



[The End of Arms Control?](#)

# The Beginning of the End?

The Collapse of the INF Treaty between Russia and the US

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It sounds like the 1980s all over again: Russia has in all likelihood breached its treaty obligations by deploying intermediate-range missiles, and now Europe is talking about an increased security threat. The US also seems to have lost interest in nuclear arms control. This means it is probably unrealistic to expect a successor to the INF Treaty, but there are some pragmatic solutions that could prevent a resumption of the arms race.

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The termination of the INF Treaty has torn down one of the last pillars of nuclear arms control.<sup>1</sup> In February 2019, the US announced it was suspending the 1987 treaty, an announcement that was echoed by the Russian Federation the following month. By August, after a six-month notice period, the treaty was no longer legally binding. Germany has also been caught off guard by the almost casual termination of this treaty. Although NATO stated its commitment to preserving the INF Treaty in July 2018, President Donald Trump surprised his allies in October with the announcement of a planned withdrawal. While the chimera of a “return of nuclear missiles to Europe”<sup>2</sup> went around, Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel and Foreign Minister Heiko Maas hastily joined forces with their French counterparts to try to save the treaty through mediation – but without success.<sup>3</sup> So why has a key element of Europe’s security architecture fallen apart so easily?

There is no conclusive evidence, but it seems highly likely that Russia has developed a weapons system that violates the INF Treaty. However, this is only the trigger for the collapse of the treaty, and it should be noted that the US made no serious efforts to salvage it. Both sides decided to terminate the INF Treaty without exhausting the entire potential for verification and arbitration. This is indicative of the disdain for nuclear arms control and highlights the power politics mindset that now seems to dominate strategic decisions in both Moscow and Washington. It is likely that these are the real reasons for the demise of the INF Treaty.

The withdrawal from the treaty has been accompanied by a political debate on the consequences for Europe’s security and future arms control scenarios. On the one hand, fears have been expressed that it significantly increases the threat to Europe, and that it could lead to a new arms race similar to that experienced during the last critical phase of the Cold War. On the other, there is the desire to negotiate a follow-up treaty, more specifically a multilateral agreement that also includes China. However, as things stand, both of these scenarios seem unlikely.

A new arms race is unlikely to occur because the state of nuclear deterrence is now much more complex than it was when the INF Treaty was negotiated, mainly due to the evolution of different types of air- and sea-launched missiles. This means the termination of the INF Treaty will not inevitably result in a radical deterioration in the security situation. There are also technical and political hurdles to an accelerated arms race. However, a limited rearmament in the medium term does appear to be a plausible scenario. The negotiation of a new treaty is also improbable due to the lack of trust between Russia and the US – which, indeed, is also the case with regard to China. Actors on both sides, however, advocate for an informal agreement on self-restraint, at least between NATO and Russia. Nevertheless, this will only succeed if verification mechanisms are put in place and steps are taken to build confidence.

### **Was the INF Treaty Breached?**

The INF Treaty banned a destabilising class of weapons from Europe and other regions. The

treaty prohibited Russia, eleven other former Soviet republics, and the US from owning, producing, and testing ground-launched ballistic missiles and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers, along with their launchers. The treaty did not apply to air- or sea-launched missiles.<sup>4</sup> When deployed in Europe, these systems could reach their target in just a few minutes. Experts believed that the short reaction time available for taking military and political decisions to respond effectively to an attack increased the risk of misunderstandings, miscalculations and the incentive for preventive strikes. The Soviet Union's former president, Mikhail Gorbachev, described the US intermediate-range missiles as "like [someone] holding a gun to our head". The short warning time "increased the risk of nuclear war, even one that was the result of an accident or technical glitch."<sup>5</sup> Banning this type of weapon thus removed a destabilising factor from the deterrent balance between the Soviet Union – later Russia – and the US.

### **Russia's possession of SSC-8 missiles probably breaches the INF Treaty. However, no conclusive evidence of this has been made public.**

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Since 2014, and with increasing vehemence, the US has accused Russia of once again developing, testing, and installing this kind of missile.<sup>6</sup> Russia has always denied this allegation, but for the Western public the situation remains unclear. This is primarily because the US has released very little information about the system concerned and Russia's treaty violation. After many years, the Trump administration finally named the missile in question: the land-based Novator 9M729 cruise missile (NATO designation SSC-8 Screwdriver).<sup>7</sup> In November 2018, US Director of National Intelligence, Daniel Coats, provided the first details and announced that Russia had already equipped several battalions with the

missile, which had been tested at ranges of "well over 500 kilometers".<sup>8</sup> There is, however, little official evidence to substantiate these allegations. Russia only admits to owning the SSC-8 but claims that its range is a mere 480 kilometers.<sup>9</sup>

