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Calling Putin's Bluff (Or Not?)

An Assessment of Russian Attachment to the INF Treaty and Its Implications

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**Abstract**

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Four years after the US State Department first publicly accused the Russian Federation of violating the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the dispute surrounding the compliance of both parties has largely remained unchanged. Despite numerous indications of interest in withdrawal from the INF Treaty, Russian policymakers have yet to make an effort to do so. Instead, these officials have used the opportunity to express their continued interest in the survival of the INF Treaty, and to condemn the behavior of US military and political elites that

the Russians claim has weakened the legitimacy of the treaty. Ultimately, evidence suggests that one can tie Russian retention of the INF Treaty to a desire to maintain strategic parity with the United States while upholding Russia's reputation as a leader in the field of international arms control. This indicates that the Russians perceive the INF Treaty as both a guarantor of Russian security, and a tool through which to promote their interpretation of the moral and practical principles driving the international arms control regime.

Ultimately, evidence suggests that one can tie Russian retention of the INF Treaty to a desire to maintain strategic parity with the United States. At the same time, formally adhering to the ideals of the INF Treaty preserves Russia's reputation as a responsible participant and leader in the field of international arms control that can credibly advocate for a distinctly Russian interpretation of the nature and goals of arms control to the larger international community.

With this in mind, US policymakers can expect their Russian counterparts to push US policymakers to make concessions benefitting Russian security during future INF Treaty negotiations. On the other hand, these experts can expect Russian policymakers to respond to US withdrawal from the INF Treaty in an extremely negative manner that will incorporate political and military actions that destabilize Europe, and undermine NATO unity.

The potential risks surrounding US withdrawal from the INF Treaty suggest that US policymakers must make every possible effort to preserve the Treaty. This can be achieved through either wider dissemination of technical information surrounding the Russian violation, or the organization of technological demonstrations for US and Russian experts of systems evoking concern from both parties.

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## **Glossary**

ABM: Anti Ballistic Missile- Referring to missiles and systems designed to destroy other missiles.

GLBM: Ground Launched Ballistic Missile.

GLCM: Ground Launched Cruise Missile

INF: Intermediate Range Forces- Nuclear weapons with ranges prohibited by the INF Treaty.

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Alliance.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction to Question, and Study**

### *1.1 Introduction:*

Since coming into force on June 1, 1988, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, or INF Treaty has dramatically contributed to global stability by eliminating an entire class of nuclear weapons from the stockpiles of the United States, and the Soviet Union. This treaty has repeatedly been recognized for playing a major role in the end of the Cold War. Several experts continue to refer to this treaty as a vital guarantor of continued cooperation and international political stability in Europe, and throughout the world.<sup>1</sup> However, to the dismay of experts and scholars worldwide, recent violations of the binding provisions in the treaty have brought the continued legitimacy of this celebrated agreement into question. In July of 2014, the US State Department formally assessed the Russian Federation to be in violation of the INF treaty due to its testing and development of a ground launched intermediate range missile with a range falling into the parameters of those prohibited by the INF treaty.<sup>2</sup> In response, officials from the Russian Federation have argued that these tests do not represent violations of the INF treaty. They go on to assert that they themselves have concerns regarding the compliance of the United States with the treaty on account of its deployment of missile defense installations with conventional strike capabilities in Europe.<sup>3</sup> This retort stands in direct contradiction to numerous threats by Russian

policymakers to withdraw from the INF Treaty in the face of a growing perceived Western security threat.

In the face of such hostility and contradiction, the Russian Federation has still not withdrawn from the INF Treaty after almost four years of intense discussion with US officials, and shows no sign of diverting from this course. The objective of this paper involves uncovering the justifications behind this behavior and the significance of these justifications as part of broader Russian national security considerations. This paper will finally attempt to facilitate the decision making process for US policymakers by providing information regarding how they can expect their Russian counterparts to react in the event that the United States withdraws from the INF Treaty, or continues to pursue resolution of their compliance issues diplomatically without eliminating the INF Treaty.

Content analysis of statements from a variety of Russian policymakers, and academics suggests that one can tie Russian retention of the INF Treaty to a desire to achieve two objectives: To use the terms of the treaty to maintain strategic parity with the United States and to uphold Russia's reputation as a leader in the field of international arms control. This suggests that the Russians perceive the INF Treaty as both a guarantor of Russian security vis a vis the US and NATO and a tool through which to promote their interpretation of the moral and practical principles driving the international arms control regime. Therefore, US policymakers can expect their Russian counterparts to consciously or unconsciously view US attempts to save the INF Treaty as an opportunity to secure concessions from the United States that bolster Russian security. Conversely, US officials can expect the Russians to implement a severe response with a rhetorical and military-technical angle that will seriously threaten stability on the European continent. Ultimately, the potential consequences of withdrawal from the INF Treaty suggest that

despite the difficulties surrounding negotiation, US officials should make every possible effort to preserve the INF Treaty through bilateral negotiation with their Russian counterparts.

### *1.2: Methodology:*

This paper will attempt to answer the above research questions through content analysis of statements and analysis from policymakers and academics from both Western and Russian circles. More specifically, the paper will apply the evidence provided by these sources to modern international relations theories in order to incorporate these examples into a broader theoretical framework. Incorporation of the assessments and statements of Russian and Western officials into this framework facilitates the recognition of the significance of this information for signatories of the INF Treaty and for international stability as a whole. This in turn can supplement the decision making process for US policymakers by providing them with the information necessary to anticipate the reaction of their Russian counterparts to their implementation of policies intended to resolve the dispute surrounding the INF Treaty. The paper distinguishes sources relevant to a particular international relations theory based on the manner in which the creators of these sources frame the issues they discuss in the source. For example, when a Russian policymaker portrays the current dispute over the INF Treaty in terms of its relevance exclusively to Russian national security interest, the paper regards this source as one promoting a realist interpretation of the problem. By this same logic, the paper considers statements that present Russia as a responsible member of the international community attempting to resolve issues of global significance as those presenting a more constructivist or liberal interpretation of the dispute.

This paper takes this approach not necessarily to gauge the level of relevance of one theory or another to this particular dispute. Instead, it aims to assess whether evidence supports the application of these theories to the issue at all, and if so what they might suggest about how US policymakers can anticipate their Russian counterparts to respond to the hardening of the stance of the United States on the INF dispute in one direction or the other.

## **Chapter 2: Understanding the Question**

### *2.1: Chapter Summary*

Since discussion on the topic began, issues related to Nuclear Arms Control have proven notoriously difficult to conceptualize, and often require those studying these issues to gain a significant amount of contextual knowledge in order to properly conceptualize the questions they seek to answer. The content touched on in this paper does not divert from this precedent.

Therefore, before addressing questions regarding how the provisions of the INF Treaty have influenced Russian national security considerations, one must first fully understand why these questions are worth answering in the first place. In the interest of accomplishing this, this chapter will provide readers with an overview of important provisions within the INF Treaty<sup>1</sup>, how the Russian Federation has allegedly violated some of these provisions. Finally, the chapter will discuss the incentives for the Russian Federation to violate the INF Treaty. If US allegations about the Russian deployment of missiles that violate the INF Treaty are grounded in truth, then these deployments violate Articles I, IV, VI, and VII of the treaty. Russian officials including

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<sup>1</sup> In the interest of space, this chapter in its current form will not cover the historical background of the INF Treaty. For background on this, please refer to the following link : <https://www.state.gov/t/avc/trty/102360.htm>

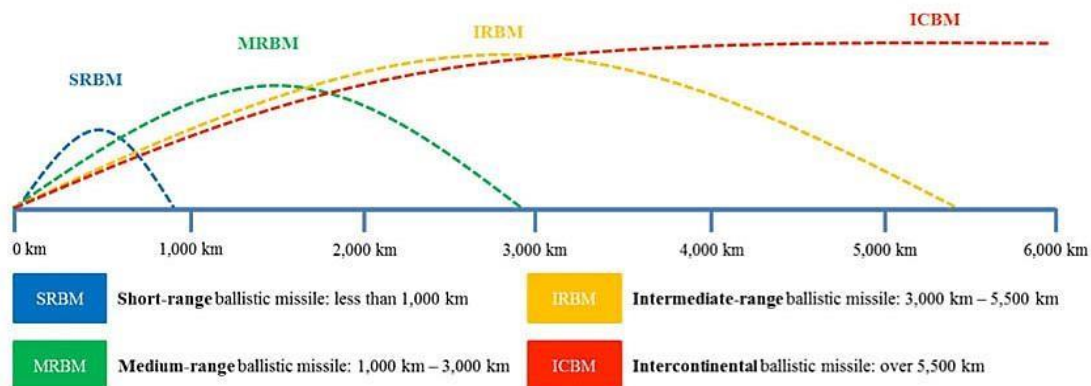
President Vladimir Putin have asserted that the expansion of Western conventional, and missile defense forces and systems have made it impossible for the Russian Federation to continue to remain a party to the INF Treaty. Despite this, the Russian Federation has not withdrawn from the INF Treaty and has vehemently denied all allegations of its violation.

