruction periods.