However, the lack of available information does not exclude the possibility of a treaty violation. The vehemence of the US's accusations, not only in public but also at NATO summits and in meetings of the Special Verification Commission (SVC), an organ of the INF Treaty, suggests that it has clear intelligence that cannot be made public. Other NATO members share the US's belief that Russia is violating the INF Treaty. In November 2018, Chancellor Merkel remarked: "We know that Russia has been failing to comply with requirements for a long time."<sup>10</sup> It seems unlikely that America's allies would stand by the allegation unless they had been presented with conclusive evidence.

For its part, Russia has countered the US's accusations with allegations of its own, of which at least one seems reasonably plausible.<sup>11</sup> Since August 2014, Russia has been claiming that the US is in violation of the INF Treaty with parts of its European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA). The EPAA is based on Aegis Ashore, a missile defence site commissioned in Romania in 2016 and a second site that is planned for Poland, which will both house MK-41 VLS land-based vertical launching systems.<sup>12</sup> The Aegis system, which is also used on US naval vessels, is capable of firing Tomahawk cruise missiles with a range of 2,500 kilometers, but this sea-launched variant is exempt from the INF Treaty. Russia argues that although the sites in Poland and Romania are not equipped with cruise missiles but with SM-3 anti-ballistic missiles, the ground-launched MK-41, like its seaborne counterpart, is capable of firing Tomahawks and is therefore a launching system for intermediate-range missiles, which is prohibited by the INF Treaty.<sup>13</sup> The US argues that the land-based MK-41 launching system differs from the sea-based system because it lacks the software, fire control hardware, and other infrastructure needed to launch cruise missiles, and

is therefore compliant.<sup>14</sup> No official, independent evidence has been made available to support Russia's argument, either.

Although this account does not rule out the possibility of a violation by the US, the allegation of Russian non-compliance is more credible. The allegation against the US remains somewhat vague and is based on arguments about hypothetical capabilities due to potential similarities with other systems. Meanwhile, the accusation against Russia is more specific and substantive, particularly if the missile has actually been

tested at ranges prohibited by the treaty. The fact that the intelligence that backs this up cannot be made available to the public is not unusual, and is indeed often the case in areas that are vital for national security.

### **Arms Control Casually Discarded**

In view of the above, Russia has to shoulder more responsibility for the failure of the INF Treaty, but it would be too simplistic to attribute all the blame to the country. Neither of the contracting parties, be it Russia or the US, have



Tensions rising? Neither the USA nor Russia had any interest in the continuation of the INF Treaty.  
Source: © Maxim Shemetov, Reuters.

exhausted all possible avenues for dealing with the mutual accusations in a cooperative way. To some extent, this is also one of the weaknesses of the INF Treaty, as it allows for discussion of treaty violations in the SVC but fails to provide a procedure for proving or refuting allegations, such as inspections. Its verification regime, which monitored the dismantling of the formerly stationed intermediate-range missiles, ended in 2001.

### **No party to the INF Treaty has exhausted all options for verification.**

Nevertheless, with sufficient political will, it should be possible to find ways and means of designing new reciprocal steps as part of a verification strategy. For example, the operational range of missiles could be checked by examining telemetric data, and it should be possible to inspect the systems and observe missile tests. However, Russia refused to allow the US to inspect the SSC-8 in 2018. By the time Moscow finally agreed to an inspection in January 2019, Washington declared that this was insufficient to verify the missile's range and instead called for the missile system to be destroyed.<sup>15</sup>

The US could also have offered to allow Russia to inspect its Aegis missile defence systems in Poland and Romania in order to demonstrate that the MK-41 VLS vertical launch systems installed there are not suitable for launching cruise missiles and that these sites do not house these types of missiles. However, this option was also ignored.<sup>16</sup>

#### **Strategic Considerations and Political Motives**

It should be noted that neither party has displayed any interest in preserving the INF Treaty. The reasons for this lie in the alarmingly similar strategic mindsets that exist in Washington and Moscow. Both sides believe international arms

treaties have no benefit – and could even be a disadvantage – for their national security.

The current US administration initially indicated it wanted to encourage Russia to comply with the INF treaty, suggesting that Washington believed the treaty was in the US's security interests. However, in October 2018, President Trump abruptly changed course and announced that the US would withdraw from the INF Treaty, citing not only Russia's non-compliance but also China's arsenal of intermediate-range missiles: "If Russia's doing it and if China's doing it and we're adhering to the agreement, that's unacceptable."<sup>17</sup>

President Trump's withdrawal is, thus, not only based on Russian violations, but also the fact that China, as a strategic competitor, has a weapons system that the US is deprived of – regardless of the fact that China was never party to the treaty.