## *2.2: Important Provisions/Definitions of the INF Treaty Itself*

In finer terms, the INF treaty, or the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate Range and Shorter Range Missiles requires the signatories to eliminate their intermediate, and shorter-range missiles, and not to build such systems in the future.<sup>4</sup> Before proceeding further, the treaty first defines which weapons the treaty prohibits. For the purposes of the treaty:

- A ballistic missile is “a missile that has a ballistic trajectory over most of its flight path.”
- A Ground Launched Ballistic Missile (GLBM) is a ballistic missile launched from the ground that serves as a weapons delivery system.
- A cruise missile is “An unmanned, self-propelled vehicle that sustains flight through the use of aerodynamic lift over most of its flight path.”
- A Ground Launched Cruise Missile (GLCM) is a cruise missile launched from the ground that serves as a weapons delivery system.
- An intermediate range missile is a ground launched ballistic missile, or ground launched cruise missile with a maximum range between 1,000 and 5,500 kilometers.
- A shorter-range missile is a ground launched ballistic, or cruise missile with a maximum range between 500, and 1,000 kilometers.<sup>5</sup>

The limits of the INF treaty specifically apply not only to missiles that fall within the ranges listed above, but also to the launchers of such missiles, the support facilities and equipment designed to produce, deploy, and maintain these missiles. The INF compels the signatories to eliminate all of these elements along with the intermediate range, and shorter-range missiles themselves.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the INF treaty does not forbid the use of weapons delivery systems that fall under its range restrictions entirely. For example, the treaty states that its restrictions apply specifically to ground launched INF weapons, launchers, and support facilities/equipment.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the treaty does not prohibit the use of intermediate ranged weapons systems fired from planes, submarines, or warships. Additionally, the treaty specifically permits the use of missile systems launched from sea, or land specifically designed to “intercept a target not on the face of the Earth” in Article 7, which suggests that the treaty does not technically prohibit the development of anti-ballistic missile systems.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 2.1:** Missile range classifications as described in the INF Treaty.

([http://tutorials.nti.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ballistic-missile-categories\\_.jpg](http://tutorials.nti.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ballistic-missile-categories_.jpg))

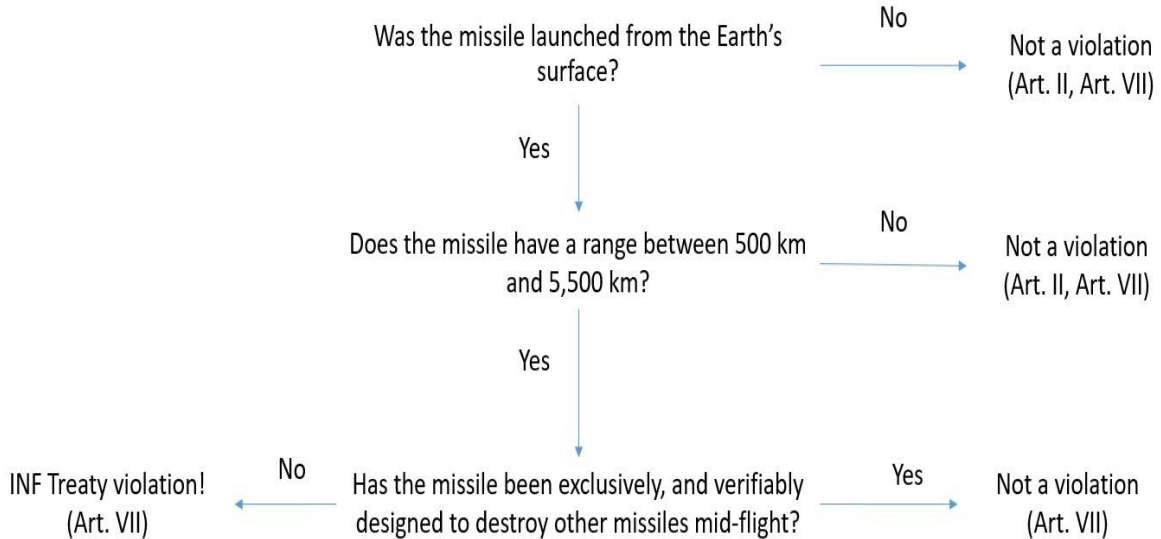
Although the INF treaty only applies to a particularly specific class of nuclear weapons, it places extremely severe restrictions on the development of any weapons delivery system that falls within the range limitations laid out in the treaty, along with the associated support equipment necessary to operate these missiles. One can find a particularly clear example of this stringency by surveying Article 7 of the INF treaty. This section of the treaty states that any test flight of a weapon that falls under the description of an intermediate range, or shorter-range missile set forth in the treaty immediately subjects every missile based off this prototype to INF prohibitions. Furthermore, the treaty states that if any launcher fires a weapons delivery system to which the limitations laid out in the INF apply, then the INF's restrictions apply to all launchers of that model as well.<sup>9</sup>

In short, the INF treaty explicitly prohibits the production, development, test flight, and deployment of any new models of ground launched missiles that can carry nuclear warheads to targets within the range restrictions specified in the treaty. A single launch of a missile that falls within the definition of a ground launched ballistic missile, or ground launched cruise missile as described in the treaty represents a violation that must lead to the immediate elimination of the launcher involved in the test, and all those of the same model that also fall under the restrictions of the treaty.

As a whole, the INF treaty uses extremely specific language regarding which types of weapons delivery systems it prohibits. For those weapons that fall under its restrictions, it severely limits the ability of the signatories to retain these weapons without violating the treaty. This has not only made it easier for both the United States, and the Soviet Union/Russian

Federation to ensure the elimination of these types of delivery vehicles, but it has also made it far easier to recognize when either party violates the expansive set of provisions in the treaty.

In the event that either signatories expresses concerns about the other party's compliance with the Treaty, Article XIII compels both sides to resolve these concerns through negotiation in a forum called the Special Verification Committee, or SVC.<sup>10</sup> While imposing heavy restrictions on the nuclear stockpiles of both states, Article XV of the INF Treaty also provides both signatories with the legal means to withdraw from the Treaty in the event that "extraordinary events related to the subject matter of this Treaty" jeopardize the signatory's "supreme interests."



**Figure 2.2:** A reference for what does and does not constitute a violation of the INF Treaty.

### *2.3: Russian Violations of the INF Treaty*

With a general understanding of what exactly the provisions of the INF Treaty do, and do not permit, one can begin to evaluate the accusations put forth regarding the violation of the INF Treaty by the Russian Federation. On July 29, 2014, a representative from the US State Department announced that the Russian Federation had violated the INF Treaty. Although the report does not go into the technical details behind the violation, the State Department did argue that the Russian Federation had violated the provisions within the treaty obliging the parties “not to possess, produce or flight test a ground launched cruise missile with a range capability of 50 to 5,500 kilometers, or to produce launchers of such missiles.”<sup>11</sup> When the State Department released its annual report on the compliance of states with arms control agreements and commitments, it elaborated on this accusation by citing exactly which provisions of the treaty they believed that the Russian Federation had violated.<sup>12</sup> These statements indicate that the United States believed that the Russian Federation had begun testing and development of a ground launched cruise missile with a range prohibited in the treaty. Nuclear weapons policy expert Amy Woolf asserts in a report to American legislators that although some speculation still exists about which Russian missile type has caused concern; evidence now clearly suggests that the Russians have violated the treaty by developing a cruise missile called the SSC-8. According to Woolf, some officials speculate that this missile is the land-based variant of the Russian sea launched Kalibr-NK cruise missile, which has a range exceeding 1,500 kilometers.<sup>13</sup>

If the prototype of the SSC-8 missile truly does have a range exceeding 500 kilometers, but not exceeding 5,500 kilometers, then the prototype, and all missiles based off its design fall under the treaty’s definition of intermediate range, ground launched cruise missiles, and the Russian Federation has violated the INF Treaty as per the restrictions placed in Article VII.

Being found in possession of an intermediate ranged ground launched cruise missile weapons system makes the Russian Federation in violation of Article I, Article IV, Article VI, and all other provisions obligating signatories not to develop intermediate ranged forces in the future.

