

U.S. Abrogation of the I.N.F. Treaty:
Implications for Russian-Sino Relations

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Abstract (Academic)

This thesis aims to address how the strategic partnership between Russia and China is affected by the absence of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, also known as the I.N.F. Treaty. Through historical evidence of the strategic partnership, along with various balancing theories, this thesis presents the argument that American abrogation of the I.N.F. Treaty would result in strengthened relations between Russia and China if the United States deploys intermediate-range nuclear weapons to the Pacific. Without U.S. deployment, however, the Russian-Sino strategic partnership will likely remain undisturbed.

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Abstract (Public)

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the relationship between Russia and China in the absence of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, better known as the I.N.F. Treaty. The treaty was initially signed in 1987 between President Reagan and Mikhail S. Gorbachev of the Soviet Union and prohibited nuclear and conventional weapons that could travel between 500 to 5,000 kilometers. As the United States decided to withdrawal from the I.N.F. Treaty on August 2, 2019, this thesis will address how Russia and China's relationship is impacted by this decision. Three potential outcomes will be examined: strengthened relations between Russia and China, more complicated relations, and the possibility that their relationship may remain unchanged.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this paper to my family as their support is the greatest blessing I have ever had the honor of receiving. To my parents, Gerald and Myra, thank you for the sacrifices you both have always made to ensure I have every possible resource I need to succeed. More importantly, thank you for providing me with the opportunity to fully experience my own successes and failures. To my sister, Alayna, thank you for constantly inspiring me with your work ethic and drive. Your desire to learn, grow, and exceed your own potential has motivated me during this process.

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Chapter 1: An History of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty

In the aftermath of World War II, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) found themselves on the cusp of a unique opportunity: achieving what they believed to be a world hegemonic role. As neither state was willing to live under an opposing ideological power, the Cold War sparked immense hostility between American-Soviet relations. This hostility was met with insecurity in a variety of fields and capabilities. Insecurity shared by both the United States and the Soviet Union inspired the need to be dominant in major sectors, from economics to militarism. One sector in particular was not safe from this superiority race, despite the fear it struck in citizens and policymakers alike: nuclear capabilities. For both states, the powerful and quick destructive nature of intermediate-range weapons made them a significant tool to becoming a global hegemon.¹ This desire, despite the world-ending power these weapons held, did not seem extinguishable. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 was not enough of a global threat to lead either state to de-escalation. Instead, a significant reduction in weapons did not develop for another 20 years after the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred. On December 8, 1987, both President Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev signed “The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty,” also known as the I.N.F. Treaty. Most notably this treaty restricted American and Soviet intermediate-range nuclear and conventional capabilities and delivery systems. This treaty ensured sizeable de-escalation by both powers and likely provided many on both sides a sense of relief from the looming threat of intermediate-range weapons.

However, on February 2, 2019, President Trump provided a 6-month warning of the American abrogation from the 1987 I.N.F. Treaty if Russia did not work back into compliance.

¹ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2014), pg. 129.

According to United States intelligence, Russia has been in violation of the I.N.F. Treaty due to the capability of their SSC-8 missile. The SSC-8 missile, also known as the Novator 9M729, is an intermediate-range missile that, similar to the entire category of intermediate-range weapons, is “easy to hide, capable of carrying nuclear warheads, and reduces the warning time to minutes...lowering the threshold for nuclear conflict.”² Furthermore, in announcing American withdrawal, President Trump has referenced China’s capabilities as a potential source of American insecurity.³ The Trump Administration argues that China, not an original partner in the I.N.F. Treaty, is unconstrained by the barriers of the Treaty, allowing the state to freely grow their nuclear capability.⁴ China’s intermediate-range prowess coupled with the growing intermediate-range capabilities of both Russia and America may affect the balancing of these three states. For my thesis, I ask how U.S. abrogation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty will affect the Russian-Sino relations in the Pacific? I argue strengthened cooperation between Russia and China would occur if the United States deploys intermediate-range nuclear weapons to the Pacific. Without U.S. deployment, I argue the Russian-Sino strategic partnership will remain undisturbed.

What is the I.N.F. Treaty and Why Do Intermediate-Range Weapons Matter?

By the 1970’s, Cold War tensions were high and continued to be a fixture in both the American and Soviet perspectives. The arms race continued to escalate as both states worked towards missile systems that could reach the other quickly and undetected. Bringing both states

² NATO and the I.N.F. Treaty,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified on August 2, 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_166100.htm.