Statements made by senior US military officials suggest that ground-launched intermediate-range missiles do not necessarily provide a military advantage. The US has a large number of air- and sea-based intermediate-range systems, all of which are compliant with the INF Treaty. With these missiles, the US is already creating an adequate balance in East Asia to the Chinese arsenal of fourteen types of missiles (twelve of which are land-based).<sup>18</sup> In Europe, four US Navy vessels equipped with Aegis combat systems are permanently stationed at the Naval Station Rota in Spain and can reach Russia with their cruise missiles from European waters. In addition, submarines of the United States Sixth Fleet regularly patrol along European sea routes.<sup>19</sup> So it is not surprising that the Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Paul Selva, told the US Congress in 2017: "There are no military requirements we cannot currently satisfy due to our compliance with the INF Treaty."<sup>20</sup>

Rather, President Trump's decision once again highlights his belief that the US is disadvantaged by international treaties, or at least his

scepticism with regard to their added value. This mindset was also reflected in his approach to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran. However, it should be kept separate from a sober examination of military requirements, because pulling out from the treaty does not necessarily provide a military benefit.<sup>21</sup>

## Trump's decision to withdraw from the INF Treaty is based on his general scepticism of international treaties.

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The president's change of course also coincided with the ascent of former National Security Advisor John Bolton, who was in office from April 2018 until September 2019. In August 2018, Bolton appointed Tim Morrison as Director for Weapons of Mass Destruction and Bio-defence on the National Security Council, and he has subsequently taken over as the NSC's new director for Europe and Russia.<sup>22</sup> Both men are regarded as outright sceptics of international treaties, particularly those relating to arms control. In a 2014 opinion piece, Bolton wrote: "Moscow's arms-control treaty violations give America the opportunity to discard obsolete, Cold War-era limits on its own arsenal, and upgrade its military capabilities."<sup>23</sup> Morrison is also considered to be an out-and-out hardliner when it comes to Russia.<sup>24</sup> Even though President Trump often takes uncoordinated and impulsive actions, the influence of Bolton and Morrison may have been an explanation for the US's decision to withdraw from the treaty.

On the Russian side, the reasons for abandoning the INF Treaty must be sought earlier. It seems likely that Russia began deliberately subverting the treaty when it developed the SSC-8 in the late 2000s. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the political discourse in Moscow at that time.

One of Russia's key concerns since the mid-2000s has been the proliferation of cruise missiles and intermediate-range ballistic missiles

in its immediate neighbourhood. In 2007, Russia's former Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov is said to have told his American counterpart that Russia intended to withdraw from the INF treaty so that it could counter the mid-range missiles being developed in China, Iran, and Pakistan.<sup>25</sup> In the same year, Russia launched an initiative at the UN aimed at making the INF treaty multi-lateral, but the proposal came to nothing.<sup>26</sup> In 2007, President Vladimir Putin declared: "It will be difficult for us to keep within the framework of the treaty [meaning the INF Treaty] in a situation where other countries do develop such weapons systems, and among those are countries in our near vicinity."<sup>27</sup> These statements reveal that the Russian leadership viewed the INF Treaty as an obstacle to the country's security – the proliferation of weapons systems that Russia was itself not allowed to deploy was clearly viewed as a problem.

As with the US, this view does not necessarily result from compelling military requirements. Russia also has at least nine air- and sea-based missile systems that comply with the INF Treaty. In the course of its intervention in Syria, Russia has actually massively increased its capabilities for the deployment of seaborne cruise missiles, such as the *Kalibr* (NATO designation SS-N-30), which is launched from ships in the Caspian Sea and the Mediterranean. That is why the need for additional ground-based intermediate-range missiles as deterrents is also disputed in Russian military circles.<sup>28</sup> But the view being driven forward by the country's president and defence minister is more rooted in power politics. President Putin's thinking is not dissimilar to that of the White House in this respect. He sees his country as a global power that should not be restricted by international treaties to which other countries are not a party.

Another dominant view in Moscow in the 2000s, which could have been one of the main reasons why Russia subverted the treaty, was scepticism about US anti-ballistic missiles – not initially in the sense of its later accusation that the launch pads violated the INF Treaty, but based on Moscow's belief that the defensive shield

was directed against Russia.<sup>29</sup> In 2007, once it became known that the US was planning to deploy missiles in Europe, and Russia's idea of a joint defence system with NATO came to nothing, Moscow feared that the defence shield could curtail Russia's strategic nuclear capability.