#### *2.4: Rationales behind the potential violation*

The utility offered by the possession of INF for In their article discussing the current obstacles to the creation of an arms control treaty that reduces US and Russian tactical nuclear weapons stockpiles, scholars Emily Saunders, Ariana Rowberry, and Brian Fearnly point out that before progress on such an agreement can take place, negotiators must first assure that reducing Russian nuclear stockpiles will not threaten Russian security.<sup>14</sup> They go on to explain that due to current limitations of Russian conventional forces in terms of the number and quality of personnel to bolster its military strength, the Russian political-military leadership has come to view Russia's tactical nuclear stockpile as a valuable tool with which to combat a conventionally superior NATO force in an attack on the Russian Federation.<sup>15</sup> The current Russian reliance on their nuclear deterrent to combat a large-scale NATO conventional offensive suggests that the Russian military may advocate for the deployment of intermediate range nuclear weapons to deploy nuclear forces greater distances away from the frontline. Such deployments provide the military with a greater level of flexibility in combat situations by allowing them to launch nuclear weapons capable of eliminating conventional forces threatening the Russian Federation at distances where NATO strike forces cannot eliminate them before launch. One can find evidence of similar considerations in the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation from 2010, which firmly dictates that the Russian Federation reserves the right to utilize its nuclear stockpile in response to attacks.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, this document makes vividly clear that Russian military

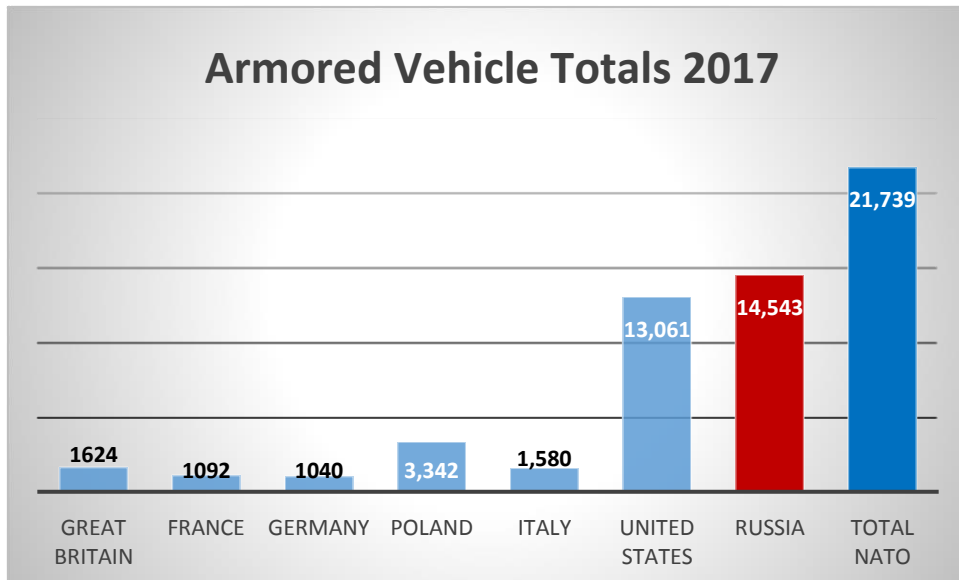
officials view the expansion of the NATO, and consequently the pool of conventional forces at the disposal of the Alliance, as a major threat to Russian security, with the Military Doctrine of 2010 going so far as to list the expansion of NATO as the first main external danger to the Russian state.<sup>17</sup>

#### *2.4.1: INF as a conventional force equalizer.*

Figure 2.1 best illustrates the connection between Russian concerns about NATO conventional power, and their desire to resort to nuclear weapons use to allay these concerns. Taken using data from a 2018 publication from the International Institute for Strategic Studies, figure 2.1 shows the total number of tanks, artillery pieces, and infantry fighting vehicles possessed by the Russian Federation, and several key NATO members.<sup>2</sup> One can see from the chart that although Russian vehicle stockpiles exceed those of any other state listed, the combined stockpile of the NATO members listed exceeds that of the Russian Federation by almost 33%. This figure does not account for the contributions for the remainder of NATO member states, which would bring the NATO total to a significantly higher level than that pictured here. In the face of such a disparity, one can understand why Russian military officials may feel more inclined to utilize nuclear weapons in the event of a conventional engagement with NATO.<sup>c</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> As opposed to comparing defense expenditures, or active personnel levels for each of the listed countries because these vehicles play the central role in large scale modern conventional engagements, and in conventional arms reduction treaties (Blank, Arms Control and European Security, p. 4) <sup>c</sup> Recently, the conventional force advantage enjoyed by NATO in Europe has come under an increasing level of scrutiny. A report from the Rand Corporation in 2017 actually projects NATO as at an immediate conventional disadvantage against Russian forces in the event of an outbreak of hostilities, as the Russian military presence in this area currently dwarfs that of the Baltic States, and their NATO allies. Further research is necessary to assess the significance of these considerations ([https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2400/RR2402/RAND\\_RR2402.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2400/RR2402/RAND_RR2402.pdf))



**Figure 2.3** Armored Vehicle Totals of Russian Federation, and 6 major NATO States<sup>18</sup>

In fact, evidence suggests that in some circles within the Russian academic community, the mere suggestion of utilizing non-nuclear methods of deterrence can spark severe levels of backlash. For example, following the publication of the 2014 revision of the Russian Military Doctrine, Russian analyst Konstantin Sivkov berated the Russian General Staff for heightening the emphasis on the use of “non-nuclear deterrence” by Russian forces. In an article on a military-technical news site called VPK (Voenno-promyshlennyi Kiur’er), Sivkov complains that the definition of non-nuclear deterrence system in the 2014 doctrine as “a complex of international-political, military, and military-technical measures” encompasses such a broad set of actions that it fails to clarify what a “non-nuclear deterrence system” even is. He condemns the entire doctrine as “slopwork” (haltura) and conveys a sense of shock that after deliberating over revisions to the Russian Military Doctrine for 6 months, members of the General Staff failed to write up a more comprehensive document.<sup>19</sup>

Although expressing a somewhat extreme view, Sivkov's article does add weight to the argument that Russian military officials have come to consider nuclear weapons as an equalizer against a larger and better equipped conventional force. Adding longer ranged missiles prohibited by the INF Treaty to the Russian arsenal would significantly improve the potency of this equalizer by both expanding the stockpile of missiles available for use, and granting the Russian military a greater level of strategic flexibility in nuclear warfighting. Referring back to figure 2.1, the INF Treaty prohibits signatories from using missiles with ranges represented by the second half of the blue curve (500km-100km), the green curve (1,000km-3,000km), and the gold curve (3,000km-5,500km). The INF Treaty's limitations do not apply to missiles with ranges falling within those represented by the first half of the blue curve (>0km-500km), or the red curve (>5,500km).

This means that if Russian military commanders gain clearance to use nuclear weapons against a hostile ground force, they can only realistically employ missiles designed for use close enough to the frontline that the enemy could detect and destroy them, or those designed to level entire cities during a nuclear exchange. Intermediate range nuclear weapons free Russian commanders from making this choice since military units can fire these missiles from outside the range of hostile air and missile forces while also not risking a wider nuclear exchange by firing intercontinental ballistic missiles. In other words, INF can grant Russian forces a decisive victory in a specific theater without triggering an all-out nuclear war. Western analysts such as The Heritage Foundation's Michaela Dodge have themselves highlighted the strategic flexibility provided by intermediate range nuclear weapons in their reports advocating for US withdrawal from the INF Treaty.<sup>20</sup> One can only imagine these considerations have long swayed several Russian analysts against the INF Treaty as well.

#### *2.4.2 INF as a response to US missile defense*

The reliance of Russian military policymakers on their nuclear capabilities suggests that one can expect these individuals to view any actions by states which could potentially limit the effectiveness of the Russian nuclear arsenal as extremely threatening, and warranting a severe response. The continued hostility displayed by Russian policymakers towards the efforts of the US military to install effective anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems on the territory of US allies confirms this assumption. Deploying INF as part of a response to continued US ABM development would send a strong message to US policymakers regarding the severity with which Russians policymakers view the threat posed by US missile defenses, while also improving the Russian military's ability to saturate the US ABM system with additional missiles.

Since abrogating the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM Treaty) in December of 2001, the United States military has devoted a significant amount of time and resources towards the development and deployment of various systems designed to eliminate missiles in the mid-flight. A report on the history of US ABM system development from the US Department of Defense states that a year after abrogating the ABM Treaty, US President George Bush publicly announced that research and development on ABM systems had resumed, and by 2004 the military had begun to implement the first components of prototype ABM installations in the United States. Under the Obama administration, the US military began to deploy basic elements of an ABM system in Europe ostensibly to eliminate the threat of conventional or nuclear ballistic missile attack from Iran.<sup>21</sup> Although US officials have repeatedly claimed that these

new ABM systems are not directed against the Russian Federation, Russian public officials and leaders of the military establishment have expressed severe doubts about this claim.<sup>3</sup>

Russian President Vladimir Putin has proven himself a particularly vehement critic of US ABM development efforts. While making remarks at the Munich Security conference in 2007, Putin put discussion regarding the development and installment of ABM systems by the United States in Europe in particularly stark terms.

