



South Koreans walk past replicas of a North Korean Scud-B missile and South Korean Nike missile at the Korean War Memorial in February 2019. (Credit: Chung Sung-Jun/Staff/Getty Images News/Getty Images AsiaPac)

## Expert Comment

# The post-INF Treaty world: Cutting costs and reducing risks

Andrey Kortunov (2019)

# The post-INF Treaty world: Cutting costs and reducing risks

**Andrey Kortunov**

Amidst accusations of non-compliance towards Russia, on 20 October 2018 US President Donald Trump announced the withdrawal of the US from the INF Treaty. The formal suspension of the treaty on 1 February 2019 prompted Russia to terminate participation in response. On 2 August 2019, the United States formally withdrew from the treaty. The INF Treaty, signed in 1987 by the United States and the former Soviet Union, required both countries to eliminate an entire class of deployed nuclear-capable weapons. The treaty banned ground-based missiles with a range of 500 kilometres to 5,500 kilometres. The treaty has paved the way for an end to military confrontation in Europe and has been one of the pillars of nuclear arms control.

Could the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty have been saved? No doubt, the answer to this question is positive. American and Russian experts have long discussed allegations of treaty violations in detail, and there was no shortage of proposals on resolving compliance concerns and giving the treaty a new lease of life. After all, Washington and Moscow do not face any unprecedented security threats in Europe that would require the withdrawal from INF and an urgent deployment of intermediate-range ballistic missiles.

Optimists hoped that Washington's statements on withdrawing from the INF Treaty were just an instance of Trump's peculiar negotiation tactics – a bluff and political manoeuvre. However, the INF Treaty had been dying a slow death for several years, and neither Russia nor the United States had displayed much political will or persistence in

seeking a compromise or taking unilateral steps to rescue the treaty. It is clear that neither side had considered saving the INF Treaty – not to mention the arms control regime as a whole – an important enough issue, such that it would be worth overcoming the situational interests of individual government agencies, the pressure of hard-line political groups, and the general atmosphere of the US-Russian confrontation.

Russia was quick to blame the United States for the treaty's demise. Indeed, it was Washington, not Moscow, that made compliance issues public and officially expressed doubts about the treaty's value. And it is Washington that is casting aside the long-standing tradition of separating strategic arms questions from other aspects of the bilateral relationship.

Many experts justifiably criticise the State Department for its insufficient efforts to save the treaty. Some also suggest that Moscow has outplayed Washington once again, forcing the Americans to shoulder the main responsibility for scrapping an agreement to Russia's benefit. The reality is that the INF Treaty has never been too popular in Russia either – many in Moscow have long complained that Mikhail Gorbachev betrayed the country's national security interests by signing the INF Treaty in 1987, since the Soviet Union made far greater quantitative reductions in delivery systems and warheads than did the United States. Furthermore, they say, the treaty did not cover American sea-launched missiles and did not specify any obligations for the US's NATO allies.

The new fundamentals of the post-INF world are challenging to everybody, including Russia, the US, and Europe. Some of these realities are already with us; some are only looming on the horizon. Let me address three aspects of the problem.

First of all, why did we get into this situation? Was it possible to avoid it? Who should be held responsible for these unfortunate developments?

Secondly, what does it mean for US-Russian relations, for Europe, and for global security?

And thirdly, what can we do, if anything? Can we somehow reverse these trends, and if so what would that imply? Can Germany or the EU play a role, and what would that involve?

## **1. How did we get here?**

When I talk to my American counterparts, including people from the Trump Administration, I basically see three reasons why the US decided to walk out on the INF Treaty. I don't want to sound trivial but the first point calls for a measure of technical analysis and I do think we need to dot the i's and cross the t's.

### **1.1. Sincere concerns**

Firstly, there are sincere concerns in the US that Russia *is* violating the treaty. Specifically, these concerns refer to a particular missile, the SSC-8. Russia maintains that this missile has a shorter range of 220-290km; American experts claim that its range is longer and, therefore, that this missile explicitly violates provisions of the INF Treaty. They maintain that Russia began producing these missiles as far back as 2007 and that Russia has ignored American complaints about the violation.

I am not a technical expert and it is difficult for me to judge whether a violation has in fact taken place. American claims of treaty violation refer mainly to the size of the missile and the point is that this missile has a longer range due to its larger fuel tank. i.e., if the fuel tank is larger, then the missile should be able to travel further.

