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*Manuel Francisco Herrera Almela**

The INF treaty and the new
hypersonic revolution

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The INF treaty and the new hypersonic revolution

Abstract:

Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a tendency to abandon arms control agreements. Therefore, the withdrawal's announcement by the U.S. and Russia from the INF (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces) treaty is simply an evidence of the consolidation of this trend. The withdrawal of both powers from the treaty is also an evidence that the non-proliferation regime, and in particular the arms control regime, is gradually crumbling. The possibility of technological advances used to gain an advantage over adversaries and the lack of resolution of discrepancies between nuclear powers encourages the development of new weapons, strategic revisions, and the abandonment of arms controls. This article seeks to analyse three issues: First, to explain the reasons why both the U.S. and Russia have decided to abandon the INF treaty. Second, to explain the implications of such an exit for international security in terms of the development of hypersonic weaponry by Russia, China and the U.S. And thirdly, to analyse where Europe stands, what its new security risks are from now on and what decisions should be taken to tackle them.

Keywords:

Hypersonic weaponry, arms race, United States, Russia, nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

***NOTE:** The ideas contained in the Opinion Papers shall be responsibility of their authors, without necessarily reflecting the thinking of the IEEE or the Ministry of Defense

Introduction

There has been a tendency since the beginning of the 21st century to abandon arms control agreements. For example, the U.S. withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002¹ ². Therefore, the announcement of the withdrawal by the U.S. and Russia from the INF Treaty is simply a further evidence of the consolidation of this trend.

At the same time, a series of reviews have been carried out of the strategic positions of several countries, such as the U.S., where the development of nuclear capabilities and armaments that maximise the impact of their use is identified as acceptable. For example, in its latest review of its nuclear posture, the U.S. indicated its intention to develop low-power nuclear weapons programmes³. For its side, Russia announced in March 2018 that it would begin a programme to develop hypersonic missiles capable of reaching any point on the planet and pass through any anti-missile defence system.

The exit of both countries from the treaty is just one more sign that the non-proliferation regime, and in particular the arms control regime, is slowly crumbling. The possibility of using technological advances to gain an advantage over adversaries and the lack of resolution of discrepancies between nuclear powers encourages the development of new weapons, strategic revisions and the abandonment of arms controls.

Accordingly, this article will analyse three issues: First, the reasons why both the U.S. and Russia have decided to abandon the INF treaty. Second, the implications of such an exit for international security in terms of the development of hypersonic weaponry by Russia, China and the US. And thirdly, where Europe stands, and what its new security risks are from now on and what decisions should be taken to tackle them.

¹ It is true that negotiations were initiated with Russia in May 2001 in order to extend this treaty, but the attacks on 11 September 2001 completely changed the U.S. position. Terrorism became Washington's top priority over nuclear weapons, and the U.S. did not want a treaty to limit its ability to test ballistic missiles that would later use to fight Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan and Iraq.

² RUSTEN, Lynn F. "U.S. Withdrawal from the Antiballistic Missile Treaty". Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction. National Defense University [online]. January 2010. pp. 6-10. Disponible en: https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/casestudies/CSWMD_CaseStudy-2.pdf. Fecha de consulta 6.03.2019

³ OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENCE. "Nuclear Posture Review". Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Defence, febrero 2018. pp. 41-59

The INF and the reasons for its abandonment

The initiative to draft and sign a treaty limiting and controlling the proliferation of intermediate-range missiles was favoured by the U.S. in order to put an end to the deployment of Soviet SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe and thus avoid another crisis similar to the Euromissile crisis⁴. In the fall of 1985, the Soviet Union presented a plan to establish a balance between the number of SS-20 missiles and the growing number of intermediate-range allied missiles in Europe. The U.S. expressed interest in the Soviet proposal, and negotiations expanded to include all U.S. and Soviet intermediate-range missiles worldwide. Building on the momentum of those talks, President Reagan and Premier Gorbachev began moving toward a comprehensive agreement to eliminate intermediate-range missiles. Their efforts culminated in the signing of the INF Treaty on December 8, 1987⁵.