After reiterating his view that the US ABM program threatens global stability, Putin announces that in response to these deployments, the Russian military will produce “certain weapons” that can “easily overcome” the impediments of an ABM system to Russian strike capability. He concludes his discussion on this issue by snidely remarking that just as US ABM systems are not directed at the Russian Federation, the new Russian weapons will not be directed against the United States, or its allies.<sup>22</sup> Although Putin does not explicitly state that these weapons may have ranges outside of the bounds of the INF Treaty, the threat perceived by the deployment of these missiles may resemble the level at which Russian officials perceive the threat of US ABM systems.

Scholar Agnes Katona asserts that Russian policymakers have even gone so far as to connect their concerns about US ABM systems to the INF Treaty itself. In her article “NATO

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<sup>3</sup> This is an example of yet another issue that warrants a great deal of discussion unrelated to the INF Treaty. During the Cold War, arms control theorists generally agreed that although ostensibly defensive weapons, ABM systems actually facilitate the use of offensive weapons by limiting the damage caused by an adversary’s retaliatory strike. Furthermore, deployment of ABM by one nuclear power may trigger an arms race by causing an adversary to expand its nuclear stockpile to negate the ABM system’s effectiveness, and in turn leading the nuclear state with the ABM system to build more missiles as well in order to be able to destroy their adversary’s new missiles. In short, traditional arms control theorists considered ABM systems extremely destabilizing, and helped write up the ABM Treaty during the SALT I talks of 1971 that prohibited their use. For more information on this topic, refer to Thomas Graham’s *Disarmament Sketches*.

Territorial Ballistic Missile Defense and its Implications for Arms Control,” Katona explains that the United States has designed, and begun to deploy a missile defense system in Europe known as the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) in order to protect NATO member states from an Iranian WMD attack.<sup>23</sup> Although the EPAA’s primary function is defensive, she argues that it ultimately destabilizes the European continent, and violates the INF Treaty because the system relies on the use of Mark 41 missile launchers, which can launch missiles carrying conventional warheads with ranges within the INF’s restrictions. Katona explains that the EPAA relies on a combination of sensors, command/control systems, and finally launchers deployed both on warships, and on land equipped with interceptors designed to destroy ballistic missiles.<sup>24</sup> If the MK 41 launcher only had the ability to fire interceptors, then their use would not be a problem. However, as Katona explains, a variant of the MK 41 known as the MK 41 VLS can launch variants of the Tomahawk cruise missile series such as the BGM -109 Block III TLAM C, which has a range of 1,667 kilometers.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, placing MK 41 VLS launchers on land violates the INF Treaty.<sup>25</sup>

Remarks from Mikhail Ulyanov, director of the non-proliferation and arms control department of the Russian Foreign Ministry repeat the concerns expressed by Katona. In a speech before the United Nations General Assembly on October 12, 2015, Ulyanov urged US and Romanian leaders to cease the deployment of MK41 VLS launchers to Romania, and not

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<sup>4</sup> In a factsheet about the MK41 VLS launcher, Lockheed Martin, the designer of the launch system, confirms that the MK41 VLS system is “designed to accept any missile into any cell—a capability that provides unparalleled flexibility.” The report also states that the launcher system can accommodate missiles designated for a land attack role. This appears to confirm Katona’s concerns. ([http://www.lockheedmartin.com/content/dam/lockheed/data/ms2/documents/launchers/MK41\\_VLS\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.lockheedmartin.com/content/dam/lockheed/data/ms2/documents/launchers/MK41_VLS_factsheet.pdf))

only stated that the launcher could destabilize the region, but that its deployment in Romania represented a “massive breach of the INF Treaty.”<sup>26</sup>

Saunders, Rowberry and Fearney point out that the development of various systems by the United States capable of limiting the potency of Russia’s nuclear deterrent has led some within the Russian defense community to speculate whether their short-range arsenal can effectively deter conventional attack. These authors suggest that the continued deployment of anti-ballistic missile installations in Europe combined with ongoing research and development by the United States on strike systems capable of hitting targets anywhere on Earth has likely led some members of the Russian defense community to consider Russia’s nuclear deterrent as under threat and in need of greater flexibility.<sup>27</sup>

Saunders, Rowberry, and Fearney have even reported that officials from the Russian Federation have warned their Western counterparts that if the United States and its allies do not make an effort to limit the scope of US missile defense systems in Europe, then these officials will have no choice but to authorize countermeasures.<sup>28</sup> Again, one can imagine these countermeasures including the deployment of missiles with ranges in violation of the INF Treaty that would prove more difficult for NATO to eliminate in a combat scenario. This response seems particularly possible if Russian military officials assume that the United States has already deployed cruise missile launchers close enough to the Russian border to strike targets in the Russian Federation itself as Katona and Ulyanov suggest.

With the above considerations in mind, one can clearly imagine why Russian officials may have chosen to violate the INF Treaty. In fact, Russian officials could cite the events surrounding the expansion of NATO, and the development of offensive and defensive systems threatening the potency of their nuclear deterrent as “extraordinary events” pertaining to the

subject matter of the INF Treaty that give them the grounds for formal withdrawal from the Treaty as stated in Article XV. Yet, despite having the grounds to do so, the Russian Federation has yet to withdraw from the INF Treaty. Why has the policymaking establishment chosen to take this route?

### **Chapter Three: Uncovering the Rationales behind Retention**

#### *3.1: Chapter summary*

With an understanding of the provisions of the INF Treaty, the provisions the Russian Federation has allegedly violated, and the probable rationales behind this violation, one can return to the original question with a full appreciation of the puzzle it presents. A day after representatives from the State Department leveled their accusation of INF Treaty violation against the Russian Federation; representatives from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs furiously condemned the State Department's accusations.

Representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs not only denied the accusation, but also in turn accused the United States of violating the INF Treaty by deploying missile launchers capable of firing missiles from land as part of ongoing installation of missile defense system components in Europe by the US military.<sup>29</sup> This resembles almost the polar opposite of a withdrawal from the INF Treaty. What considerations have led policymakers to take this stance? The objective of this chapter is to answer this question through a survey of existing theoretical discussion surrounding how Russian policymakers and experts perceive the value of arms control treaties, and what role these treaties play in the pursuit of Russian national interests. Evidence suggests that Russian withdrawal from the INF Treaty has not taken place because adherence to

the treaty reinforces Russia's image in the international community as a leader of the international arms control regime.

Retaining this position in the eyes of the international community provides Russia with the authority necessary for it to shape international law surrounding arms control in a way that best suits Russian national interests, and guarantees Russian security without firing a shot. While addressing Russia's relationship with arms control treaties more broadly, a number of Western scholars have presented arguments explaining why Russian officials continue to consider nuclear arms control agreements with the United States in their state's best interest. For the most part, one can divide the arguments presented by these authors into three sets of conclusions rooted in various schools of International Relations. One school of thought presenting the worldview of contemporary realism suggests that Russian officials have not pulled their state out of the INF Treaty or other arms control agreements because they recognize that doing so would trigger an arms race that the Russian economy is ill prepared to afford. From this point of view, economic, and security, considerations drive the arms control decision-making process. In response to this narrative, scholars and experts with more constructivist leanings have argued that the reluctance of Russian officials to withdraw from treaties like the INF Treaty has far more to do with the normal structure of the contemporary international arms control regime. This argument suggests that Russian policymakers have not withdrawn their state from the INF Treaty because they wish to uphold Russia's reputation as a leader and arbiter in the implication of the international arms control regime. From this point of view, withdrawing from the INF Treaty brings into question the integrity of Russia's position as a leader in international arms control, and limit Russia's ability to influence the trajectory of the arms control regime in the future.

This section will not attempt to argue that one of these two viewpoints carries a greater level of relevance to the issues under discussion. It will however use statements from Russian policymakers, and arms control experts to demonstrate that the more abstract arguments made by proponents of a norm centered argument surrounding continued Russian participation in the INF Treaty do in fact provide valuable and relevant insight about the dynamics driving Russian arms control policy.

### *3.2 Security Centered Argument*

The first line of reasoning provides a relatively simple argument behind why the Russian Federation remains part of the INF Treaty. From the point of view of several analysts and military experts, Russian policymakers have not pushed particularly hard to withdraw from the INF Treaty because they recognize blatantly disregarding arms control treaties like the INF Treaty may trigger an arms race between Russia and NATO that would put unnecessary strain on the Russian economy.