This consideration may also have been the motivation for developing a cruise missile such as the SSC-8. For defence systems, it is difficult or impossible to counter this type of missile, so Moscow could view it as a suitable weapon in the face of US territorial missile defence systems. However, this strategic advantage is already provided by Russia's current stock of sea- and air-launched cruise missiles, so there is no need to develop a ground-launched missile. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that President Putin will make such a compromise when maintaining a symbol of Russian power – its nuclear capability. It is more likely that he wants to send a signal that Russia is on a par with the US and has accepted that breaching the INF Treaty is part-and-parcel of this.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, President Putin is said to have threatened to withdraw from the INF Treaty as early as 2007 in light of US plans to deploy a missile defence system in Europe, so that Russia would be in a position to attack the US systems with mid-range weapons if necessary.<sup>31</sup>

### Impact on the Security Situation

When, in early 2019, it became increasingly clear that the INF Treaty was set to collapse, talk immediately turned to a new arms race and a massive increase in the security threat. Yet, it is unlikely that the security situation will rapidly deteriorate, at least in the near future, because the military situation of today differs vastly from that of the 1980s. It is, however, conceivable that the US and Russia will gradually build up their intermediate-range weapons, including limited deployment in Europe.

From the West's perspective, the arms build-up during the last critical phase of the Cold War fulfilled the essential purpose of preventing the decoupling of European allies from the US by Russian intermediate-range missiles. At the

end of the 1970s, the Soviet Union deployed the RSD-10 Pioner intermediate-range ballistic missile (NATO designation SS-20 Saber). With a range of 5,000 kilometers, it was capable of reaching Europe and East Asia, but not North America. As far as Germany's Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher were concerned, the lack of a comparable intermediate-range missile in the West led to a gap in the spectrum of NATO's available nuclear response to aggression.<sup>32</sup> NATO was thus worried that it would "cast doubt on the credibility of the Alliance's deterrent strategy" – and promptly upgraded its own systems.<sup>33</sup>

At first glance, history appears to be repeating itself. In August 2019, the US tested a ground-launched cruise missile based on the Tomahawk, which should be ready for deployment by early 2021. Until the end of the year, a ballistic missile with ranges of 3,000 to 4,000 kilometers should be tested. Additionally, the Pentagon has earmarked a 100 million US dollars budget for 2020 for the development of three conventional intermediate-range missiles, and expenditure is set to increase significantly in subsequent years.<sup>34</sup> Russia, for its part, has announced that it is developing a launcher for a ground-based cruise missile based on the SS-N-30 by 2020, and that further missile projects are set to follow.<sup>35</sup>

### Despite rearmament on the part of Russia and the US, a comparison with the arms race of the 1980s is too simplistic.

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However, these recent developments cannot really be compared with the Cold War arms race. They no longer involve the introduction of a completely new type of weapon that, depending on one's perspective, either opens or closes a gap in the nuclear capability spectrum. Unlike the situation in the late 1970s, both sides now have many different types of nuclear

and conventional intermediate-range missile types. Numerous sea-launched mid-range systems exist, such as the Russian SS-N-30 and the American Tomahawk. According to experts, these conventional guided missiles can be equipped with nuclear warheads, are extremely accurate, and have a long range. On top of this, air-launched nuclear cruise missiles such as the Russian Kh-102 Kodiak (NATO designation AS-23B) and the American AGM-86 can be deployed rapidly from bombers like the Russian Tu-95 Bear and the US B-52 Stratofortress in each country's own airspace.<sup>36</sup>

This broad spectrum of military capabilities means there is already a multi-layered deterrent potential in place. This will become more complex with the introduction of the Russian SSC-8 and other US and Russian systems, but will not change fundamentally as long as there is no mass deployment of new missiles. So the nuclear balance will not be shaken to the same extent as it was in the late 1970s, nor will a qualitatively different threat be created that was not already in existence.<sup>37</sup> In addition, many of the arms projects that have been announced will require years of development and testing before they are ready to be deployed and can actually have an impact on the security situation.