The INF put an end to a period of escalating tensions between the two powers and committed them to permanently eliminate their intermediate-range (500-5,000 km) land-based missile arsenals, both nuclear and conventional, in addition to establishing verification mechanisms. This led to the destruction, in the early 1990s, of 2,600 units of such weapons, as well as their ground launchers; and the signing of START I (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) in 1991⁶. Beyond arms reduction and control, the importance of the treaty lies in the fact that short- and medium-range missiles do not offer the leaders of the warring parties any or few opportunities for consultation to avoid a nuclear catastrophe in the event of complications (e.g. unintentional or unapproved missile launches, computer error, misfiring of missiles as part of a misguided trajectory exercise, misunderstandings, etc.)⁷. Therefore, the end of the treaty may lead to a situation where there are fewer opportunities to avoid a nuclear catastrophe.

U.S. suspicions that Russia has openly violated the treaty are well-founded. For example,

⁴ BRANDES, Juan Maria. "1983, el año de los euromisiles". El País [online]. 12th february 1983. Available at: https://elpais.com/diario/1983/02/12/internacional/413852403_850215.html. Date of access 23.02.2019

⁵ KIMBALL, Daryl and REIF, Kingston. 2019, "The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty at a Glance | Arms Control Association". Armscontrol.org [online]. February 2019. Available at: <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/INFtreaty>. Date of access 25.02.2019

⁶ *Ibidem*

⁷ SZÉNÁSI, Endre. *US Withdrawal from INF Treaty: Policy Implications*. 20th december 2018

in the early 2010's, Russia began circumventing treaty obligations by placing vertical launch systems capable of firing Kalibr cruise missiles, which have a range of 2,500 km⁸. From 2014 onwards, in the context of the Donbass War, the two powers have accused each other of violating the treaty. For example, in 2017 the U.S. accused Russia of violating the treaty with the deployment of the Novator 9M729 missiles, as an integral part of the Iskander missile system⁹. For its part, Russia has consistently denied that it has violated the treaty and raised concerns about U.S. compliance. For example, Russia accused the U.S. of deploying defensive missile systems in Romania and Poland¹⁰, in particular MK-41 launchers, which may be used, in addition to anti-missile defence tasks, to launch Tomahawk missiles with offensive purposes¹¹. In addition, there have also been cross-accusations regarding the designation and offensive capability of armed Predator SARs.

Faced with this cross-accusation, in December 2017, the Trump administration announced a strategy to respond to Russia's violations of the treaty. The U.S. published the INF Treaty Integrated Strategy¹², where it put on the table the real possibility of developing an intermediate-range missile system in Eastern Europe to curtail Russia's expansionist ambitions. As early as 2018, the U.S. Nuclear Review Posture indicated plans to develop a cruise missile to be launched against Russia if it continued to breach its treaty obligations¹³. In fact, the 2018 Nuclear Review Posture directly points to Russia

⁸ GRESSEL, Gustav. "To INF or not to INF? How unilateral withdrawal helps Moscow get away with treaty violations". European Council on Foreign Relations [online]. 24th October 2018. Available at: https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_inf_unilateral_withdrawal_moscow_treaty_violation. Date of access 25.02.2019

⁹ MAJUMDAR, Dave. "Russia's Dangerous Nuclear Forces are Back. Did Moscow violate the INF treaty?" The National Interest [online]. 14th February 2017. Available at: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/russias-dangerous-nuclear-forces-are-back-19442>. Date of access 26.02.2019

¹⁰ GRESSEL, Gustav. "To INF or not to INF? How unilateral withdrawal helps Moscow get away with treaty violations. *Op. Cit*

¹¹ "Deployment of US Mk 41 missile systems in Romania, Poland contradicts INF Treaty". Armyrecognition.com [online]. Octubre 2018. [Disponibile en: https://www.armyrecognition.com/october_2018_global_defense_security_army_news_industry/deployment_of_us_mk_41_missile_systems_in_romania_poland_contradicts_inf_treaty.html]. Fecha de acceso 6.03.2019

¹² "Trump Administration INF Treaty Integrated Strategy". U.S. Department of State [online]. 8th december 2017. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/12/276363.htm>. Date of access 25.02.2019

¹³ OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENCE. "Nuclear Posture Review". Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Defence, February 2018. pp. 8-11

as the US's main rival or enemy because of its position vis-à-vis NATO and the U.S. itself. This is due to Russia's increasing emphasis (through its arsenal modernisation programme, its refusal to reduce non-strategic nuclear forces, and repeated INF violations) on the use of its nuclear capabilities to expand its influence in the world.

