The relations between the United States and the former Soviet Union, influenced the international relations and still continues to do so. One of the profound impact of their four decades long rivalry is the building up of the nuclear arsenals, with overkill capacity. The control and the limitations of the nuclear weapons still remains a matter of great concern despite a clear-cut United States' victory in the long conflict. The nuclear weapons drastically changed the nature and cost of a probable war. The nuclear policies of the two powers proved to be the base on which the structure of the U.S.-Soviet strategic relations were constructed. That is the subject matter of the present dissertation.

Both had major interest in Western Europe. Thus, it became the battle ground for the cold war. The Soviet Union had trade interests in the region. It used to import both raw materials and technology from the West. The political interest of the Soviets lay in broadening the gulf of differences between the European members of the NATO and the United States. To gain that, it supported and instigated the peace movements. Moreover, Western Europe being
geographically nearer to the Soviet Union, it was concerned about balancing the US strategic nuclear forces, the Forward Based Systems in Western Europe and the independent nuclear forces of Britain and France with its own IRBMs deployed on its Western front with capacity to hit targets in Western Europe. On the other hand, due to its economic ties with Western Europe, the United States regarded the dominance of the region by any hostile power to be detrimental to its vital strategic interests. Ever since the conclusion of the Second World War, the American policy-makers consciously pursued the policy to contain the Soviet influence in Europe. While Marshall Plan (implemented in 1948) was the economic version of the containment policy, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was the military version.

The nuclear forces were divided into three categories, - (i) strategic (above 5500 km), (ii) intermediate (1000 km-5500 km) and (iii) tactical (500 - 1000 km), on the basis of their range. The deployment of Theatre Nuclear Forces in Western Europe, increased the American effective striking capability against the former Soviet Union several fold.
Since the beginning of nuclear arms race, only the SALT I Treaty acknowledged a balance of sort in the strategic weapons between the United States and the then Soviet Union. This balance began to be undermined by the modernisation and deployment of the IRBMS with triple warheaded SS-20S by the latter in late 1970s. This deployment alarmed the West European allies and generated a demand on the United States to safeguard their security interests. The military occupation of Afghanistan by Soviet Union in 1979 further increased doubts about American commitment to NATO alliance. In 1979, the NATO council adopted the dual-track decision to modernise the nuclear weapons and simultaneously seek arms control agreement.

In his first term, between 1981-84, Reagan took an aggressive stand against the Soviet Union and implemented the decision to deploy Pershing II and GLCM missiles in Western Europe at the face of stiff opposition from anti-nuclear protestors. The advantage which the former Soviet Union wanted to take of these peace movements against the deployment of these missiles were countered by the effective propaganda by the Reagan administration. The arms control negotiations which had a limping beginning in 1981 came to a standstill, with the Soviet-walk-out in 1983, in protest against the deployment of Pershing II and GLCM.
Later in 1985, with the change in Soviet leadership the Soviets returned to the negotiating table and in the third Summit Meeting between Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty was signed in 1987 at Washington, D.C.

The period between 1981-88 is of significance in the US-Soviet Relations. The cold war was at its peak in the beginning of 1981. Mutual suspicion, allegations and counter allegations, hawkish rhetoric and mudslinging coloured the US-Soviet relations. The fear of nuclear war loomed large in the international scene. With Ronald Reagan being elected for the second term in 1984, hardly any one predicted any shift in the US policies towards Soviet Union, but by the end of his second term in 1988, Reagan who called the Soviet Union an "evil empire", signed the historic INF treaty with his Soviet counterpart, Mikhail Gorbachev.

This study is a modest attempt to analyse the role of the Congress in the decisions to deploy Pershing II and GLCM missiles, the efforts of the executive to take the Congress into confidence throughout the arms control negotiations, the inter-departmental rivalry viz., between the Department of State and Department of Defense and the influence it had on the arms control policies of Reagan, the effect of the
European peace movements as a pressure group on the Reagan administration, the forces which influenced the decisions of both the sides at the negotiating table, the impact of the domestic, economic and political relations between the US and the Soviet Union and the leadership thinking which helped to finally shape the policies.

The Methodology adopted here is both empirical and analytical. On the basis of data available in published government documents, and other empirical data, the issue has been analysed.

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