Of course, the Russian military has its own view and says that the change in the size of the missile does not necessarily reflect a change in the flight length or the system, and they say they are ready to demonstrate this to the US.

To be fair, I think Russia bears some responsibility for the collapse of the treaty because these are concerns that the US has been putting forward for a long time. Russia should have been more sensitive to these concerns and it probably should have shared more information and data on this specific system.

However, the United States has not demonstrated much sensitivity either; Russia has also made numerous claims of US treaty violations. These surround the presence of the NATO ballistic missile defence (BMD) system in Romania, which is also going to be deployed in Poland. Russia argues the capacity of this launch system implies treaty violations because the possibility of ground-launching tomahawk cruise missiles now exists.

## **1.2. An outdated treaty**

The first dimension is important but the problem goes beyond that. I recall talking to John Bolton when he visited Moscow last summer and he was very explicit about his thinking. He said, “Well, you probably are violating the treaty and we do have concerns about this, but this is not our major concern. Our major concern is that the INF is not fair because the treaty only covers two countries. We signed the INF Treaty back in 1987 when the world was still bi-polar. The treaty was justified then and it reflected Cold War geopolitics. This was more than thirty years ago. Look at what is going on in the world now. For instance, a number of countries in Asia – China, Iran, some of the Gulf States – develop their ballistic and cruise missile potential based precisely on these types of weapons”. This narrative reflects an influential strain of thought within the US, asking why Americans should limit themselves while others are not constrained by the INF.

Moreover, American experts have often maintained that in the case of China, the US choice is between ground-based midrange missiles and sea-based or air-delivered missiles of the same range. The latter are much more expensive, so the logic suggests that if the US

was interested in a cheaper deterrent capacity in relation to China, then Washington should probably deploy midrange missiles. Nevertheless, the INF Treaty does not allow the US to follow this path. This is the second important consideration that we should keep in mind when trying to understand the US move on the INF. It has nothing to do with Europe; it is about Asia in general and about China in particular.

There are, of course, legitimate questions about how a new nuclear missile race can contribute to the US national security, but that is a different story.

### **1.3. The nature of Trump**

Finally, my feeling is that the US decision to withdraw from the INF Treaty is a reflection of the overall philosophy of the current administration. The Trump administration does not want to be constrained by any international agreements, be they bilateral or multilateral. Of course, an audience in Berlin would know – probably better than I do – that this approach is not limited to arms control. The United States, under its current leadership, is clearly moving in a unilateral direction, be it on security, trade, or other important international matters.

Apparently, Trump believes the United States can outspend any potential military adversary, whether that is Russia or China. From that perspective, it is understandable why he does not like any arms control commitments. Why, indeed, should the United States restrict the options that it has at its disposal if it is going to prevail at the end of the day?

Could we have avoided the present situation? We probably could have succeeded in saving the INF if there had been stronger public pressure on the US administration and arguably on the Russian leadership as well. However, the reality is that arms control is not at the top of the security agenda anymore; neither in Washington nor in Moscow is arms control as central to the national security agenda as it was 30-to-40 years ago.

In March 2018, Putin made a famous public presentation in his address to the Federal Assembly. He proudly demonstrated multiple images of very futuristic strategic weapons systems. The message he delivered was very clear: 'we would like to preserve the system of international arms control, but we will be able to protect our national security, even without it'. It was clear that the Kremlin under Putin no longer regarded arms control as indispensable for Russian security interests. Even if Russia did not initiate the collapse of INF, it had been working hard to get itself ready for the post-INF world.

## **2. What are the repercussions?**

The consequences of the US withdrawal from the INF Treaty should be divided into military and political implications. In terms of military consequences, at the moment, the United States has no technological, productive, or financial capabilities for a swift production and deployment of a large number of medium and shorter-range missiles. One can, of course, assume the existence of some plans for moving sea-based or air-launched missiles to land, but this is a rather pointless exercise; it will not add anything meaningful to US military capacities. In addition, there are political restrictions; that is, in order to deploy these missiles in Europe, the consent of US allies is required, and this agreement is not so easy to get.

### **2.1. A limited military impact**

Let me address the military dimension in more detail. As we know, the United States now plans to test a ground-based medium-range ballistic missile by the end of 2019. There are also plans to test a ground-based cruise missile with a range of over 500 kilometres. Of course, Russia interprets these US announcements in the sense that the Pentagon had long been planning to withdraw from the INF Treaty, and Washington accusing Moscow of non-

compliance with the Treaty was just an awkward attempt to justify its own unwillingness to comply with the INF Treaty.