Finally, on October 20, 2018, President Trump announced that the U.S. would withdraw from the INF treaty, arguing that the main reason for this decision was Russia's multiple violations of the treaty. On Saturday, February 2, 2019, Russia also announced its formal withdrawal from the INF in response to Washington's decision. At the same time, the Russian president announced a new research and development program for the construction of new hypersonic ballistic missiles, which will be added to those already present in the Russian military arsenal; and indicated that American missile sites on the territory of its allies could become targets for future military exchanges.

Beyond the fact that the main explanations offered by Washington to justify its exit from the INF have been Russia's repeated violations of the treaty, the decision does not necessarily respond to Moscow's violation of the treaty since Washington has not shown the slightest initiative to force Putin's country to comply with the treaty. Therefore, the reasons for the US's departure are necessarily different: The problem with the INF lies in the limitations it imposes on the U.S. to be able to develop short- and medium-range missiles and in particular new technologies in the field of hypersonics that both Russia and China have developed^{14 15}. In the specific case of China, it has not been affected by the INF's limitations, which has allowed it to create a very significant terrestrial arsenal of short- and medium-range ballistic missiles. For example, carrier-killers capable of destroying U.S. aircraft carriers on the high seas¹⁶. This arsenal is part of a much broader military modernisation and allows China to challenge U.S. and allied forces in Asia-Pacific¹⁷. Another example that would justify the U.S. decision is that Russia has two

¹⁴ BAEV, Pavel K. "European angst about Trump's INF Treaty withdrawal". Brookings [online]. 29th October 2018. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/10/29/european-angst-about-trumps-inf-treaty-withdrawal/>. Date of access 15.02.2019

¹⁵ GRESSEL, Gustav. "To INF or not to INF? How unilateral withdrawal helps Moscow get away with treaty violations" *Op. Cit*

¹⁶ MIZOKAMI, Kyle. "China is Testing a Ramjet-Powered 'Carrier Killer' Missile". Foxtrotalpha.jalopnik.com [online]. Octubre 2018. Disponible en: <https://foxtrotalpha.jalopnik.com/china-is-testing-a-ramjet-powered-carrier-killer-missil-183009684>. Fecha de acceso 6.03.2019

¹⁷ "The U.S. Withdrawal From the INF Treaty Is the Next Step in a Global Arms Race". Stratfor [online].

intermediate-range systems, with built-in hypersonic technology, that are ready for deployment, while the U.S. is a decade away from matching this capability¹⁸. Thus, the treaty gave no strategic advantage to the U.S. over Russia and China and their weapons modernisation programmes, and the U.S. has therefore been forced to abandon it. Therefore, INF withdrawal might be better justified by the need to reduce the gap between Russia and the U.S. with regard to the development of new hypersonic weapons than by Russia's violations of the treaty. The incentive for Washington to get rid of the treaty has gradually become an imperative. The same was true of the Russian political elite, who have long wanted to abandon the agreement and have seen Trump as the perfect excuse for doing so^{19 20}. A way out of the INF could therefore be better understood by the need to reduce the gap between Russia and the U.S. over new hypersonic weapons and with China and its deployment of short- and medium-range ballistic missiles in the Asia-Pacific. While its exit will allow the US to develop such an arsenal of missiles to challenge China and Russia, the completion of the treaty will undoubtedly fuel an arms race (the development of the new Russian hypersonic arsenal would be proof of the start of such a race) between the major powers and could lead to the disappearance of other key arms control treaties, such as the new START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty). The latter would represent an acceleration of the fall of the arms control regime.