In an article discussing Russia's arms control agenda following the signing of New START, nonproliferation analyst Steven Pifer supports this conclusion when he suggests that Russian officials may seek further reductions to the deployable nuclear warhead limits established in New START in order to close a growing gap between the Russian and US arsenals. Pifer points out that as of 2012, "Russian strategic nuclear forces have declined to a number very close to the New START limit of 1,550 deployed strategic warheads and have fallen well below the limit of 700 deployed strategic delivery vehicles."<sup>30</sup> Conversely, he reports that the United States military can afford to sustain a force of 1,550 deployed warheads and 700 delivery vehicles. In order to close this gap, Pifer asserts that either the Russians can build up

their existing forces in an effort to regain parity with the United States, or they can push for further reductions to the nuclear stockpiles of both sides to levels that the Russian military can more easily afford to field.<sup>31</sup> Considering the fact that few technical distinctions exist between strategic and nonstrategic weapons other than those related to range and payload, one can assume that economic considerations regarding nuclear stockpile expansion would also apply to Russian considerations to build up a stockpile of intermediate range forces.

Economic information appears to add further weight to Pifer's claim. Based off CIA World Fact book projections, the GDP (purchasing power parity) of the Russian Federation in 2017 came to roughly 4 trillion US dollars.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, the GDP (ppp) of the United States came to \$19.36 trillion, almost five times that of the Russian GDP for that year.<sup>33</sup> Although a superfluous figure, this comparison still communicates the major economic disparity between the Russian Federation, and the United States, especially when one considers the potential costs of producing intermediate and shorter-range missiles. An overview of the costs behind the production of US Tomahawk Block IV cruise missiles serves as a valuable reference point from which to assess the costs associated with producing INF range cruise missiles in the United States, as this weapon system was originally designed for use as an intermediate range cruise missile.<sup>34</sup> Data regarding weapon system costs from the US Department of Defense's Budget Request for FY 2016 projects the cost of producing an additional 100 Tomahawk Block IV Cruise missiles in 2016 at \$184.8 million. This amounts to a cost of roughly \$1.85 million per missile.<sup>35</sup> Assuming the costs to produce the Russian equivalent to the Tomahawk Block IV, the 3M14 Kalibr, are similar, one can imagine that the US defense budget for FY 2018 of \$639 million as providing far more room for GLBM/GLCM production and deployment than the Russian military budget of \$46 billion.<sup>36 37</sup>

The focus on the military logistics of missile proliferation in this argument, combined with speculations that Russian officials wish to use arms control measures such as the INF Treaty to limit the potential nuclear stockpile of the United States presents a stark view of the role of arms control in Russian security considerations. From this point of view, arms control agreements such as the INF Treaty appear to have the sole utility of providing great powers with the means through which to establish strategic parity without placing undue strains on the economies of said great powers in an arms race.

In other words, by this logic Russian officials have chosen to not withdraw from the INF Treaty because the security benefits connected to limiting the size of the US nuclear arsenal through the treaty carry more value than the strategic flexibility gained by withdrawal. Framing Russian arms control considerations in this light suggests that rational security considerations drive decision-making processes connected to arms control. Pifer's security centered presentation of the value of arms control reflects the arguments of traditional arms control theorists from the Cold War era who argued that arms control treaties exclusively encompass the security concerns of great powers. Scholar Jeffrey A Larsen provides evidence of this connection when he summarizes the basic tenets of traditional arms control as part of a book titled *Arms Control and Cooperative Security*. According to Larsen, early arms control theorists such as Hedley Bull, and Thomas Schelling argued that arms control was conceived as a way to enhance national security and not necessarily to reduce arms stockpiles. According to Larsen, traditional arms control theorists viewed arms control not as a means in its own right, but a way through which to prevent a nuclear war detrimental to the security of all nuclear-armed states involved.

Larsen reports that these authors go on to further highlight the connection between arms control and national security by arguing that the military strategic considerations must influence arms control policy in the interest of promoting national security.<sup>38</sup>

Such an interpretation of arms control leaves little to the imagination as to the motivations allegedly driving Russia's desire to remain within the INF Treaty despite violating it. From the security-focused point of view, Russian officials recognize that withdrawal from the treaty could trigger a cascade of proliferation that threatens Russian security, and puts undue strain on the Russian economy.

The security-centered explanations behind Russian attachment to the INF Treaty comfortably compliments existing literature from the realist school of international relations. Like Pifer, Bull and Schelling, realist scholars portray international relations as a contest between great powers for security and survival. Scholar John Mearsheimer effectively summarizes the main tenants of structural realism as part of a broader work discussing international relations theory titled "International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity." These five arguments are as follows:

1. Great powers are the main actors in world politics and they operate in an anarchic system.
2. All states possess enough offensive military power to harm their neighbors.
3. States can never be certain of the intentions of other states, particularly whether a potential adversary intends to alter the existing balance of power by force. Analysts can verify the military capabilities of a potential adversary, but they cannot measure their intentions.

4. The main goal of states is survival. States may seek to pursue other objectives such as economic development or the promotion of human rights, but survival takes priority over all other objectives.
5. States are rational actors which can come up with sound strategies through which to ensure their survival. The rules of this logic remain the same for every state regardless of its historical experience or cultural identity. <sup>39</sup>

These five pillars of structural realist thought leave little room for any discussion of international relations outside the realm of security-centered politics. In fact, some realists may use the third pillar regarding the ambiguity of state intentions to argue that arms control treaties are doomed to fail. If a state cannot trust the other signatories to follow the treaties provisions, then it must inevitably guarantee its survival by acquiring weapons prohibited by the treaty before potential adversaries can. Overall, the logic driving the five principles listed above appears to mirror that used by Pifer and traditional arms control theorists. In both cases, the benefit of arms control centers around its ability to eliminate the threat to a state's survival through the limitation of a potential adversary's ability to inflict damage on the state.

As a whole, Russian policymakers appear to refrain from presenting arguments of arms control in this manner during discussions of arms control. As later discussion indicates, Russian officials appear to show a preference for presenting arms control in terms of its relevance to the international community, and not to Russian security. This practice may stem from a tradition of presenting arms control as an international issue. They may also want to refrain from making any allusions about the inability of the Russian nuclear deterrent to guarantee Russian security from a US nuclear attack, as some may interpret praise of arms limitations as an admission of weakness. Regardless, transcripts from statements by policymakers on arms control indicate a preference

for framing these issues in non-realist terms. This does not suggest that realist based considerations do not influence Russian decision making related to arms control. In fact, several Russian academics and military officials have naturally framed these issues from a far more Russia centric frame of reference. However, the rhetoric of policymakers does suggest that bridging the discrepancy between these concepts, and the language used by Russian policymakers requires a fresh approach.

### *3.3 Norms Centered Argument*

While recognizing the merit behind this security focused narrative of arms control theory, numerous constructivist scholars have argued that this theory does not embrace the conceptual complexity of arms control issues. Proponents of this view proceed from this point to assert that considerations tied to the compliance with existing international norms surrounding the issue of international arms control also influence how policymakers perceive the value of arms control. When applied to the question of continued Russian participation in the INF Treaty, this line of thinking suggests that Russian officials have chosen not to withdraw from the INF Treaty because they recognize that doing so may harm Russia's reputation as a leader in the field of international arms control. Damage to this reputation in turn may impede the ability of Russian policymakers and arms control experts to shape the existing arms control regime in a way that best coincides with Russian interests and values.

Firm proponents of this view include scholars Harald Muller and Carmen Wunderlich, who suggest that the meanings behind international norms like arms control exist in a state of constant flux as various actors exert their influence to promote an interpretation of a norm that best caters to their interests and values. Wunderlich expands on this concept in her contribution

to a book titled *Norm Dynamics in Multilateral Arms Control* when she argues, “Norm change may be induced by intrinsic and extrinsic structural factors constituting windows of opportunity for norm entrepreneurs, who are indispensable for norm change, to materialize.”<sup>40</sup> Wunderlich defines a norm entrepreneur as a state or non-state actor determined to change the way a norm is interpreted, and argues that these actors power the process of norm dynamics. Although she concedes that many norm entrepreneurs may seek to change the framework of a norm in some way, she makes sure to point out that these actors “do not descend from Mount Olympus” and often benefit directly from the changes in the interpretation or application of the norm that they promote.<sup>41</sup> This suggests that state and non-state actors will interpret even the least ambiguous norms and international expectations in a variety of different ways, which inevitably leads proponents of different interpretations of the norm in question to compete over which of their arguments more closely follows the spirit of the norm.

In an article discussing the processes through which policymakers draw inferences about the intentions of their contemporaries in a foreign state through interpretation of the images and messages projected by these foreign officials, Robert Jervis makes assertions similar to those of Muller and Wunderlich. Jervis argues that one can relate the behavior of individuals and groups of individuals to their self-images and identities.<sup>42</sup> With this in mind, he suggests that one can therefore perceive behavior based on these self-images. Most importantly, Jervis suggests that actors not only perceive others, but they send signals to one another that may be either true or false as they recognize that the other side interprets their behavior through signals as well.<sup>43</sup> In other words, Jervis appears to suggest that policymakers can present an image of their state in a particular light in order to manipulate the perceptions of foreign policymakers into making decisions that further the interests of their state in a way similar to how norm entrepreneurs push

a particular interpretation of a norm in pursuit of their own interests. Although the lines of reasoning made by Jervis, and Wunderlich diverge from one another in a myriad of ways, both scholars seem to agree that the manner in which policymakers interpret a particular set of behaviors, or norms matters.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, both suggest that policymakers often try to manipulate the perception of their peers regarding a specific norm or series of behaviors in a way that furthers their own moral or material interests.