However, most analysts on both sides are doubtful about the ability of the United States to promptly deploy new missile systems, whether ballistic or cruise. The common and not too new tomahawk missiles, with minimal modifications can take off from a mobile ground platform, which is not currently available. A fully-fledged mobile complex with a new-generation cruise missile is unlikely to become a reality in the next three-to-four years. Analysts believe that the new-generation medium-range ballistic missile (LRHW project) will take about the same time to complete. Thus, current US activities in this area are rather intended for political and psychological purposes than military and technical ones, which is fully consistent with the Trump administration's general style.

Russia has enough time and technical capabilities for an adequate response. Clearly, the SSC-8 (in Russia it is called 9M729) cruise missile, which caused great concern among the Americans during the discussion on the INF Treaty, is a very promising system, and its range can be significantly increased. Of course, there are corresponding achievements in the ballistic field as well. Take, for instance, such a wild card up the Russian Defence Ministry's sleeve as the RS-26 Rubezh system. It is expensive, but reliable. It appears there are no fundamental technical difficulties in converting an ICBM into a medium-range missile. Therefore, it is still an open question about who will lead this new race, and who will have to catch up.

Perhaps, Washington is pinning its hopes on the technological and economic superiority of the United States over Russia. But it will be impossible to realise this superiority any time soon: today's armament programmes have a lot of inertia, and radically changing the general Russia-US strategic balance in a matter of several years is clearly unrealistic either for Trump, or his potential successor, or even for the successor's successor. The degree of inertia in this balance can be seen, in particular, in the fact that Moscow has

retained its status of the second-largest nuclear superpower almost 30 years after the collapse of the USSR.

Of course, the geostrategic asymmetry between the United States and Russia still exists. If it had chosen to provide a mirror response to possible deployment of US medium- and short-range missiles in Europe, Moscow would have been forced to follow in Khrushchev's steps and deploy its systems in the Western Hemisphere. It takes a very strong stretch of the imagination to see Russian missile launchers, for example, in Venezuela or Nicaragua. But at the same time, the Americans will also find it difficult to convince their European allies to voluntarily deploy ultramodern Pershing-3 missiles on their territory, thus becoming the closest potential targets for a Russian second retaliatory strike.

It is widely believed that the main purpose of a new generation of US medium-range ballistic and cruise missiles is to deter China, not Russia. However, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff are unlikely to be able to prove this convincingly to Russia's General Staff, especially amid the current deplorable state of bilateral relations. Similar to Europe, there will also be problems with deploying US ground-based missiles in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, it is difficult to assume that several years ago China's Central Military Commission did not consider the potential collapse of the INF Treaty and failed to begin work on appropriate preventive measures. If, in the case of Moscow, Washington can still hope to economically and financially exhaust its adversary, there can be no such hope for Beijing.

In sum, the military consequences of the United States' withdrawal from the treaty will not be immediate, but will reveal themselves within a few years. Until that time, the United States will actually comply with the terms of the treaty, as was the case when it withdrew from the ABM Treaty in 2002. The Americans quit, but they did not create an efficient missile defence system: they actually continued to implement it. And in order to create a fundamentally new system of medium-range missiles, it will take at least 5-to-10

years, and this will, of course, also require appropriate budget decisions, and much more besides.

## **2.2. A security spoiler**

The political consequences of the United States' withdrawal from the treaty are already obvious and will continue to manifest themselves. In the field of nuclear arms control, the US decision could create a 'domino effect': if it abandons the INF Treaty, it puts the New START treaty's extension into question. Mutual accusations about the failure to abide by this treaty – at least in terms of its spirit, if not the letter – are becoming increasingly loud both in Russia and the US, as are statements that the national security of either side will be guaranteed even if the extension of the treaty is renounced.

Without the New START, there will be a broader issue of maintaining the nuclear weapons non-proliferation regime. We should not forget about the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty either. The United States, by the way, has not ratified the CTBT, but is now criticising Russia for alleged CTBT violations.

Thus, a chain reaction could be launched that will lead to the collapse of not only the bilateral system of strategic weapons control, but also to the erosion of the entire international regime of containing nuclear weapons. This will create numerous new risks and problems, and it will be very difficult to return to any international or bilateral agreements, although that is possible.

