



# How to Rebalance US Global Security Cheaply and Easily

December 5, 2018 **Stephen Blank, Peter Huessy**

**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Economic Sanctions; Energy Security; Europe Military; Military Innovation; Missile Defense; Science and Technology; China; Russia

- Russia, evidently not restrained by the agreement, is already building missiles outside the INF treaty, according to an October 29, 2018 report from the Congressional Research Service. The bottom line is: If the Russians do not comply with the INF arms control treaty, there is no treaty to be saved.
- Worse, as China was never a party to the INF treaty, it is deploying thousands of such INF range missiles in the Pacific, thereby putting the USA and its allies at a serious military disadvantage.
- To counter such threats effectively and stand up to the culture of intimidation and threats of both Russia and China, the US needs create a conventional missile and nuclear deterrent capability that is at least on a par with those of Moscow and Beijing. Such deployments, rather than undermining arms control, might even induce Russia and China to negotiate any future arms negotiations with the US in better faith, while simultaneously strengthening US security.
- If created with US allies in the Pacific, such relatively inexpensive and easily produced conventionally armed missiles would, in short order, rebalance the Pacific security situation in the favor of the US and its Indo-Pacific alliances.



The reason the Soviets eventually signed the INF treaty in 1987 was because the US and NATO deployment of hundreds of Pershing and ground launched cruise missiles in Western Europe exemplified NATO solidarity and vitiated the coercive threat that the earlier Soviet SS-20 missile deployments had hoped to secure to prevent a NATO response to potential Soviet aggression. Pictured: Pershing II missiles at Fort Bliss McGregor Range. (Image source: US Dept. of Defense)

The US renunciation of the 1987 United States-Soviet Union Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) has generated much skepticism in the arms-control community – particularly in much of Europe, and from Japan.

These countries hoped not only to keep Russia and the United States in the 1987 treaty, (despite Russia's major violations of the INF treaty) but also to persuade China to become a party to the treaty and thus be forced to eliminate the multiple hundreds of INF-range missiles China has deployed in Asia ranged against US and its allied interests.

Critics have presented the following five main arguments against the US move:

1. It enables Russia to build as many INF missiles as it likes, while simultaneously allowing Moscow to blame Washington for renegeing on the treaty.
2. It imperils the entire structure of arms control, including the possible 2021 extension of the United States-Russia 2010 New START Treaty.
3. It would require extensive consultation with Europe or risk undermining allied cohesion and offering Moscow new targets in its campaign of political warfare against the NATO alliance.
4. It is unnecessary -- despite Russia's violations -- because the US has adequate conventional air-launched and sea-launched cruise missiles to keep Russia at risk and defend Europe, and presumably America's Pacific allies, against China.
5. It concedes a strategic advantage to Russia, as no INF-equivalent missile is in production by the United States to match Russia's INF missile deployments.

When examined, however, these arguments do not hold up to scrutiny.

Given the fact that the Russian and Chinese threats are present and growing, the US decision to withdraw from the treaty and deploy weapons such as more missiles to counter these threats, actually strengthens – not weakens – both deterrence and the defense of America's allies.

Specifically, Russia, evidently not restrained by the agreement, is already building missiles outside the INF treaty, according to an October 29, 2018 report from the Congressional Research Service.

Without a parallel United States and NATO response, the missile imbalance in Europe could expand to the detriment of the security of the US and its allies, thereby undermining the very deterrence that the INF treaty enhanced when both parties were compliant.

Staying within the INF treaty, as the United States is still doing, has evidently not restrained Russians from violating their treaties. Why, then, would *continued* United States unilateral adherence to the treaty change that?

However much the US would like to disregard the treaty violations of an adversary, its non-compliance threatens not only Western -- but also global – security.

The implications of Russia's violations of the INF treaty, as well as the implications of both Russia's and China's continued rapid production of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles (Beijing is not a party to the INF treaty) need to be taken seriously.

Furthermore, Russia has violated not only the INF treaty, but, according to former senior White House nuclear arms official Frank Miller, most major arms control, military and security agreements that it has signed over the past two decades.

Russia's violation of the INF treaty was also recently confirmed by senior defense officials in the Netherlands, as well as by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, who said that while he does not expect a nuclear buildup in Europe, he did back United States allegations that Russia has been violating the INF pact.

America's other NATO allies agreed that the Russians were violating the 1987 INF Treaty, which bans an entire class of weapons: all land-based cruise and ballistic missiles with a range between 310-3,410 miles. "The treaty," Stoltenberg concluded, "is not working if it's only being respected by one side. The problem, the threat, the challenge is the Russian behavior...has been ongoing for a long time."

As senior American administration officials have emphasized, the United States will continue to invite Russia to come back into the INF treaty if it will continue its limitations. To date Russia has rejected such offers

In this respect, and contrary to criticism, all of NATO is on the same page, putting the blame for breaking the treaty squarely on the Russians.

Yet another charge is that leaving the INF treaty would imperil another major arms control agreement such as the 2010 New Start agreement between the United States and Russia and thus undermine US security. But would the United States' departure from the INF threaten the overall arms control framework represented by the INF and other nuclear arms treaties?