However, this does not mean that the termination of the INF Treaty is without consequences. Experts believe that the US Department of Defence is keen to station new American intermediate-range missiles in Europe, which remains a realistic option. At present, these would only be equipped with conventional warheads, but since nuclear rearmament is technically possible, the willingness of many European NATO allies to allow these systems on their territory is likely to be low. However, Eastern European allies, especially Poland, have a more acute perception of the threat posed by Russia and as a result are more open to stationing. The US Congress is also exerting pressure on the administration to first identify allies who would be willing to accept these missiles before approving funding for developing new missile systems. If Washington and certain receptive Eastern



European partners were to seek bilateral, stop-gap solutions in this situation, this could lead to clashes within NATO that would paralyse the Alliance. This is a political risk that should be taken seriously.<sup>38</sup>

### **Potential for Future Arms Control**

In parallel with these considerations, all parties say a new nuclear arms control treaty for intermediate-range missiles would be a desirable





Bone of contention: Russia has most likely laid the basis for the end of the INF Treaty by developing its banned medium-range cruise missile. [Source: © Mikhail Voskresensky, Reuters.](#)

target scenario. As mentioned earlier, Russia and the US are both insisting that China and possibly other states should be parties to a new treaty. However, as things stand, such an outcome seems unlikely. As discussed earlier, it is made more difficult by the unwillingness of Russia and the US to work together to find solutions within the framework of the INF Treaty, which indicates a lack of trust and represents a burden on future negotiations. It is also unlikely because China will not allow itself to be bulldozed into signing

a successor agreement to the INF Treaty.<sup>39</sup> For many years, Beijing has maintained its position that it will not consider participating in talks on arms control until Russia and the US have disarmed to the same level as the other nuclear states. However, Russia currently has more than 6,850 nuclear warheads and the US over 6,450, while China's arsenal consists of 280 nuclear warheads.<sup>40</sup> There is no sign that Moscow or Washington have the political will to make drastic cuts to their arsenals. China also insists on

the inclusion of other types of weapons, such as heavy bombers and sub-strategic weapons, in any treaty.<sup>41</sup> Under these conditions, a comprehensive arms control treaty appears utopian for the foreseeable future and would not be feasible without a fundamental rethink or a change in the current political leadership.

**China would only agree to sign a successor to the INF Treaty if Russia and the US drastically reduced their arsenals before. This is currently unrealistic.**

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It would be more realistic – and politically desirable from a German point of view – to establish an informal, flexible control mechanism, now that treaty-based controls on intermediate-range missiles have ended. It should be noted that neither side initially declared the deployment of mid-range missiles as one of their political objectives. In February 2019, President Putin stated that Russia would not deploy intermediate-range missiles in Europe or other parts of the world as long as the US did not. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also gave an assurance after the end of the INF Treaty in August 2019: “We will not mirror what Russia is doing [...] we have no intention of deploying ground-launched nuclear missiles in Europe.”<sup>42</sup> But Russia’s assertion is devalued by the fact that, according to all indications, it has already deployed SSC-8 cruise missiles on the Caspian Sea, ergo in Europe. On the other hand, the current discussions in Washington on upgrading weapons systems demonstrates that there, too, people are not willing to allow Russian deployment to go completely unanswered.<sup>43</sup>

In order to make the goal of an informal agreement on the non-deployment of ground-launched intermediate-range missiles in Europe feasible, Roderich Kiesewetter (CDU) and Rolf Mützenich (SPD), both members of the

*Bundestag*, have tabled a proposal to relocate the Russian SSC-8 missiles east of the Urals. Compliance with this relocation could be verified by using technical means and intelligence.<sup>44</sup> However, whether this would create the conditions that would make it unnecessary for NATO to upgrade its intermediate-range weapons in Europe depends crucially on whether Moscow declares itself willing to do this without being forced into it by Western missile deployments, as was the case with the Soviet Union in the wake of NATO’s double-track decision.

At the moment, it is hard to imagine that Moscow would accede to this proposal of its own volition, and Germany only has limited diplomatic means to persuade Russia to accept such a proposal. Nevertheless, the German government should insist that the two parties stand by their declarations that they will not deploy intermediate-range missiles in Europe and work towards the implementation of the concrete proposal that exists on this issue. Even in Washington, some in Congress are sceptical about new missile deployments, and Russian foreign ministry officials have expressed an interest in self-restraint with regard to deployment.<sup>45</sup> Germany should support this and promote its own position.

And finally, it is important not to neglect confidence-building measures, which would be a basic prerequisite for an informal agreement. The erosion of trust between both sides is ultimately the root cause of the problem and this can only be rebuilt through dialogue and cooperation at all levels. This includes intensive political dialogue among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and the NATO-Russia Council. But even more important than political dialogue – which is deadlocked in some of these organisations – is contact and cooperation at the military level. Military personnel stress the importance of this direct contact for improving transparency and reducing misunderstandings, which in turn builds confidence.<sup>46</sup> Within the framework of the Vienna Document of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE),

this instrument should be used more.<sup>47</sup> The military-level exchange under the framework of the NATO-Russia Council, which is currently shelved, would also have to be taken up again to regain trust.