A related and significant problem I see here is that we are losing the centrality of arms control to the US–Russian relationship. The core pillar of the relationship is in peril: since the early 1970s, strategic arms control has been a foundation for all other aspects of interaction between Moscow and Washington. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, both sides have struggled to define an alternative core, but without much success. Removing the

centrality of strategic arms control not only deprives the US-Russia relationship of its special status in global politics, but also drastically reduces both countries' importance to one another.

Arms control, which admittedly is difficult, time-consuming, and complicated, needs to remain a top priority for the Kremlin and the White House. In my view, that can only be done with much stronger public pressure. One reason for the arms control success stories of the 1970s and 1980s was exactly this public pressure, including very serious pressure in Germany. The INF Treaty became a reality partially because in Germany there was a very strong movement against the deployment of new weapons systems in Europe. One challenge now is therefore to consider how we can re-activate the public and recover the sense that this is a serious issue.

As the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung public opinion poll has recently shown, the public threat perception of war across Europe is high. Unfortunately, political and social leaders are failing to convert this into political action. The political class is allowing its leaders to ignore arms control as nothing more significant than a secondary issue. This is a problem we have to address both in the West and in the East. The sooner we stand up to the challenge, the more pressure we apply to our respective leaders, the earlier we will be able to see a resurrection of arms control and a shift from a new arms race to a new cycle of nuclear disarmament.

### **2.3. Undermining trust in the US**

The Trump Administration says that the United States and Russia should begin a serious dialogue on the principles of strategic security for the new age, as they put it. This will be difficult. Communication lines, in most cases, do not operate now as they should. The

political background is mostly negative these days. Both the US and Russian leaders are distracted by other urgent foreign policy challenge and threats.

The second issue is that, psychologically, this represents another very lasting problem. Allow me to remind you that even now, almost two decades since the United States unilaterally withdrew from the ABM Treaty – the US made the decision towards the end of 2001 and formally withdrew in mid-2002 – in Moscow, they never miss an opportunity to criticise US for this move. To this day, Russian leaders still remind their American counterparts that George W. Bush's decision to withdraw from the ABM Treaty was the very move that reversed the positive trend of the post-Soviet bilateral relationship.

The INF Treaty carries similar political significance to the ABM Treaty. Moscow is likely to use the Trump administration's withdrawal for both domestic and foreign propaganda. The US withdrawal from the INF will be remembered for a very, very long time as an indicator that you cannot deal with the United States. The idea is gaining traction that Americans are unreliable and that they are not credible partners. Psychologically at the very least, this is important.

#### **2.4. European security in the short term**

However, and this might be a glimpse of optimism, if you put aside the political repercussions and focus on the military consequences, I do not think that we will see any immediately dramatic changes in Europe's security landscape. As I mentioned earlier, the US does not have any new middle range systems in the pipeline and Washington is likely to have a problem with its allies, because there aren't too many countries in Europe that are willing to host new nuclear weapons from the other side of the Atlantic.

The strategic balance in Europe will not change overnight. I would go even further, arguing that Russia could be more tempted to go beyond the limitations of INF than the

United States, because technologically, Russia appears to be better prepared to begin producing and deploying new systems. Additionally, Russia does not have to negotiate deployment with its allies as it can deploy the systems on its own territory.

I think it is very important for Russia – and I hope that all the right decisions will be made in Moscow – to resist the temptation to go beyond the limitations of the INF. The right position, in my view, would be to state officially that until the US deploys new systems in Europe, Russia would also refrain from such action. I should remind you, since I mentioned the ABM Treaty earlier, that although the US left ABM, its actions actually stayed within the limitations of the treaty because the US was unable to produce a reliable national missile defence system. The US withdrawal from ABM was more of a political gesture than a strategic decision. Let us hope that the Trump Administration will apply the same approach to the INF.

However, the repercussions of withdrawal from the INF Treaty will nonetheless include consequences that go beyond bilateral relations.

## **2.5. The future of non-proliferation**

As experts have warned, it is impossible to abandon the bilateral Russia-US dimension of nuclear arms control while leaving its multilateral dimension intact. The energy of disintegration is bound to spill over from the framework of bilateral relations and this is already happening before our eyes.

