

## Abstract

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty) served as one of the cornerstones of bilateral nuclear arms control between the two world's main nuclear powers, the Soviet Union (later the Russian Federation) and the United States of America. The Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and the U.S. President Ronald Reagan signed the treaty on December 8, 1987, and by that both of the states for the first time in history became obliged to eliminate a whole class of weapons – land-based ballistic and cruise missiles with range from 500 to 5500 kilometres. The INF Treaty continued the trend of attempting to use arms control measures in order to increase mutual trust and strategic stability, starting in the beginning of 1960s, when the world had been brought to a brink of a nuclear catastrophe by the Cuban Crisis. Signing of this treaty lifted the imminent nuclear danger stemming from deployment of the modern and more effective Soviet SS-20 weapon systems, which was followed by the deployment of the *Pershing II* missiles by the U.S. in Western Europe. Not only did the INF Treaty introduce an unprecedented verification regime, it also held a symbolic value of a step towards overcoming the Cold War tensions. However, after 2005 the treaty found itself under the pressure of criticism from Russian authorities and in 2014 an open crisis of the INF Treaty became fully apparent, when the U.S. publicly accused Russia of violating the treaty's provisions. Shortly after that, Russian counteraccusations of U.S. violations of the treaty followed. This stalemate resulted in the INF Treaty demise after the formal withdrawal of the U.S. on August 2, 2019.

The thesis works on the assumption, that it was possible to settle the mutual disagreements by renewing inspections on the problematic sites, and therefore to save the treaty. However, the necessary political will for such resolution was found neither on the Russian, nor on the American side. The aim of this thesis was to analyse the factors, which influenced the Russian position on the demise of the INF Treaty and effectively contributed to the lack of this political will on the side of the Russian Federation. The analysis was carried out within three viewpoints, which I set as *political*, *strategic-security* and *expert*. The political viewpoint analysed the influence of the deteriorating relations between Russia and the West, the impact of the geopolitical change as of the emergence of multilateralism after the Cold War's end and lastly the degree to which Russian elites are inclining to the idea of arms control. Through the prism of the strategic-security viewpoint, the change in the strategic value of the INF Treaty and the possibility to use its demise for Russia's own ends was evaluated. The last, expert viewpoint analysed how did technological progress, the rise of cyber threats, the erosion of international

norms concerning the use of nuclear weapons and the internal flaws of the treaty itself impact the Russian position on its demise. The hypothesis was, that the Russian position was most importantly influenced by the factors within the scope of the strategic-security viewpoint – that if the strategic value of the INF Treaty remained the same as it was at the time of its signing, the political will to maintain the treaty would still persist. However, the result of the research disproved the hypothesis. It was shown that all the three viewpoints are highly interconnected and that important factors, which shaped the Russian position appeared within each one of them. The thesis builds on the theoretical framework of arms control, which allowed to grasp when and under what circumstances can arms control regimes emerge and function, and similarly, what makes them crumble. The principal premise is that arms control is only thinkable when the situation allows it to function. Currently, the situation characterized by the rising tensions between Russia and the West, increasing complexity of the international security environment and shifts in the strategic dynamics resulting from technological progress represents a setting that is highly unfavourable to arms control in general. These circumstances gave rise to the demise of the INF Treaty and left a scar both on U.S.-Russian bilateral nuclear arms control and on international security.