The new hypersonic arms race

Hypersonic weapons are those that can fly at more than five times the speed of sound, travel much lower in the atmosphere than traditional ballistic missiles, and manoeuvre in mid-flight. The potential advantages are clear: hypersonic missiles would allow a nation to attack an adversary in a matter of minutes. The low trajectory of the weapons allows them to travel much further and more stealthily than other missiles and their

22nd October 2018. Available at: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/us-withdrawal-inf-treaty-russia-global-arms-race-missiles>. Date of access 25.02.2019

¹⁸ *Ibidem*

¹⁹ *Ibidem*

²⁰ FELGENHAUER, Pavel. "Russia Prepares to Make the Best of Scrapped INF Treaty". The Jamestown Foundation [online]. 25th October 2018. Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-prepares-to-make-the-best-of-scrapped-inf-treaty/>. Date of access 25.02.2019

manoeuvrability allows them to evade anti-missile defences²¹. For example, an Avangard (Yu-71) hypersonic warhead for a missile such as the RS-28 Sarmat would not follow a parabolic arc to impact its target, but would flatten its trajectory after re-entering the Earth's atmosphere, behaving like a cruise missile. It would fly at an incredibly high speed and at such a low altitude that the radar would have a hard time tracking it, and the defensive weapons would have a hard time attacking it.

With regard to the new arms race surrounding this type of weaponry, we can say that Putin already initiated it through the picturesque presentation he made at the Federal Assembly in March 2018 of the new hypersonic missiles of the Russian army. Putin obviously wanted to change the dynamics of what is a race to the bottom, abruptly putting Russia ahead of the U.S. and China²². That is why, in the same presentation, the Russian president announced the development of a new generation of RS-28 Sarmat ballistic missiles. In theory, the Sarmat could carry up to 24 HGV (hypersonic glide vehicle) warheads with a nuclear charge of between 150 and 300 kilotons each. Once released, the warheads could plan at hypersonic speed and reach targets at a distance of 17,000 km with a probable error of 10 meters. A more ambitious claim of Putin is the Kinzhal missile, which according to the Russian president can carry a nuclear or conventional warhead at a distance of more than 2,000 kilometres²³. The new Russian missile system could complement existing sea- and air-launched cruise missiles with greater mobility and agility, more difficult detection capabilities and reduced alert time, allowing for a faster or surprise attack.

In the face of this threat, the withdrawal from the INF eliminates the constrictions that prevented the U.S. from developing this type of weaponry. In fact, it has already initiated programs to develop hypersonic weapons to reduce the gap with Russia and China (such as the Tactical Boost Glide²⁴ and the Hypersonic Airbreathing Weapon Concept²⁵). To

²¹ STROUD, Matt, "Inside the race for hypersonic weapons". The Verge [online]. 6th March 2018. Available at: <https://www.theverge.com/2018/3/6/17081590/hypersonic-missiles-long-range-arms-race-putin-speech>. Date of access 25.02.2019

²² *Ibidem*

²³ *Ibid*

²⁴ ERBLAND, Peter. "Tactical Boost Glide (TBG)". Darpa.mil [online]. Disponible en: <https://www.darpa.mil/program/tactical-boost-glide>. Date of access 23.02.2019

²⁵ "Hypersonic Air-breathing Weapon Concept (HAWC)". GlobalSecurity.org [online]. Disponible en: <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/munitions/hawc.htm>. Date of access 23.02.2019

this end, the US has increased spending on research and development. According to figures provided by the DARPA (Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency), funding for hypersonic initiatives in 2017 amounted to \$85.8 million. \$108.6 million in 2018; and \$256.7 million in 2019²⁶. We can see a progressive increase in investment in this area, which would mean that the U.S. not only takes the Russian threat seriously, but is willing to engage in the hypersonic arms race to reduce the existing gap with Russia.