Wunderlich asserts that major powers like the United States and the Russian Federation are particularly well equipped to pressure other states and actors to adopt certain interpretations of a norm. This enables these states to play the role of norm enforcers, and occasionally norm entrepreneurs more successfully than other states and actors, which in turn gives them a greater level of leeway regarding the trajectory of laws, traditions and expectations operating at the global level.<sup>44</sup> The immense size of the Russian and US arsenals, combined with their historical experiences surrounding the establishment, and expansion of the global nuclear arms control regime make representatives of the United States and Russian Federation particularly well suited to direct the trajectory of the arms control regime today.<sup>6</sup>

As one can expect, this position has enabled the Russian Federation to play a major role in the norm development process of international arms control. For example, as Director of the

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<sup>5</sup> One should refrain from coming to the conclusion that Jervis, Muller and Wunderlist share similar perspectives regarding international relations based on the congruence of their views on the importance of identity and images. The views of Jervis and Muller/Wunderlist diverge sharply regarding the agency of individual actors and states in influencing international relations.

<sup>6</sup> For further information on the size of the US and Russian nuclear arsenals, refer to Kelsey Davenport, and Kingston Reif's factsheet on nuclear weapons stockpiles on the Arms Control Association's website using the following link (<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat>). To learn more about the history of arms control agreements between the United States and Soviet Union/Russian Federation, one can refer to a timeline from the council of foreign relations detailing various events and treaties relevant to arms control with the following link (<https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-russia-nuclear-arms-control>).

Moscow based Center for Energy and Security Studies Anton Khlopkov reports, the Russian Federation has played a pivotal role in pushing the establishment of international nuclear fuel management centers. These fuel centers would provide states with newer nuclear energy programs uranium enrichment and spent fuel management services that negate the need for these states to develop their own enrichment and fuel management technology, which in turn gives them a pathway towards the development of nuclear weapons. In this particular situation, part of Russia's effort to establish this program included using an existing Russian enrichment complex in Angarsk as a pilot program, with tangible material benefits for Russian actors involved in this process.<sup>45</sup> Unlike proponents of realist or rational choice theory, constructivists like Wunderlich firmly reject the notion that a set of universally rational security considerations define how policymakers shape their state's foreign policy. Instead, these scholars assert that a society's cultural norms and the identities of political beliefs play a far greater role in how a state shapes its foreign policy.

Constructivists tend to paint rationalist or realist concepts as themselves socially constructed which disproves the prominence of any kind of structure over the decision making process. Prominent constructivist scholar Alexander Wendt expands on these concepts in his article "Anarchy is what States make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics." While discussing the subjectivity of the concept of anarchy, which plays such a central role in traditional realist thought, Wendt criticizes realists for "reifying" the concept of self-help, and proceeds to argue that if elites perceive themselves as operating in an anarchic world, then this perception itself will create that system.<sup>46</sup> Constructivists essentially reply to any realist assertions denying the significance of norms by arguing that the concept of realism itself represents a norm that has defined how some actors on the world stage operate.

In short, scholars like Wunderlich, and Jervis imply that if Russia simply withdrew from the INF Treaty, and began to build up a large stockpile of shorter-range and intermediate range GLBMs and GLCMs, they would go against established arms control norms advocating for the reduction – not expansion- of existing nuclear arsenals. Taking this stance may in turn limit Russia’s international credibility in the arms control sphere, and limit its ability to promote projects beneficial to Russian national interests. By this same logic, Russian officials can utilize their position in the international community in this field to condemn states that break with these same international norms, including the United States. In this manner, one can therefore consider arms control treaties as tools through which actors can shape broader discussion about the norms and concepts related to the treaty in the field of arms control. Treaties serve as a source of legitimacy from which norm entrepreneurs can draw to reinforce their arguments and facilitate norm advocacy. The multitude of statements by several Russian policymakers, and arms control experts condemning the unilateral abrogation of the ABM Treaty demonstrates the relevance of incorporating norms based considerations as presented by Wunderlich and others into discussion connected to arms control decision-making processes. This affirmation of the norms centered argument stems from the frequent framing of Russian misgivings regarding US ABM aspirations from an international normal point of reference that portrays the Russian Federation as a reliable arbiter of the international arms control regime.

### *3.4 Russian Norm Entrepreneurship in Action: Condemnation of US Withdrawal from the ABM Treaty.*

Russian officials have already taken this approach following the abrogation of the ABM

Treaty by the United States on December 13, 2001. From the day the Bush administration announced its abrogation of the treaty, Russian officials have made increasingly severe statements criticizing this action and the subsequent deployment of anti-ballistic missile system components in Europe and the United States. During each of these statements, Russian officials emphasize their respect for international law, and their commitment to the principle of international stability while labeling US missile defense centered actions as the greatest threat to the relevance of these principles. By basing their objections to US actions on concerns regarding their effect on the legitimacy of international law instead of exclusively on Russian security concerns, Russian officials appear to add weight to the argument presented by Wunderlich and likeminded scholars that security considerations do not exclusively influence how policy makers make decisions related to arms control.

One can find evidence of the use of normal arguments by Russian policymakers when discussion arms control in the statements of a number of Russia officials condemning US missile defense programs. In a statement directly following the Bush administration's announcement of the Treaty's abrogation, Putin called the decision a "mistake" that eliminated one of the foundations of the legal system in the sphere of arms control.<sup>47</sup>

In the same statement, Putin reiterated that his condemnation of US actions grew purely out of concern for "the preservation and strengthening of international institutions in the field of disarmament and the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction."<sup>48</sup> One can recognize in this statement that Putin limits his discussion of how the abrogation of the INF Treaty affects the Russian Federation specifically. Instead, Putin uses the abrogation as an opportunity to in a sense "take the high road" on the issue, presenting the Russian Federation as a proponent of the international arms regime in the face of US unilateralism.

Former Russian policymaker Andrei Kokoshin appears to take a similar stance in his book titled “Nuclear Conflicts in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” While discussing the consequences of the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, Kokoshin asserts that the elimination of limitations on ABM systems contributes to the growth of strategic uncertainty (*strategicheskoi neopredelennosti*) not just in the US-Russia relationship, but also in the system of international relations as a whole.<sup>49</sup>

He explains that lifting restrictions on the development of ABM systems also lifts restrictions on the testing and deployment of ABM satellites. The subsequent deployment of such satellites could lead to the militarization of space, which Kokoshin describes as a global issue of extreme importance.<sup>50</sup> As with Putin’s statement, Kokoshin frames US ABM aspirations as a danger to the international community as a whole, and not simply to Russia’s nuclear deterrent. Connecting his ABM concerns to more broadly held misgivings regarding the militarization of space allows Kokoshin to create a potential window of opportunity through which a norm entrepreneur can advocate for the strengthening of limitations on the use of space for military purposes in a way that also prevents the deployment of a space based ABM system. Whether the demilitarization of space itself or the inhibition of US ABM efforts is the ultimate goal of this policy matters little because resolving this issue as Russia perceives it accomplishes both goals.

To argue in support of the relevance of norms centered concepts in arms control theory is not meant to discount the applicability of more traditional security based principles of arms control theory. One cannot attempt to argue in favor of the relevance of one of these conceptual frameworks over the other without a clear understanding of the ideals, intentions, and perspectives of Russian policymakers on a multitude of levels. Even in this case, the possibility exists that Russian policymakers themselves cannot definitively articulate which considerations influence their perceptions of the role arms control plays in the foreign policymaking process.

Instead, demonstration of the relevance of the norms centered argument made by Wunderlist and her co-author Harald Muller is intended to support the conclusion that portraying arms control as a field in which only materially based security considerations provides researchers and policymakers with an incomplete picture of what considerations derive arms control policy. Furthermore, discussion of considerations like those presented by Muller and Wunderlich facilitates discussion surrounding the response US policymakers can anticipate from their Russian counterparts to efforts to bring the Russian Federation back into compliance with the INF Treaty.

Ultimately, the above literature connected to arms control theory suggests that one should not consider treaties like the INF Treaty as merely guarantors of international stability, but also as tools through which policymakers can pursue their moral and material interests behind a veil of international legitimacy.

This suggests that Russian policymakers continue to participate in the international arms control regime in order to eliminate potential security threats, and to give these policymakers a window through which to pursue soft power objectives. The current Russian stance on the INF Treaty effectively demonstrates this point. By denying US allegations that they violated the INF Treaty while also leveling similar accusations at the United States, Russian policymakers have salvaged a potentially disastrous situation into a more favorable one in which the onus for resolution of the issue sits squarely with US policymakers.