My fear is that the failure to maintain the INF Treaty will have a seriously detrimental impact on non-proliferation. The ultimate destruction of the NPT would be the final nail in the coffin for nuclear arms control. Its Article VI notes the “obligation of nuclear-weapon States to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament.” But to what extent can nuclear disarmament be discussed today at all? At a

meeting on the preparations for the NPT Review Conference early this year, the Nuclear Five even refused to sign a final joint declaration. The 2015 Review Conference was already a big disappointment for nuclear disarmament advocates and the 2020 Review Conference may turn out to be the final event in this format. In this way, the NPT will follow in the wake of the New START, INF and ABM treaties on the road to the dustbin of history that is growing every year.

The reality is that if Russia and the US are not ready to cut down their nuclear arsenals, if they cannot even maintain treaties that they have already concluded, then they cannot expect much from rest of the international community. If that is the case, we will open up a Pandora's box.

If the NPT is in jeopardy, then the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is also in jeopardy. The treaty has made little progress over the last couple of years and it is unlikely to make further progress. At some point, both the US and Russia will have to get down to testing. That means that the entire international nuclear arms control infrastructure will erode and crumble before our eyes. This is not only very bad, but this is simply not acceptable. This is something that we have to stop before too long, no matter how difficult it may be.

### **3. What can be done?**

Now, what can be done? I think there are least two options – there may be more, but let me limit myself to two – that we still have at our disposal.

#### **3.1. Mid-range and short-range missiles**

Firstly, we need to look at the specific issue of mid-range and short-range missiles. The US is saying, 'OK, we are not against this treaty as such but we need to bring China in'. At the

same time, the Chinese tell us, 'how can we be part of this treaty when these systems constitute two-thirds of our overall nuclear potential? Do you want us to disarm, unilaterally? Sorry folks, we are not going to do that'!

Can we square the circle? I think we can but only if we try very hard. Indeed, if you take ground-launched middle range missiles, then it would be unfair to impose INF limitations on China. China would be left with almost nothing whereas the US would only have to reconsider its future deployment plans away from ground-launched to air and sea-launched systems; the same goes for Russia.

However, if you take these systems in their totality, which means that we include into some kind package not only ground-launched mid-range missiles, but also sea-launched and air-launched missiles, then the situation looks rather different. The US has approximately 4,000 systems like this. Russia also has sea-launched missiles. Not as many as the US, but it does have its own capacity.

If we broaden the range of systems subject to control, then, we could probably make this deal more attractive to the Chinese. Is this doable? It is hard to tell; the issue is very sensitive for the Chinese. I think the first thing we should do is begin some kind of Russian-Chinese consultations on this.

A more general question, however, is whether we really still need all these distinctions between strategic, intermediate-range, and tactical systems. The reality is that the United States and Russia have and will continue to have strikingly different geopolitical and geostrategic positions in the world; their threat perceptions and their respective strategic doctrines will never be identical. If so, could we merge New START and INF into one umbrella agreement, which would set overall ceilings for nuclear warheads and launchers on both sides?

Within these overall ceilings, both Washington and Moscow would be in a position to blend individual cocktails of strategic, intermediate range and tactical systems to their liking.

For a better taste, they could even add the missile defence component to the mix; there is no particular reason why BMD should not be a part of the drink. As some US and Russian experts argue, the only sub-ceiling that we might need to preserve is the sub-ceiling for deployed warheads, which are of particular concern to the other side. This sub-ceiling can amount to a half or one third of the total number. In other words, the cocktail should be shaken, but not stirred.

This approach will not address all the contemporary challenges to strategic arms control. For example, it will not multilateralise the latter, though the time has come to move away from a bilateral Russia–US format to a multilateral one. Still, an innovative approach would be a loud and clear signal to third nuclear powers, demonstrating Moscow’s and Washington’s will not only to preserve, but also to enhance and to modernise global strategic security.

Sceptics can argue that today is not the best time to experiment with new approaches to strategic arms control. With Russia–US relations at historical lows, and trust between the two countries non-existent, political opposition to any new deals will be too strong to generate domestic support for any new agreements. These are exactly the arguments they used back in the 1950s against a possible US–Soviet collaboration in writing a set of rules for the new nuclear world. It took the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 to start moving away from this perception and another ten years to sign the first US–Soviet Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Agreement (SALT-1). Are we ready to wait for another missile crisis – in North Korea or elsewhere? Can we afford another ten years for a new détente between Washington and Moscow?

