



Extending New START Treaty

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Why in News

The **Russian President** has proposed extending by one year the **New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty)** between the USA and Russia expiring in February 2021.

Key Points

- **The New START Treaty:** It is a treaty **between the United States of America and the Russian Federation** on measures for the further reduction and limitation of **strategic offensive arms**.
 - It entered into force on **5th February, 2011**.
 - New START has replaced the 1991 START I treaty, which expired December 2009, and superseded the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), which terminated when New START entered into force.
 - It is a **successor to the START framework of 1991** (at the end of the Cold War) that limited both sides to 1,600 strategic delivery vehicles and 6,000 warheads.
 - It continues the **bipartisan process** of verifiably reducing the USA and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals by limiting both sides to 700 strategic launchers and 1,550 operational warheads.
 - It will lapse in February 2021 unless extended for a five-year period.

- **Recent Proposal:** Russia has extended the proposal along with concerns of lack of interest from the United States.
 - In 2019, the United States has also suspended the **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Treaty** (INF Treaty) with Russia.
 - It was a nuclear arms-control accord reached by the United States and the Soviet Union in 1987 in which the two nations agreed to **eliminate their stocks of intermediate-range and shorter-range (or “medium-range”) land-based missiles** (which could carry nuclear warheads).
 - The **United States withdrew** from the Treaty on 2nd August 2019.
 - **USA’s Stand:** The USA wanted any replacement treaty should include China and to encompass all of Russia’s nuclear weapons — not just the “**strategic**” weapons covered under New START but also Russia’s sizable stockpile of smaller, “**tactical**” nuclear weapons that fall outside the treaty.
 - Russia rejected the demands, and China has refused to take part in negotiations.
 - The USA has agreed to negotiate the extension.

Way Forward

- Negotiators would still need to work out a **verification system** and agree on the detailed definition of a warhead. Failure to do so would remove the main pillar maintaining the nuclear balance between them.
- If the treaty is not extended or replaced, the world’s two biggest nuclear powers will return to an era without substantive restraints on their arsenals for the first time in decades.
- An extension would mark a rare bright spot in the fraught US-Russian relationship. The time bought by extending New START can be used for conducting comprehensive bilateral negotiations on future control over nuclear missile weapons.

Source: TH