In order for this policy to continue to work, Russian policymakers must continue to at give the impression of compliance with the treaty. This approach leaves US policymakers with the prospect of making serious political sacrifices regardless of whether they choose to “call Putin’s bluff” and engage in negotiations to resolve the INF Treaty, or to site Russian violation

of the treaty as grounds for withdrawal. Ultimately, it seems unlikely that Russia will withdraw from the INF Treaty provided Europe and Eurasia remain relatively stable in the coming years.

## **Chapter 4: Options for Policymakers, and How the Russians Might Respond**

### *4.1 Chapter Summary*

US policymakers can take one of two stances towards recent Russian actions tied to the INF Treaty. The first of these options involves attempting to coax Russian officials into bringing their state back into compliance with the treaty through a combination of diplomatic pressure and the implementation of various confidence building measures. Alternatively, they can use the Russian violation as grounds for withdrawal from the treaty and immediately begin to design, produce, and deploy ground launched shorter range and intermediate range missiles.<sup>7</sup>

One can expect Russian officials to interpret calls to negotiate the future of the INF Treaty as an opportunity through which to align the understanding of the treaty's provisions more closely with Russian political and security interests. This in turn may lead Russian negotiators to demand concessions from their US counterparts in the field of missile defense, and military space programs that US voters may find difficult to accept. Conversely, one can expect Russian officials will condemn US withdrawal from the INF Treaty with extremely caustic rhetoric that may cause damage to the international reputation of the United States abroad, and to the unity of NATO. In the event that the United States pulls out of the INF Treaty, transparency about the

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<sup>7</sup> Simply ignoring the issues connected to the INF Treaty should not even be considered an option. This course of action increases the severity of the consequences associated with the resolution of these issues while bringing the legitimacy of both US security guarantees and the capacity of US policymakers to enforce the norms of the international arms control regime into question. The United States cannot simply allow a treaty violation of this magnitude to proceed without a response.

capabilities and intended role of new US intermediate range missiles may address some of the uncertainty triggered by this action.

#### *4.2: Retaining the INF Treaty.*

Attempting to coax Russian officials into addressing US compliance concerns is the more challenging of the two approaches, but also carries the lowest amount of risk to international stability. This approach may involve offering to provide Russian nonproliferation experts access to US ABM facilities in Romania and Poland provided the Kremlin allows US experts to conduct tests on the SSC-8 missile. Provided these inspections do not uncover evidence of troublemaking, both sides could put their immediate concerns about the treaty to rest. However, if one side does find evidence that the other has indeed violated the treaty, then the prospect of resolving the issue becomes far more challenging. In this case, retaining the INF Treaty would require leaders from the state found in violation of the treaty to accept the findings of the inspection teams, and to destroy any and all missiles, launchers, and support equipment that violate the treaty. Technical experts from both countries would also need to devise entirely new methods through which to verify the destruction of these weapons, and their support equipment.<sup>51</sup> In either case, one can expect both sides to show little interest in giving foreign agents access to sensitive technical information without promises of major security concessions that citizens in both countries may find difficult to accept. In spite of these obstacles, official statements from the foreign affairs offices of both the United States and Russian Federation suggest that the political will necessary to tackle this challenge still exists.

. In reports for both the Brookings Institute and the Arms Control Association, Steven

Pifer has indicated that Russian officials can address the concerns of US policymakers regarding the range of the SSC-8 missile by exhibiting the SSC-8 missile and its launcher to US experts and explaining important characteristics of the missile such as its range. Pifer proceeds to assert that in order to consider the Russian Federation in compliance with the Treaty, US experts would either need to verify that the SSC-8 cannot strike targets in excess of 500 km, or verify that every SSC-8 missile and launcher has been destroyed.<sup>52</sup> However, as Pifer appears to suggest, convincing Russian officials to give US experts permission to examine the SSC-8 without addressing the issues these officials have communicated about potential US violations of the INF Treaty is unreasonable.

As mentioned earlier, Director of the Foreign Ministry Department for Nonproliferation and Arms Control Mikhail Ulyanov has raised concerns regarding the possibility that US missile interceptor launchers deployed in Romania and scheduled for deployment in Poland can fire tomahawk missiles. Other distinguished officials within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have voiced similar concerns, including Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Riabkov, who cites the deployment of Mk41 launchers in Romania as an example demonstrating how the United States has refused to acknowledge Russian security concerns regarding how the US tends to their INF Treaty obligations.<sup>53</sup> In order to address these concerns, and incentivize Russian officials to permit US inspections of the SSC-8 missile and launcher, US civil and military officials could invite Russian experts to tour the ABM facility in Deveselu, Romania and provide proof to Russian experts that these launchers cannot in fact fire tomahawk missiles. If these officials attached such an offer to their SSC-8 exhibition requests, Russian officials may prove more willing to oblige, provided the SSC-8 missile does not in fact violate the INF Treaty.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This proposal comes with a major caveat. Multiple Western security experts have pointed out that any tour of Romanian, or Polish missile defense sites will require the consent of Romanian or Polish officials, as these sites technically fall under NATO ownership, and the US military built these installations on the sovereign territory of

Furthermore, creating favorable conditions for such a process may require US officials to make concessions that compromise US security, such as endorsing Russian efforts to create a new international treaty prohibiting the militarization of space. Unfortunately, with special council Robert Mueller's investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential election ongoing, and in the wake of anti-Putin protests following the Russian presidential election, a political environment conducive to such concessions may not exist in either country.

Russian experts and policymakers have proven exceptionally tight lipped on the topic of resolving the INF Treaty through mutual confidence building measures. Although willing to condemn the United States for setting up the ABM installations in Romania, Russian scholars and policymakers generally appear to refrain from discussing inspections of these facilities when talking about how to resolve current INF Treaty issues.<sup>54</sup> Instead, these officials argue that the United States must clearly lay out their Russian violation concerns.

This stance has likely grown out of the fact that much of the more detailed technical information gathered by the United States remains classified. Former National Security Council official Celeste Wallander gave this explanation at a speaking event at the University of Washington on January 31. When asked why the United States has not more widely disseminated information regarding the Russian violation, Wallander stated that the details of US

foreign states. As Brad Roberts notes in his book *The Case for US Nuclear Weapons in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, missile defense installations like the one built in Romania provide a multitude of reassuring deterrence benefits for the United States and more importantly, for its allies. Roberts particularly emphasizes that these installations reinforce the perceived legitimacy of US security guarantees to allies who could initiate their own nuclear programs if they felt particularly vulnerable (Roberts, 86-94). Pifer also mentions in his article on the future of the INF Treaty for the Arms Control Association that Romanian and Polish officials must play a role in any negotiations regarding US missile sites for similar reasons (Pifer, 2018). In short, providing Russian experts with information about US missile defense systems improves their ability to find exploitable weaknesses in these systems that negate their deterrence capabilities. This suggests that US policymakers will have to devise compensatory demonstrations of

their security commitment to states like Poland and Romania in the event that Russian experts can inspect Mk41 launcher sites. findings remain classified in part to ensure that the methods through which US officials came to learn of the violation remain secret.<sup>55</sup> With concrete evidence of violation unavailable for public consumption, and perhaps even kept from Russian officials themselves, several Russian officials have expressed the opinion that they simply lack the information they need interpret US allegations as anything but a political ploy through which US officials can fabricate a justification for withdrawal from the INF Treaty. If they do not perceive US allegations as a legitimate issue warranting resolution through negotiation within the bilateral arms control framework, Russian officials may simply have yet to devote much thought to how they can resolve the current INF Treaty impasse diplomatically.

In other words, Russian policymakers may have not even considered devising solutions to a problem they do not believe exists. Similarly, US policymakers have largely not considered unilaterally carrying out confidence measures for the Russian Federation, as they do not share Russian concerns that the United States seeks to unilaterally withdraw from the INF Treaty. Bringing both sides to view the concerns of the other party as a genuine issue must constitute the first step towards a larger solution. Clearly, US policymakers interested in retaining the INF Treaty and encouraging their Russian counterparts to address US concerns over the alleged Russian violation of the INF Treaty must overcome a multitude of implementation challenges in order to resolve the current dispute and save the INF Treaty.