The challenge of the day is not to resolve the nuclear problem, but to cut the costs and to reduce the risks of the nuclear confrontation. New approaches may gain us some time, not much more than that. Nevertheless, gaining time is still quite important.

### 3.2. Greater ambitions

If we want to think about something more ambitious, we should keep in mind that in certain ways Trump and Bolton are correct: the current model of arms control is antiquated. It belongs to the 20th century and not to the 21st century. We cannot apply the same principles we applied to the arms race 50 years ago to what we have now.

For a long time, sober-minded experts did not want to believe in even the hypothetical possibility of the death of arms control. Both in Russia and in the West they proceeded from the premise that “this cannot be because this can never be.” Hence, they focused on preserving the nuclear status quo that took shape in broad outline in the past century. How to drive the nuclear genie back into the bottle? How to stop the chain reaction of disintegration? Where is it possible to hold defences against the coming nuclear chaos?

Today, the prospect of a world without nuclear arms control is too realistic to be ignored. All of us are facing a different set of questions. How to live in the world without the old nuclear arms agreements? How to minimise the risks and reduce the costs of a new arms race? On what terms and in what format is it possible to revive international arms control?

For the time being, the tone of the emerging discussion is determined by extravagant ideas that sooner testify to the intellectually uninhibited style of their authors than to their sense of responsibility. Some claim that a nuclear war is not so horrible after all and that nuclear weapons do not differ in principle from conventional arms. Others say that to revive nuclear arms control the human race needs to go through a disaster comparable to the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962.

The calls for an immediate transition to a multilateral model of nuclear arms control are not very impressive, either. Needless to say, hardly anyone would object to this idea in principle. But given the current state of political relations between the Nuclear Five, hardly anyone will take these appeals seriously. And even if the sides had the political will for this,

it would most probably take several decades to form justified, stable, verifiable and legally binding mechanisms of multilateral nuclear deterrence.

It must be honestly acknowledged that the historic task of an orderly and safe transition from the old model of nuclear arms control of the 20th century to a new model of the 21st century has failed to materialise. The current generation of politicians and statesmen has not shown the wisdom, responsibility or strategic vision of their predecessors. This means that the world is entering a dangerous period where security problems will only get worse.

How long will global instability last? It depends on many isolated variables and how they interact. Will Donald Trump be re-elected in November 2020? How far will the US-China confrontation go in the near future? How will a change of generations in the Russian government play out? How acute and universal will new unconventional security threats be? In a scenario that would be beneficial for everyone, this period of instability will last several years, in a worst-case scenario, it will stretch well into the next 10, 20 or even 30 years.

### **3.3. The road ahead**

Without claiming any mystical knowledge on life after the death of arms control, I would like to offer several rules that could make our life a bit less dangerous and more comfortable for everyone.

First, peace is more important than disarmament. For all the importance of limiting and reducing nuclear arms, the priority task for all should be to prevent a nuclear war. This means that even given the absence of an adequate international legal foundation for strategic stability, this stability can and should be improved with the help of the instruments at our common disposal. For example, it can be achieved through contacts between our military, politicians and experts at different levels, parallel reduction of the combat readiness

of nuclear carriers, mutual deterrence in deploying new systems (this is especially important in view of the collapse of the INF Treaty), and exchange of information on the evolution of military doctrines and plans for military development.

Second, quality is more dangerous than quantity. In all probability, Russia and the US have approached the limits of the quantitative arms race – none of them plans to sharply increase the number of warheads or means of their delivery. In the meantime, though, the technological race has just begun. For the time being, there is still an opportunity to promptly shut down its most dangerous areas linked with artificial intelligence, space militarisation, and the development of lethal arms autonomous systems, to name a few. Obviously, this task will require completely different formats of arms control whereby informal norms and codes of conduct may mean more than formalised agreements, and the role of the private sector and the civil society will not be inferior to that of states.

Third, threats posed by non-government players will increasingly outweigh the dangers from opposing states. No matter what attitude the world may have to the nuclear-missile programme of North Korea or the possible development of nuclear arms by the Islamic Republic of Iran, a common logic of deterrence can be applied in both cases. This logic cannot be applied to international terrorist organisations in principle. In the meantime, such organisations will be increasingly likely to acquire nuclear arms. There will also be an increasing number of 'failed states' and they are a breeding ground for international terrorism. Therefore, the prevention of nuclear terrorism (and terrorism with the use of any other weapons of mass destruction) should be a top priority in the future mechanisms of international arms control.