Once it has legally disassociated itself from the INF treaty, the U.S. will undoubtedly strengthen its capabilities on its front with China. However, the demise of such a historic arms control agreement will have serious global repercussions. In the Pacific Ocean, China is likely to continue to improve and increase its armed forces to challenge new U.S. efforts to deploy short- and medium-range missiles; and Russia will likely continue to redirect its resources towards the accumulation of a land-based arsenal of short- and medium-range missiles with hypersonic technology. All these developments will inevitably lead to a scenario of proliferation of hypersonic weapons, an escalation of tension, and ultimately a high-profile arms race.

The danger of hypersonic weapons therefore lies in the way in which they risk changing the relationship between rivals. They make the control, detection and destruction of this type of weapon much more difficult; they feed an antagonistic relationship between powers based on a logic of maximization or accumulation of this type of weapon, and that, in turn, makes crisis and conflict more likely. These risks call for reflecting on the deployment of defensive missile systems, such as the ones described above in Poland and Romania, since if these are not efficient in combating hypersonic weapons, they are likely to be used for offensive purposes, as the Russians have denounced. Consequently, hypersonic weapons or the development of hypersonic weapons is not ensuring deterrence, on the contrary, it is encouraging the development of offensive capabilities with conventional missiles.

²⁶ STROUD, Matt, "Inside the race for hypersonic weapons". *Op. Cit*

Where does Europe stand?

The collapse of the INF adds another crisis to Europe's security architecture and makes it necessary to look for alternatives to the current arms control regime. Europeans were certainly aware of the crisis surrounding the INF treaty, which means that the recent announcement by Washington and Moscow has not surprised any European leader. However, neither Obama nor Trump bothered to build a convincing case to prove Russian non-compliance or to discuss a posture following its possible abandonment; and what has been annoying is the fact that the U.S. did not consult or communicate to NATO allies its decision to abandon the treaty, thus showing the degree of deterioration of the trans-Atlantic alliance²⁷.

Reactions by European states and the EU to the withdrawal of both powers from the treaty have not been long in coming: European governments have indicated that such an arms race between the U.S. and Russia is an unacceptable risk to European security. The collapse of the INF treaty has also caused some scaremongering in Europe because this will be the first time since the end of the Cold War that the European states will stand right between the intermediate-range nuclear missiles of Russia and the U.S.²⁸, once again placing Europe at the geopolitical centre of an arms race and of any potential conflict between the two countries. For example, the likely installation of weapons systems by the U.S. will make European states targets for potential Russian attacks, which will reduce the security of Europe as a whole. Consequently, European security concerns and diplomatic efforts against the suppression of the INF Treaty by the U.S. and Russia are entirely legitimate, rational and valid²⁹.

²⁷ LOPINOT, Quentin, "American withdrawal from the INF treaty: What consequence's for Europe's security". Institute Montaigne [online]. 29th October 2018. Available at: <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/blog/american-withdrawal-inf-treaty-what-consequences-europes-defense>. Date of access 25.02.2019

²⁸ "U.S., Russia: The Rivals Threaten to Abandon a Key Nuclear Treaty". Stratfor [online]. 3rd October 2018. Available at: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/us-russia-rivals-threaten-abandon-key-nuclear-treaty>. Date of access 25.02.2019

²⁹ BORGER, JULIAN. "European diplomats mount last-ditch effort to stop US scrapping INF treaty". The Guardian [online]. 18th November 2018. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/18/inf-treaty-european-diplomats-us-russia>. Date of access 25.02.2019

German Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas, has already criticized the announcement of U.S. withdrawal, and other Washington allies in Europe have been forced to raise similar concerns in public and in private. The concern will only grow as Russia deploys its intermediate-range missiles to its western border and the U.S. responds with its own deployment in Europe. Countries such as Germany, due to the fact that will stop using nuclear energy by 2022 and because of the strong anti-nuclear movement in the country, are likely to oppose the deployment of such missiles on their territory, but other countries such as Poland, Romania, or the Baltic States might be more willing to host these missile units, especially if they guarantee an additional U.S. military presence on their territory³⁰.