Despite these challenges, this option represents the more predictable of the two options US officials should consider. While discussing the INF Treaty, almost all of the previously mentioned Russian and US officials and scholars have cited the INF Treaty as an extremely important guarantor of international stability, which has laid much of the groundwork for more

recent arms control treaties, and agreements. For example, in a brief statement marking the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the INF Treaty, representatives from the State Department called the INF Treaty “critically important to the security of US allies and partners globally” and reiterated that the United States still seeks to resolve the current dispute over the INF Treaty diplomatically.<sup>56</sup> The Russian Embassy in Washington DC mirrored these remarks in a similar statement marking the anniversary of the treaty’s signing.<sup>57</sup> In mid-October of 2017, Minister Sergei Lavrov remarked that the Russian Federation has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to carry out the conditions of the INF Treaty, and its willingness to discuss the concerns of both parties.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the fact that both sides still virulently condemn one another’s actions related to the Treaty in these statements, the guarded openness on both sides to work through various treaty related issues suggests that the political will necessary to retain the treaty still exists. The importance of the INF Treaty to international stability, combined with the identification of several possible means by which US and Russian officials and experts can resolve their differences over the treaty suggests that although difficult to implement, successfully bringing the Russian Federation into compliance with the INF Treaty through diplomatic initiatives would be worth the trouble.

#### *4.3: Withdraw from the INF Treaty.*

A different, and more straightforward option available to US policymakers in response to Russian violation of the INF Treaty is to simply pull the United States out of the Treaty, and deploy ground launched intermediate and shorter ranged nuclear missiles in Europe. Although an arguably less challenging policy to implement, taking this stance will almost certainly provoke a

severe response from the Russian Federation, which may involve both a diplomatic and military angle that may weaken the resolve of US European allies within range of Russian INF. In the event that US policymakers chose to take this route, providing detailed technical information about the new missile, and the role it plays in US security strategy may reassure US international partners, and make the deployment of INF in Europe tolerable for European NATO members.

In an article discussing the future of the INF Treaty for the Brookings institute, Steven Pifer explains that in addition to diplomatic efforts, the Trump administration has begun to consider a variety of military options designed to pressure the Russians into compliance, or to deter their use of INF against US allies. He explains that currently the administration has considered reintroducing nuclear tipped cruise missiles to US warships active either in the North Atlantic, or deploying a new US ground launched INF system in Europe.<sup>59</sup> Executive Director of the Arms Control Association Daryl G. Kimball concurs with Pifer's conclusion, adding that the Trump administration appears to have chosen to take a "tit for tat" approach to the Russian violation by facilitating the deployment of a new US ground based missile in violation of the INF Treaty in Europe or Asia.<sup>60</sup> Regardless of whether these actions pressure Russian officials into bringing their state back into compliance with the INF Treaty or not, providing US forces around the world with shorter range, and smaller yield nuclear weapons will likely grant them a significantly higher level of flexibility in the event of a crisis. At present, the nuclear response of the United States only consists of short range tactical nuclear weapons which have such a limited range that they may come under attack before getting in range of the target, and long range, large yield strategic weapons with multiple warheads that represent the last leg of nuclear escalation. Some scholars with a more security-focused background like CSIS senior fellow Thomas Karako

have suggested that giving the military options in between these two extremes may allow them to deter an adversary in a crisis more effectively.<sup>61</sup>

At the same time, deploying ground launched INF in Europe would lift any pretense of the INF Treaty's legitimacy. Taking this approach will also provoke a severe Russian response with both a rhetorical and military technical angle.<sup>62</sup> Russian officials will quickly the US deployment of INF in Europe into their existing narrative condemning US unilateralism in the field of arms control. In fact, statements made by Mikhail Ulyanov suggest that the Russian government has already laid the groundwork for their response to a US withdrawal. When discussing the future of the INF Treaty in a statement, Ulyanov accused US officials of leveling baseless accusations against the Russian Federation in order to fabricate a justification for them to pull the United States out of the INF Treaty. He goes on to cite the US unilateral withdrawal from the ABM Treaty as precedent that supports this conclusion.<sup>63</sup> Putin presents a similar narrative, adding that the Russian Federation is fully aware that the Pentagon has already allocated funding for the development of ground launched intermediate and shorter ranged missiles.<sup>64</sup>

These statements suggest that US deployment of INF in Europe may in fact play perfectly into the narrative Russian policymakers wish to present regarding US compliance with the international arms control regime, and may in turn add to the sense of alienation currently felt by US allies on account of unilateral US action. This could have disastrously detrimental effects on the unity of NATO. Both Pifer and Kimball assert that due to the limited range of INF, US forces could not deploy these new weapons within their own borders, and hope to hit any targets in the Russian Federation. This means that deploying INF in range of targets in the Russian Federation will require the United States to deploy their new INF weapons in the territory of NATO member

states, which in turn requires these states to give the US military permission to base their new weapons in the member state's territory.<sup>65</sup>

Although theoretically a straightforward exercise, Pifer and Kimball both report that no NATO states have shown any interest in hosting INF bases.<sup>66</sup> This reluctance has likely grown out of concerns held by policymakers in NATO member states regarding the fact that any deployment of US INF in Europe immediately makes the host country a target for Russian nuclear weapons designed to deter US nuclear weapons stationed within the host country's borders. Russian policymakers could capitalize on this fact to sow further division in NATO, especially if the Alliance fails to come to a consensus as an entire body on whether to support US INF deployment, or not. The prospect of Russian officials condemning the United States for unilaterally placing its allies at risk for the sake of its own security does not seem too far-fetched.

On top of this, Russian policymakers could pair their exploitation of an opportunity to sabotage US international credibility by simply producing and deploying more SSC-8 missiles. As Pifer notes, the Russian military has a momentary advantage over their US counterpart in terms of INF due to the fact that Russian forces can deploy an already developed and tested intermediate range GLCM, while the research/development, testing, production, and deployment of a large quantity of US INF may take several years.<sup>67</sup> Such an initial imbalance of INF arsenals may exacerbate feelings of vulnerability within NATO, and perhaps add weight to Russian arguments condemning US behavior.

Employing a more coercive military option to deter the threat of Russian INF should prove significantly easier for US policymakers to implement than a more diplomatic approach designed to retain the INF Treaty. However, by lifting restrictions on an entire class of nuclear

weapons, US policymakers should expect this policy to trigger a variety of destabilizing, and unpredictable consequences.

Chief amongst these consequences will include an increasingly hostile response by Russian officials to US efforts to deploy ground based intermediate and shorter-range missiles that could lead to heightened disunity in NATO, and an arms race that destabilizes the European continent as a whole. In the event that US policymakers do choose to take this approach, further transparency on the capabilities, and role of INF in the broader US nuclear defense strategy may soften blow to European stability. In this situation, leaders in the defense community should be prepared to provide enough information regarding US ground launched INF systems to limit the danger that these new weapons could cause an accidental nuclear exchange. The Department of Defense has included some vague allusions to beginning research on future ground based INF systems, but this information will not suffice to reassure allies, or reduce the danger that a potential adversary will misinterpret activity at US INF bases as preparations for an attack, and launch a pre-emptive strike.<sup>68</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

Ultimately, contradictory security considerations paired with a desire to retain Russia's position as a moderator of norm dynamics in the field of international arms control appear to drive Russian policy regarding the INF Treaty. Despite occasionally threatening to withdraw from the treaty, the defensive reaction of Russian policymakers to US accusations raises doubts about their willingness to do so. The way in which the INF Treaty prevents an economically draining arms race, and facilitates Russian norm advocacy in the international arms control regime makes the price of Russian withdrawal from the treaty too high. However, the potential strategic benefits of possessing a small stockpile of ground launched intermediate range nuclear

missiles also make it impossible to discount the possibility that the Russian military has at least conducted tests on these systems. In other words, Putin and his associates are more likely to try to violate the INF Treaty clandestinely than they are to withdraw from the treaty formally. Through clandestine development of a weapon in violation of the INF Treaty, Russian officials could theoretically enjoy both the strategic flexibility of possessing nuclear weapons and the economic and norm centered advantages of complying with the treaty. Regardless, the defensive rhetoric of Russian political officials, and the analysis conducted by Western and Russian scholars suggests that the Russian Federation has not withdrawn from the INF Treaty due to the utility of the treaty as both a security guarantor, and a tool with which to shape the international arms control regime.

Russian officials do indeed recognize the importance of arms control treaties like the INF Treaty, and will view any efforts by the United States or its allies to distance themselves from the provisions of these treaties as a threat. This in turn suggests that US officials should anticipate a significant level of obstinacy from Russian officials regarding the resolution of arms control treaty issues if Russian officials perceive the intentions of their US counterparts as insincere. It also suggests that one can expect the Russian government to react negatively and erratically to the lifting of the restrictions established in the INF Treaty, or other arms control treaties that Russian policymakers view as important guarantors of Russian security and prestige. At the same time, Russian attachment to the INF Treaty does suggest that enough political will exists in Russian governmental circles for efforts to save the INF Treaty to pay off. Whether US policymakers choose to “call Putin’s bluff” or not, the outcome of such a policy will depend in large part on the transparency of these decision makers regarding the justifications, and

implications of their approach. Failing to do so adds dangerous levels of uncertainty to the European security environment that increase the danger of an accidental exchange.

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