### 3.4. What about multilateralism?

The arms control system of the 21st century cannot be bilateral. It has to be multilateral. The transition is very difficult. Nobody knows what multilateral deterrence could mean; nobody knows what China or India or Pakistan should legitimately have in order to provide for their respective security. What is clear, however, is that a multilateral framework will very different from the bilateral arms control system that we have lived with. We also know that we have to move in this direction.

My personal suggestion would be to have European nuclear powers take the lead here. Let me remind you how the multilateral nuclear agreement with Iran took place. In October 2003, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of France Dominique de Villepin and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany Joschka Fischer approached President of Iran, Mohammad Khatami. The idea was to persuade him to comply with IAEA requirements and also to provide him with guarantees that his country's right to develop the peaceful atom would be respected. The issue could not be resolved at that time, but the dialogue had been opened.

Then the Russian Federation, China and the United States joined the negotiations, forming a consortium of six world powers, which, after many years of efforts, agreed upon the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in July 2015. The agreement is quite rightly considered one of the most significant achievements in the field of international security this century; the JCPOA held its ground even when Donald Trump refused to comply with its provisions.

Fifteen years have passed since that journey began. The international situation today, after the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA, is much more complicated than it was in 2003. Europe faces far greater threats to its security than it did at the beginning of the century. And the bilateral dialogue on nuclear issues between the United States and Russia is extremely difficult at best, and, at worst, in a state of limbo for the foreseeable

future. Meanwhile, France and the United Kingdom are still nuclear powers and permanent members of the UN Security Council. And Germany has been a non-permanent member since the beginning of 2019. Maybe it is time for European leaders to show the same kind of political will and imagination in the nuclear sphere that they demonstrated in 2003.

The future of nuclear arms control (if it has one) will in any case be multilateral in nature. And if the two superpowers have not coped with the mission entrusted to them by history, then surely it is time to let other nuclear countries in on the game. Paris and London have stated their respective positions on the matter quite clearly: 'First, let the Russians and Americans reduce their arsenals to levels comparable to ours, and then we can talk about multilateral agreements'. Moreover, France and the United Kingdom have, of their own accord, reduced the number of nuclear warheads in their own arsenals to 300 and 215, respectively. For comparison, the Russian Federation and the United States have 7,200 and 7,000 units of nuclear arms, including tactical nuclear weapons and warheads stored in warehouses, respectively.

However, arms control cannot be reduced to an arithmetic problem. The question also includes 'algebraic' considerations – the combat readiness of nuclear arsenals, their degree of transparency, confidence-building measures, the dialogue on military doctrines, the exchange of information on modernisation plans, blocking the most dangerous areas of the arms race, and much more. Progress in at least some of these areas would make it possible to both mitigate the negative consequences of the collapse of the INF Treaty and also start to outline a new model of nuclear arms control that would gradually and delicately bring China, India, and other nuclear powers into the fold.

It took almost 12 years to hammer out the agreement with Iran. And it will probably take even longer to work out and then build a new model for multilateral control over nuclear weapons. However, the main task right now is to go back to the drawing board with a ruling

pen, rather than a baseball bat, in hand. For numerous reasons, European countries will have an easier time doing this than the privileged members of the 'nuclear club'.

There is a major difference between multipolarity and multilateralism. Multipolarity emphasises the centres of power and their competition, whereas multilateralism is about interaction between the centres of power. I have always been sceptical about multilateralism, and not without reason, but I think multilateralism is the only way to go. And furthermore, I refer to the European experience as I think the Europeans should take the lead precisely because there is no other place in the world where multilateralism has been able to achieve so much and has had such diverse implications. The European Union stands out in that sense and that is why I think the time has come for Europe to show what it stands for.

### **3.5. Creative legislation**

When I talk about a new model of arms control, I also imply that currently, unfortunately, it is very difficult to arrive at legally binding agreements, which are subject to ratification by national legislatures. Can you imagine any arms control agreement between Russia and the United States that would be able to make it through the US Congress these days? I cannot.

Even if Putin decided to disarm unilaterally, there would be people in Washington who would say, 'this is a trick, you know, we shouldn't go for it – he is acting in some way against our security'. And then the agreement wouldn't receive a qualified majority, which it would need in order to be ratified.