Even if it can only have an effect in the medium term, such confidence-building would provide a foundation for implementing the aforementioned self-restraint in the deployment of ground-based intermediate-range missiles in Europe. The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs) of 1991, under which President George H. W. Bush voluntarily reduced tactical nuclear weapons and President Gorbachev followed suit, show that informal, reciprocal approaches to arms control can work. But this requires the right basis of trust.

## Conclusion

Russia probably laid the foundations for ending the INF Treaty when it developed its banned intermediate-range missile. Although Russia has to shoulder a greater share of the blame, the US has also failed to make any serious efforts to preserve the treaty. Washington and Moscow both believe the INF Treaty is no longer up to date. Their reference to the widespread possession of intermediate-range missiles, particularly by China and some of Russia's other neighbours, and their conclusion that the INF Treaty is no longer in the security interests of either country, allow us insights about the mindset of the two presidents and of their advisors, which is focussed on power politics, rather than the withdrawal from the treaty being justified on strategic military grounds. The fact is, any additional development of ground-launched intermediate-range weapons systems will provide little military advantage for either Russia or the US in light of the air- and sea-launched systems that they already have in their arsenals.

The distribution of intermediate-range weapons is now so widespread and the deterrent balance so multi-layered and complex, that the introduction of the Russian missile and its possible US counterparts does not necessarily exacerbate

the security threat. Nevertheless, the question of limited missile development and deployment could split NATO. In parallel, it is currently not possible to foresee how the desire to negotiate a follow-up treaty could realistically come to fruition, particularly if China is to be part of the equation.

Politicians should, therefore, focus on coming to an informal agreement on self-restraint in the deployment of intermediate-range systems, at least in Europe. Germany has already submitted initial proposals, and it should continue to work on these through diplomatic channels. In light of this, it is especially important to support the US House of Representatives, which has recently blocked funding for the development of land-based intermediate-range missiles.<sup>48</sup> However, implementation also requires an increase in confidence-building measures, above all through military contacts and cooperation. However, the impact of this should not be overstated, as this kind of confidence-building can only happen gradually and in the medium term.

A functioning relationship based on trust is also vital, because the collapse of the next and most recent nuclear arms control treaty is already looming: the New START Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Nuclear Weapons expires in February 2021. Without the political will to renew this treaty, we could see a repeat of the collapse of the INF Treaty. If this happens, nuclear arms control will finally be consigned to history.