Here are the facts:

The most important other nuclear arms agreements are the 2010 New Start treaty, along with the 1969 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which has 189 state signatories, including the United States and Russia. The United States is in complete compliance with the New Start and NPT treaties and remains committed to them.

According to the US nuclear specialist Mark Schneider, when Russia released its official nuclear-weapon figures earlier this year -- as stipulated in the New START treaty -- and when it announced a reduction in nuclear warheads, Moscow allegedly deployed more than two dozen additional multiple warhead missiles.

Thus, while Russia's continued compliance with the New Start treaty is under review, and despite Russian existing and possible further treaty violations, the United States is continuing to adhere to all its nuclear arms obligations.

In addition, what of the assertion the United States already has adequate forces to deal with Russian INF range missile threats to NATO so Russian violations of the INF treaty are of no consequence?

The United States does have -- as not prohibited by the INF treaty -- cruise missiles of INF range that can be launched from ships or airplanes. The range of these missiles, however, is not necessarily adequate to deal with current and projected threats. Also, land-based missiles are less expensive to build and easier to deploy. That option should be open to the United States.

In addition, while most attention on the INF issue has centered on Europe and the missile balance there, the US would do well to remember that both Russia and China habitually brandish missiles as well as nuclear weapons against US allies to try to fragment not only America's European allies but those in the Indo-Pacific as well.

The US therefore faces multiple kinds of deception characteristic of China's military posture. Although Beijing often declares that it has a "no first use" nuclear doctrine, it is not a party to any nuclear-arms-reduction or missile limiting treaty, and therefore does not disclose its true missile and nuclear capacities, doctrine and strategy.

US military commanders in Asia and US Pacific Command (PACOM) thus have voiced growing anxiety about the military missile balance in the Asia-Pacific theater especially with respect to INF type range missiles deployed by China.

To counter such threats effectively and stand up to the culture of intimidation and threats of both Russia and China, the US needs create a conventional missile and nuclear deterrent capability that is at least on a par with those of Moscow and Beijing.

Such deployments, rather than undermining arms control, might even induce Russia and China to negotiate any future arms negotiations with the US in better faith, while simultaneously strengthening US security.

The Reagan administration, for instance, and its European allies deployed Pershing and ground launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) in Europe in 1983-4 to counter multiple thousands of Soviet SS-20 missiles deployed starting in the 1970s.

While the Soviets first walked out of the arms negotiations in 1984 when the US deployed the Pershing and GLCM missiles, the Soviets eventually came back to the negotiating table and agreed to the Reagan administration proposal to ban all such missiles, the act that resulted in the very 1987 INF treaty discussed here.

The reason the Soviets came back to the table and eventually signed the INF treaty was because when the United States and NATO together deployed hundreds of Pershing missiles and GLCMs in Italy, Great Britain, West Germany and Belgium, these deployments exemplified NATO solidarity and vitiated the coercive threat that the earlier Soviet SS-20 missile deployments had hoped to secure to prevent a NATO response to potential Soviet aggression.

The bottom line is: If the Russians do not comply with the INF arms control treaty, there is no treaty to be saved. It is senseless to pine for a treaty that only one power -- the United States -- observes. Self-abnegation here only enables adversaries such as the Russians or the Chinese to shoot such missiles first and make threats that the US will then, because the US has no comparable missiles, not be able to answer.

Those who warn against US withdrawal from the treaty seem to forget the important lesson that made it such a viable tool three decades ago in the first place: then-President Ronald Reagan called it "peace through strength."

In short, in deploying military forces -- especially new land-based missiles -- the US needs to deter its enemies. In the absence of verified and sound treaties, the US, to counter these threats, would therefore be prudent at *least* to go forward with new missile deployments.

In recent and important testimony, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats explained in detail how new Russian INF range missiles would be used to "coerce" European NATO allies not to respond to Russian aggression.

Coats further noted that the United States must be able to counter Russian missiles with its own missiles—unconstrained by the INF treaty -- to which now only the US complies ---to give the United States a more flexible and robust defense capability. Current US sea and air-launched cruise missiles do not necessarily have the INF type of range needed to counter Russian threats.

Worse, as China was never a party to the INF treaty, it is deploying thousands of such INF range missiles in the Pacific, thereby putting the USA and its allies at a serious military disadvantage.

This point was repeated by the two Chairmen of the Congressional defense committees in a recent *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, in which they explicitly warned of USA deficiencies in long range cruise missiles.

While it is true that the United States does not currently have in production an INF class land-based missile, it can easily ramp up such production, along with sea- and air-based systems. Thankfully, land-based systems are inexpensive and not difficult to build.

If created with US allies in the Pacific, such relatively inexpensive and easily produced conventionally armed missiles would, in short order, rebalance the Pacific security situation in the favor of the US and its Indo-Pacific alliances.

*Stephen Blank is a senior fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council; Peter Huessy is director of Strategic Deterrent Studies at the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies.*

---

© 2019 - American Foreign Policy Council