

ABSTRACT

The U.S. and Soviet Union at the height of the cold war, engaged in several arms control treaties to deescalate the ever-growing nuclear competition. The INF treaty, signed in 1987, led to elimination of an entire category of ground-based ballistic and cruise missiles with a range between 500-5500 kilometers. Despite its successes, Trump administration took a unilateral withdrawal from the INF treaty on August 2, 2019, on the pretext of Russia's development of 9M729 ground-launched cruise missile, which was prohibited under the treaty. Besides terminating the INF treaty, President Trump has also abolished the Open Skies Treaty, Paris Agreement, Trans-Pacific Partnership and Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Although Russia cannot be given clean chit in INF treaty's collapse but strategic competition between the U.S. and China has encouraged Washington to exit from the arms control commitments. In the contemporary global politics, the rise of China has attracted special focus because of its deeper impact on international relations. The U.S. has withdrawn from INF treaty on the pretext of Russia's violations to the treaty whereas this decision is motivated by the U.S. strategic objective of countering the rising China. There is a prevalent thinking in the U.S. that INF treaty was an obstacle in the way of Washington to develop and deploy more intermediate range ballistic and cruise missiles in Asia in order to deter Beijing's military interests in the region. Hence, the U.S. withdrawal from INF treaty highlights its aggressive foreign policy towards China and intensions to keep the status quo intact while maintaining its dominance. The INF treaty's demise is likely to have long-lasting impact on the arms control regime with severe implications for the global security. It may augment trust deficit among the great powers and eventually influence other arms control agreements. This situation is likely to disturb strategic balance at global level, leading to an instability. The ultimate outcome of this instability would be a security dilemma, which may result into global nuclear arms race and more frequent conflicts. Currently, arms control regime is directly dependent on the bilateral relationship between Moscow and Washington. Any positive initiative by these states can promote multilateralism and work as confidence building measures.