*—translated from German—*

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- 1 INF stands for Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces.
- 2 Cf. Graw, Ansgar / Jungholt, Thorsten 2019: Die Rückkehr der Atomraketen nach Europa, *Welt am Sonntag*, 10 Jan 2019, in: <https://bit.ly/2YQatWO> [12 Aug 2019].
- 3 Cf. Kubiak, Katarzyna 2019: Schauplatz statt Akteur: Europa zwischen zwei Nuklearmächten, in: *Osteuropa* 69: 1–2, pp. 113–118.
- 4 For the text of the treaty see: Treaty Between The United States Of America And The Union Of Soviet Socialist Republics On The Elimination Of Their Intermediate-Range And Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty), 1987, in: <https://bit.ly/2Kv4woI> [12 Aug 2019].
- 5 Lifflander, Justin 2012: 25 Years On, Gorbachev Recalls Nuclear Milestone, *The Moscow Times*, 6 Dec 2012, in: <https://bit.ly/2KJDgnH> [28 Jun 2019].
- 6 Cf. U.S. Department of State 2014: Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments, Jul 2014, in: <https://bit.ly/2KJFDHa> [12 Aug 2019].
- 7 Cf. Kühn, Ulrich 2019: Das Ende des INF-Vertrags: Folgen für die nukleare Rüstungskontrolle in Europa, in: *Osteuropa* 69: 1–2, pp. 89–101.
- 8 Cf. Coats, Daniel 2018: Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats on Russia's Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty Violation, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 30 Sep 2018, in: <https://bit.ly/2Q7MDRo> [23 Jul 2019].
- 9 Cf. Hegmann, Gerhard 2019: Die Waffe, die das atomare Gleichgewicht erschüttert, *Die Welt*, 10 Jan 2019, in: <https://welt.de/186641682> [23 Jul 2019].
- 10 Cf. Merkel, Angela 2018: Press statements of Chancellor Merkel and Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen, 20 Sep 2018, in: <https://bit.ly/2DSHDt6> [23 Jul 2019].
- 11 Russia also accuses the US of (1) using missiles with prohibited ranges for testing missile defence systems and (2) possessing unmanned drones. However, it is debatable whether the definition of prohibited weapons systems, as referred to in the text of the treaty, actually applies to these two cases, so they will not be discussed further at this point.
- 12 Cf. Kubiak, Katarzyna 2017: Rakettenabwehr: Potentiale einer Kooperation mit Russland, *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP-Studie 2017/S 13*, Jul 2017, in: <https://bit.ly/2H6LS4e> [23 Jul 2019].
- 13 In future, the Aegis Ashore sites in Poland and Romania will also be equipped with the SM-6 hybrid missile, which can be used both defensively and offensively. This would raise even more questions about whether the system is for purely defensive purposes.
- 14 Cf. Woolf, Amy 2019: Russian Compliance with the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty: Background and Issues for Congress, *Congressional Research Service*, 2 Aug 2019, in: <https://bit.ly/2kwmXwW> [23 Jul 2019].
- 15 Cf. Zagorskij, Andrej 2019: Le roi est mort, vive le roi? Die Zukunft der Rüstungskontrolle nach dem INF-Aus, in: *Osteuropa* 69: 1–2, pp. 79–87.
- 16 Cf. Richter, Wolfgang 2019: Europa und der INF-Vertrag: Verdammte Zuschauerrolle?, *Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb)*, 26 Apr 2019, in: <http://bpb.de/apuz/289943> [12 Aug 2019].
- 17 Quoted in Borger, Julian / Pengelly, Martin 2018: Trump says US will withdraw from nuclear arms treaty with Russia, *The Guardian*, 21 Oct 2018, in: <https://bit.ly/2IXzLS7> [23 Jul 2019].
- 18 Cf. Kristensen, Hans 2018: INF Weapons: Status, Modernisations, and Arms Control Prospects, *Toda Peace Institute, Policy Brief No. 25*, Nov 2018, in: <https://bit.ly/2LsoJfU> [23 Jul 2019].
- 19 Cf. Richter 2019, n. 16; cf. LeGrone, Owen 2019: New U.S. Intermediate-Range Missiles Aren't Needed for Precision Strike in Europe, *Arms Control Association*, 27 Aug 2019, in: <https://bit.ly/2ky6I4v> [6 Sep 2019].
- 20 However, some experts believe that ground-launched intermediate-range missiles offer a military advantage because they are slightly more precise than air- and sea-launched variants and have better survivability because they are more difficult to detect. General Selva has also stated that one of the strategic advantages of ground-based systems for the US armed forces is greater operational flexibility. Cf. US Government Publishing Office 2017: *Military Assessment of Nuclear Deterrence Requirements*, 8 Mar 2017, in: <https://bit.ly/2IX4Imo> [23 Jul 2019]; cf. Kühn, Ulrich 2018: *Geht es eigentlich um China?*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26 Oct 2018, in: <https://faz.net/-gg5-9fw0o> [23 Jul 2019].
- 21 Cf. Alcaro, Riccardo 2019: Ideology, Not Russia or China, Explains US Pullout from the INF, *Istituto Affari Internazionale*, 5 Feb 2019, in: <https://bit.ly/2Ls5ZNo> [23 Jul 2019].
- 22 Cf. Ackerman, Spencer 2018: John Bolton Brings a Nuclear Superhawk Into the White House, *The Daily Beast*, 8 Feb 2018, in: <https://bit.ly/2XciqiL> [23 Jul 2019].
- 23 Cf. Bolton, John / Yoo, John 2014: An Obsolete Nuclear Treaty Even Before Russia Cheated, *The Wall Street Journal*, 9 Sep 2014, in: <https://on.wsj.com/2XiZX99> [23 Jul 2019].
- 24 Cf. Gramer, Robbie / Mackinnon, Amy 2019: Trump's Top Russia Aide to Depart, *Foreign Policy*, 18 Jun 2019, in: <https://bit.ly/2lPOYLY> [23 Jul 2019].
- 25 Cf. Gates, Robert 2014: *Duty: Memoirs of A Secretary at War*, New York.
- 26 However, the initiative was not approved by the UN General Assembly, despite being backed by the US. Cf. US Department of State 2007: *Joint U.S.-Russian Statement on the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly*, 25 Oct 2007, in: <https://bit.ly/2xjxWib> [23 Jul 2019].