The common position of European states (to the extent that they can do so) has turned this crisis into an opportunity to exert greater pressure on Russia to reduce its nuclear ambitions. However, Europeans are also convinced that Washington has made no serious effort to negotiate an alternative to the INF. They know that John Bolton, who has been chosen as key negotiator, condemns arms control as an undesirable limitation on the primary role of the U.S. in the world. And while the argument of countering China's growing capabilities may carry weight in U.S. debates, for European politicians it simply means that their security has been sacrificed for the sake of the US's Asia-Pacific strategy.

The main negative consequences of the collapse of the INF treaty for European security are: First, that both powers will be free to develop and deploy short- and medium-range missiles. Second, in the absence of a treaty on such weapons, it is not possible to put pressure on Moscow with regard to its intermediate-range missiles. For example, Carl Bildt (Co-Chairman of the European Council on Foreign Relations) has pointed out that "The disappearance of the INF treaty will allow Russia to deploy its Kalibr cruise missiles with a range of 1,500 km from ground launchers. This would quickly cover the whole of Europe with an additional threat"³¹. Without the INF treaty, Russia could freely launch an

³⁰ "Poland: Warsaw's Push for a U.S. Base Faces an Uphill Climb". Stratfor [online]. 19th september 2018. Available at: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/poland-warsaw-tries-win-washington-approval-us-base-polish-soil>. Date of access 25.02.2019

³¹ 'Huge mistake': Fears of arms race as US, Russia suspend INF pact". Aljazeera.com [online]. 3rd february 2019. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/02/mistake-fears-arms-race-russia-suspend-inf-pact-190203152747235.html>. Date of access 25.02.2019

unlimited number of intermediate-range cruise missiles in the vicinity of Europe. Third, the possible appetite of some European governments to capitalise on the installation of conventional intermediate-range cruise missiles, should the U.S. decide to deploy them, could accentuate NATO's division³². Since it is customary for the Kremlin to arouse discontent among NATO allies, one can bet that a mixture of threats, openings and disinformation by Russia would deepen these differences³³. This fracture in NATO may also become a fracture within the EU itself due to whether or not the member states are in tune with the U.S. At the same time, Europe is in a relatively weak position to cope with another missile crisis as most European decision-makers are unfamiliar with nuclear deterrence. Finally, Russian analysts such as Pavel Felgenhauer have recognised that the development of “such a weapon would avoid missile defence systems in Europe and the Middle East. That takes the situation to a higher, more dangerous level... and that makes nuclear war more possible”³⁴.

In short, for the purpose of the treaty, NATO and Europe in particular face the need to assess the implications of the new Russian hypersonic missiles³⁵. All European states, and Washington, have assessed the possibilities of a set of military and diplomatic responses against Russia³⁶. These could include expanding NATO ballistic missile defence with cruise missile defence capabilities, increasing the readiness level of NATO double-capacity aircraft, strengthening the credibility of the U.S. expanded nuclear deterrent in Europe, deploying a conventional land-based cruise missile in Europe under the INF treaty³⁷, U.S. efforts to remodel Ohio class submarines, and introducing new sea-

³² KUBIAK, Katarzyna. “The INF Treaty: European Perspectives on the Impending U.S. Withdrawal | Arms Control Association”. Armscontrol.org [online]. December 2018. Disponible en: <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2018-12/features/inf-treaty-european-perspectives-impending-us-withdrawal>. Date of access 25.02.2019

³³ GRESSEL, Gustav. “To INF or not to INF? How unilateral withdrawal helps Moscow get away with treaty violations” *Op. Cit*

³⁴ *Ibidem*

³⁵ KUBIAK, Katarzyna. “The INF Treaty: European Perspectives on the Impending U.S. Withdrawal | Arms Control Association” *Op. Cit*

³⁶ KAMPF, Lena and MASCOLO, Georg. “Nato: Russlands Atomprogramm verstößt gegen Abkommen”. Süddeutsche Zeitung [online]. 31st August 2017. Available at: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/abruestungsabkommen-nato-russlands-atomprogramm-verstoest-gegen-abkommen-1.3647876>. Date of access 25.02.2019