Now, if we cannot ensure ratification, this means that we cannot ensure verification, so we should look for different ways, maybe more technical ways, to get assurances that arms control agreements are abided by. This is not easy; we are used to a different culture, a very legalistic culture, but this culture is not likely to work in the 21st century. This is not a

problem that centres on Trump; it's about the disconnect between an undercurrent of technological progress on one hand and on the other, the very slow and protracted legislative mechanisms that we have at our disposal.

We have to find new ways to think, we have to be creative, and we have to challenge our conventional wisdom. This brings us back to the days of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, when most of the arms control agreements were developed. I don't want to sound condescending when I speak with reference to that era. I think the people who worked on these agreements did a truly great job. Maybe the reason we are all here today is because of their efforts, commitment, and dedication. What we need to is to demonstrate similar vision, similar imagination, a similar level of commitment to make sure that arms control can be reinvented in order to make our world safer for future generations.

Strategic arms control as it has been known for almost half a century since Leonid Brezhnev and Richard Nixon signed the first agreement is coming to its logical end. The Trump administration's destructive steps have simply accelerated and added more drama to the inevitable demise of arms control. Irrespective of the administration occupying the White House, it is no longer possible for Moscow and Washington to return to the 1970s or even to 2010, when Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama signed the New START Treaty.

Clearly, it is unlikely that any new strategic arms control agreements will be signed in the next few years. First of all, the political background in Russian-US relations is not favourable for fruitful talks. Can such an agreement be discussed at all when the two countries' leaders cannot coordinate their next meeting for six months? In addition, amid the ongoing political crisis in the United States, any talks with Moscow become the subject of fierce fighting between the White House and its numerous opponents. And lastly, there are no strong anti-war movements and no clearly expressed public opinion in the West or the East that would force the national leaders to accept arms control as a foreign policy priority.

Therefore, Russia, the United States and the rest of the world will have to move through a relatively large dead zone with few chances of resuming full control of strategic armaments. This situation may last until the end of President Donald Trump's term, or until the beginning of a new political cycle in Russia, or until the next edition of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, etc.

### **3.6. Finally - some quick fixes.**

It is clear that the problem of nuclear arms will not fix itself. No, it will only grow worse unless Moscow and Washington start cooperating to resolve it. The risk of a conflict will grow, along with the cost of a new arms race, and critics will become increasingly outspoken. This means that Moscow and Washington will eventually have to resume talks.

If this is the case, the task is to shorten the pause as much as possible and make the resumption of the talks as simple as possible. There are at least four ways of doing this.

First, even the absence of formal obligations under the INF Treaty or the New START Treaty cannot stop the sides from honouring them de facto. The analysis of the Russian and American nuclear modernisation plans shows that the sides do not intend to move beyond the existing agreements. An informal arrangement or at least a silent agreement to maintain the status quo in the nuclear sphere would definitely help Russia and the United States avoid serious problems and additional expenses. The ball is in Moscow's court in this case, because it will be technologically and geopolitically easier for Moscow to take advantage of Washington's decision to withdraw from the INF Treaty.

Second, any Russian-US consultations on the principles of strategic stability would be useful in the first or second track or even between them. It would be naive to expect a breakthrough, but a continued interchange between the sides would have a positive psychological effect. Besides, this dialogue, as well as respect for the common strategic

culture and the accumulation of new ideas, would allow them to sooner move over to concrete talks when the political conditions for this come about.

Third, a pause in Russian-US cooperation on strategic arms could be used to gradually involve other nuclear powers in these discussions. Of course, this extremely difficult task calls for great patience and tact, but the sides will have to do it eventually anyway. Washington's withdrawal from the INF Treaty is an opportunity to start considering ways to do this, because the demise of the treaty has a direct bearing on all members of the nuclear club.

And fourth, in this situation Russia and the United States should focus on preparations for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Withdrawal from the INF Treaty and, more importantly, refusal to extend the New START Treaty would create major risks for the global non-proliferation regime, and the next NPT Review Conference may turn out to be the last. This will not benefit Moscow or Washington, and so a common interest in preserving the non-proliferation regime may provide a major incentive for maintaining Russian-US cooperation, even if in a limited scope.

Compared to the twentieth century, the international system today is more complex, less predictable, and potentially more dangerous. One hopes that the impending US withdrawal from the INF Treaty will not become just another item on Moscow's laundry list of grievances against Washington, but that it will intensify the search for new models for reducing nuclear risks and strengthening global and regional strategic stability.

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