- 27 Cf. Harding, Luke 2007: Putin Threatens Withdrawal from Cold War Nuclear Treaty, *The Guardian*, 12 Oct 2007, in: <https://bit.ly/2xknruZ> [23 Jul 2019].
- 28 However, it is likely that Russia is also concerned about the fact that sea- and land-based missiles and the platforms that carry them are more expensive to produce and maintain than ground-based missiles. In absolute terms, Russia's defence budget is only one-tenth of the US budget, yet it accounts for 3.9 per cent of GDP, compared to 3.2 per cent. So in terms of its industrial policy, ground-based systems have cost benefits for Russia. Cf. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) 2018: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, in: <https://sipri.org/databases/milex> [23 Jul 2019]. The assessment was carried out by participants at a workshop on "Security Disorder: Conflict Lines and Scopes of Action" organised under Chatham House Rules by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung from 25 to 28 Mar 2019 in Cadenabbia, Italy.
- 29 The US insisted that the missile defence systems were not directed at Russia. Although the original declarations made no reference to specific nations, as far as NATO was concerned the missile system was intended to defend against the threat of ballistic missiles from the Middle East – so mainly Iran. Cf. Kubiak 2017, n.12.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Cf. Woolf 2019, n.14.
- 32 However, the theory of a European decoupling did not go uncontested at the time – for example, it ignored the role of British and French nuclear weapons in the European nuclear deterrent. Cf. Gassert, Philipp 2019: Rüstung, Bündnissolidarität und Kampf um Frieden: Lernen aus dem Nato-Doppelbeschluss von 1979?, *bpj*, 26 Apr 2019, in: <http://bpj.de/apuz/289939> [12 Aug 2019].
- 33 Cf. NATO 1979: Communiqué of a Special Meeting of Foreign and Defence Ministers Brussels ["NATO Double-Track Decision"], 12 Dec 1979.
- 34 Cf. Reif, Kingston 2019: Trump Increases Budget for Banned Missiles, *Arms Control Association*, May 2019, in: <https://bit.ly/2W8K1Bu> [23 Jul 2019]; cf. idem 2019: Treaty Withdrawal Accelerates Missile Debate, *Arms Control Association*, Sep 2019, in: <https://bit.ly/2LHDwbt> [6 Sep 2019].
- 35 Cf. Zagorskij 2019, n. 15.
- 36 Cf. Podvig, Pavel 2018: Who lost the INF Treaty?, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 26 Aug 2018, in: <https://bit.ly/2Njp72I> [23 Jul 2019].
- 37 Cf. Podvig, Pavel 2019. *Fahrlässig verspielt: Das Ende des INF-Vertrags*, in: *Osteuropa* 69, 1–2, pp.103–107; cf. Richter 2019, n.16.
- 38 Statement by Dr. Ulrich Kühn on the public hearing entitled "Regional stability? Conventional and nuclear arms and deterrence in Central and Eastern Europe today: Possibilities for Arms Control and Disarmament" at the 10<sup>th</sup> session of the Subcommittee on Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation of the German Bundestag (18<sup>th</sup> legislative period), 15 May 2019.
- 39 Cf. Spiegel Online 2018: U.S. Withdrawal from Nuke Treaty Worries Europeans, 30 Oct 2018, in: <https://spon.de/aflF8> [23 Jul 2019].
- 40 Cf. SIPRI 2018: SIPRI Yearbook 2018, Oxford.
- 41 Cf. Zagorskij 2019, n. 15.
- 42 Cf. NATO 2019: Secretary General: NATO response to INF Treaty demise will be measured and responsible, 2 Aug 2019, in: <https://bit.ly/2lB7E8w> [6 Sep 2019].
- 43 Cf. Zagorskij 2019, n. 15.
- 44 Kiesewetter, Roderich 2019: Kiesewetter zu Chancen, den INF-Vertrag zu retten, 28 Feb 2019, in: <https://bit.ly/2lZ2rRf> [23 Jul 2019].
- 45 Cf. Kühn 2019, n.38.
- 46 This assessment was carried out by participants at a workshop on "Security Disorder: Conflict Lines and Scopes of Action", n.28.
- 47 For the content of the agreement, see OSCE 2011: Vienna Document 2011: On Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, 30 Nov 2011, in: <https://bit.ly/2ZXwCxU> [23 Jul 2019].
- 48 Ali, Idrees / Stewart, Phil 2019: After INF treaty's demise, U.S. seeks funds for missile tests, *Reuters*, 2 Aug 2019, in: <https://reut.rs/2KdH0fN> [6 Sep 2019].