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The consequences of US withdrawal from the INF treaty  
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CONTRIBUTORS

HOST

ADRIANNA PITA

FRANK ROSE

Senior Fellow – Security and Strategy, Foreign Policy

PITA: You're listening to five on 45 from the Brookings podcast network analysis and commentary from Brookings experts on today's news regarding the Trump administration.

ROSE: My name is Frank Rose, and I'm a Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Program here at Brookings. On October 20<sup>th</sup>, President Donald Trump announced that the United States was withdrawing from the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty or INF treaty, which prohibits the United States and the states of the former Soviet Union from testing or deploying ground launch ballistic and cruise missiles with a range of between 500 and 5500 kilometers. This represents the latest chapter in the ongoing controversy over the future of the INF treaty which began in July 2014 when the United States publicly declared that Russia was in violation of its obligations under the INF treaty not to possess, produce, or flight test a ground launched cruise missile with a range capability of between 500 and 5500 kilometers or to produce launches for such missiles.

Given Russia's clear violation of the treaty through the deployment of a treaty-prohibited ground launch cruise missile, the administration's decision to withdraw from the treaty is certainly understandable. However, I'm concerned that the Trump administration's haphazard diplomatic announcement of the decision may ultimately shift the international blame for the demise of the treaty from Russia, where it belongs, to the United States. It also has the potential to negatively impact the ability of the United States to develop an effective allied response to the Russian violation.

Despite what some experts claim, it's my strong view that Russia was not coming back into compliance with the INF treaty. As early as 2005, Russia officially proposed that the United States and Russia jointly withdraw from the INF treaty arguing that the strategic situation in Eurasia had changed dramatically since the treaty was originally concluded in 1987. Furthermore, the United States has engaged Russia diplomatically since 2013 over five years in an attempt to bring Russia back into compliance. None of these numerous

diplomatic engagements conducted by both the Obama and Trump administrations have been successful in convincing Russia to return to compliance with the treaty.

Why has getting Russia to return to compliance with the treaty been so difficult? In my view, Russia's violation of the INF treaty is a symptom of a larger political problem. It no longer believes that the Euro Atlantic Security Architecture put in place at the end of the Cold War is in its interests. Therefore, over the last decade, Russia has been on a deliberative mission to remove the key building blocks of that order of which the INF treaty is the latest casualty.

In addition to the political reasons, there are also several military related factors why Russia was unlikely to return to compliance with the INF treaty. I discussed these military reasons in my March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Congressional testimony which can be found on the Brookings Institution website. This leads me to the key question: did the Trump administration handle the U.S. withdrawal announcement correctly? The short answer is no.

First, by announcing the U.S. withdrawal from the treaty in a matter which he did, the Trump administration made this about the United States—not about Russia's violation of the treaty. In many ways, the U.S. withdrawal from the treaty may be a political gift to the Russians who will argue that it is the United States undermining international arms control and non-proliferation agreements, not the other way around.

Second, the INF treaty is not merely a bilateral treaty between the United States and the Soviet successor states including Russia, but it is fundamentally about wider Eurasian security and directly impacts the security of U.S. allies both in Europe and Asia. At this point, it is unclear how much consultation was conducted with allies prior to the President's October 20<sup>th</sup> announcement. However, based on public reactions from allied leaders today, there appears to have been minimal consultation conducted.

There are two potential impacts of this situation. First, it may provide an opportunity

for Russia to drive a further wedge between the United States and its allies. And second, this may complicate efforts to develop effective NATO military response options to the Russian violation. Additionally, the Trump administration has argued that withdrawing from the INF treaty will allow the United States to develop and deploy its own ground launch ballistic missile and cruise missile systems to deter China. While I agree that China's intermediate range ballistic missiles represent a major challenge to U.S. deployed forces and allies in Asia, I'm not convinced that a similar deployment of INF range missiles by the United States would be an effective response.

For example it's highly unlikely that U.S. allies in the region like Japan or the Republic of Korea would accept such a deployment on their territory. Furthermore, the United States doesn't need ground launch ballistic or cruise missiles to hold at risk Chinese targets. We can effectively perform that mission with sea and air launch cruise missiles which are permitted under the terms of the treaty. This is one of the key reasons that I've supported the development of a conventional variant of the long range standoff nuclear cruise missile.

Instead of announcing the U.S. withdrawal from the treaty in the way that it did, the Trump administration would have been wiser to link that decision to a broader diplomatic effort conducted in conjunction with our allies which placed the blame for the demise of the treaty squarely on Russia. For example, the Trump administration could have declared Russia in quote material breach or temporarily suspended implementation of the treaty and provided a clear deadline for Russia to return to compliance. This would certainly have helped with the diplomatic messaging in the maintenance of alliance unity. Unfortunately, that is not the approach the Trump administration has taken. The Trump administration's response to Russia's violation of the INF treaty is like its approach to many national security issues. They have correctly diagnosed the problem, but the diplomatic implementation has been a disaster.

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