³⁷ OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENCE. “Nuclear Posture Review”. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Defence, febrero 2018.

launched nuclear cruise missiles into the US arsenal³⁸. However, any response involving arms deployment by NATO will worsen relations between the alliance and Russia, accentuate Moscow's feeling of being under siege, and consequently Russia may react with an escalation of tension. While the end of the INF will not automatically translate into a military confrontation between Russia and NATO, it will increase the risks of misperceptions and misunderstandings between the two sides. So, in the current situation, when tensions between NATO and Russia are very high, a small misunderstanding or an accident could lead to an escalation of tension. Moreover, the fewer agreements we have in the area of arms control, the greater the risk that unforeseen events will ultimately lead to military confrontations. Finally, the end of the treaty could hinder the prospects of extending existing agreements, such as the New START Treaty, and negotiating new ones³⁹.

Conclusions

U.S. withdrawal from the INF treaty is just another episode of a trend characterized by the elimination of arms control treaties. The cumulative effect of this trend is lower global security^{40 41}. The crisis and the collapse of the INF thus forces us to seek alternative ways of limiting the number of intermediate-range missiles rather than banning them altogether, geographically limiting the deployment of cruise missiles, banning nuclear-tipped cruise missiles, or multilateralizing and extending the treaty's scope. Regardless of whether the treaty is dead, its normative and geographical framework could be adjusted in such a way as to cover a broader European security system. For example, through a multilateral treaty between NATO and Russia or the U.S., the UK, France and Russia, which also includes new weapons systems such as hypersonic weapons⁴².

³⁸ *Ibidem*

³⁹ KÜHN, Ulrich, "The New Arms Race and Its Consequences". Carnegie Endowment for International Peace [online]. 13th december 2018. Available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/12/13/new-arms-race-and-its-consequences-pub-77957>. Date of access 15.02.2019

⁴⁰ "The U.S. Withdrawal From the INF Treaty Is the Next Step in a Global Arms Race". Stratfor [online]. 2018. Available: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/us-withdrawal-inf-treaty-russia-global-arms-race-missiles>. Date of access 25.02.2019

⁴¹ SZÉNÁSI, Endre. *US Withdrawal from INF Treaty: Policy Implications*. Op. Cit p. 3

⁴² BAEV, Pavel K. "European angst about Trump's INF Treaty withdrawal" Op. Cit.

On the other hand, if the U.S. is not willing to continue discussing arms control, Europeans should start taking on more responsibilities in this area. At the end of the day, it is their own security that is at stake. This means that Europe has to discuss the capabilities and behaviours it considers most worrying, along with the ways in which the latter might be constrained. As previously indicated, the death of the INF is going to have a negative impact on nuclear disarmament issues, and will lead to an arms race between nuclear powers. In this sense, European states can perceive nuclear deterrence as a valid principle to guarantee their security against aggressive nuclear states, and consequently put on the table initiatives in favour of developing this facet of common security and defence⁴³. This would necessarily require an in-depth study of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), both in strategic and capabilities terms. However, divisions among European states have already been noted on this issue.

Finally, the focus is now on the new START, a 2010 agreement between the U.S. and Russia to limit the number of strategic missiles deployed to 700 and strategic warheads to 1,550, to see whether the trend of abandoning arms control agreements is consolidated or not. This is the most important arms control agreement that still exists between the U.S. and Russia. If the new START ceases to be binding in 2021, there will be no treaty between the U.S. and Russia that controls and constrains their nuclear capabilities. Moscow is currently interested in extending it and the treaty is not controversial in Washington either. However, an abrupt collapse of the INF treaty, coupled with a further accumulation of hypersonic weapons, could be a serious threat to the longevity of the new START. And if both treaties collapse the start of an arms race between the U.S., China and Russia at all operational and strategic levels is guaranteed.

Manuel Francisco Herrera Almela

Geopolitical Analysis Area DICOES / SEGENPOL

Member of the GLOBALCODES research group

⁴³ Ibid