³ The White House, “President Donald J. Trump to Withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty Fact Sheet,” February 1, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-withdraw-united-states-intermediate-range-nuclear-forces-inf-treaty/>.

⁴ Peter Brookes, “The I.N.F. Treaty – What It Means for The U.S., Russia, and China Today,” Lecture by Peter Brookes, *The Heritage Foundation*, November 18, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/HL1301.pdf>.

to the negotiating table in the 1980's was the SS-20, a nuclear warhead developed by the Moscow Institute of Thermal Technology, significantly advancing Soviet nuclear capability.⁵

This missile, according to the White House, was capable of the following:

“The SS-20 was mobile, accurate, and capable of being concealed and rapidly redeployed. It carried three independently targetable warheads, as distinguished from the single warheads carried by its predecessors. The SS-20s 5,000-kilometer range permitted it to cover targets in Western Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and, from bases in the eastern Soviet Union, most of Asia, Southeast Asia, and Alaska.”⁶

The capability of the SS-20 was certainly threatening not only to the United States, but also American allies in Europe and the Pacific. Noting this significance, NATO presented a “dual track” strategy. This strategy urged both Soviet and American leadership to reduce intermediate-range forces to a minimal amount while also deploying an American ground-launched cruise missile in Western Europe.⁷ Despite the unwillingness to deescalate on both sides, on December 8, 1987, the United States and the USSR agreed to work towards complete disarmament regarding their intermediate-range weapons:

“The United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics...Conscious that nuclear war would have devastating consequences for all mankind, Guided by the objective of strengthening strategic stability, Convinced that the measures set forth in this Treaty will help to reduce the risk of outbreak of war and strengthen international peace and security, and Mindful of their obligations under Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Have agreed [to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty].”⁸

Historically, this treaty was the first of its kind as it eliminated an entire sector of nuclear weapons. This treaty “prohibited land-based cruise or ballistic missiles (both conventional and

⁵ “SS-20,” Missile Threat, Missile Defense Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies,” last updated on June 6, 2018, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/ss-20-saber-rsd-10/>.

⁶ “Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty,” U.S. Department of State, signed December 8, 1987, <https://www.state.gov/t/avc/trty/102360.htm>.

⁷ NATO and the I.N.F. Treaty,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified on August 2, 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_166100.htm.

⁸ “Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty,” U.S. Department of State, signed December 8, 1987, <https://www.state.gov/t/avc/trty/102360.htm>.

nuclear armed) with ranges between 311 miles and 3,420 miles.”⁹ In kilometers, this range would vary between 500km and 5,500km. The treaty outlined that neither state would be allowed to produce, test, or have within their possession an intermediate-range ballistic missile. Ballistic missiles that can reach beyond 3,420 miles are considered to be intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM).

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty was, and is still thought of, as a document of notable importance to the stability of an active nuclear international community. For the United States, their ability to deploy intermediate-range weapons to their allies in Europe, renders nuclear weapons as unnecessary for certain European countries. If this treaty provided stability and security within the international community, and for many American allies, what would be the benefit of retaining these weapons once again? It would be an injustice to the original purpose of the treaty not to briefly outline the benefits a state may have should they possess intermediate-range ballistic missiles. Additionally, this outline will provide more guidance regarding why these intermediate-range nuclear weapons were considered to be so destructive during the Cold War era.

Intercontinental ballistic missiles certainly have a farther reach than intermediate-range weapons, but author Michael Klare described the threat best when he recognized intermediate-range nuclear missiles as “providing an easy bridge from conventional to nuclear war.”¹⁰ According to Oak Ridge National Lab’s Deputy Director of Nuclear Intelligence, William Barrett, the desirability of intermediate-range ballistic missiles is often associated with their

⁹ Andrew E. Kramer, “The I.N.F. Treaty Explained,” *New York Times*, October 23, 2018: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/23/world/europe/inf-treaty-russia-united-states-trump-nuclear.html?module=inline>.

¹⁰ Michael T. Klare, “Nuclear Madness,” *Nation* Vol. 308, No. 5 (February 2019): pg.9.

flight time and lack of detectability.¹¹ Intercontinental ballistic missiles, should a state want to aim them toward a target reachable by an intermediate-range weapon, would likely take much more time to get to the same location.

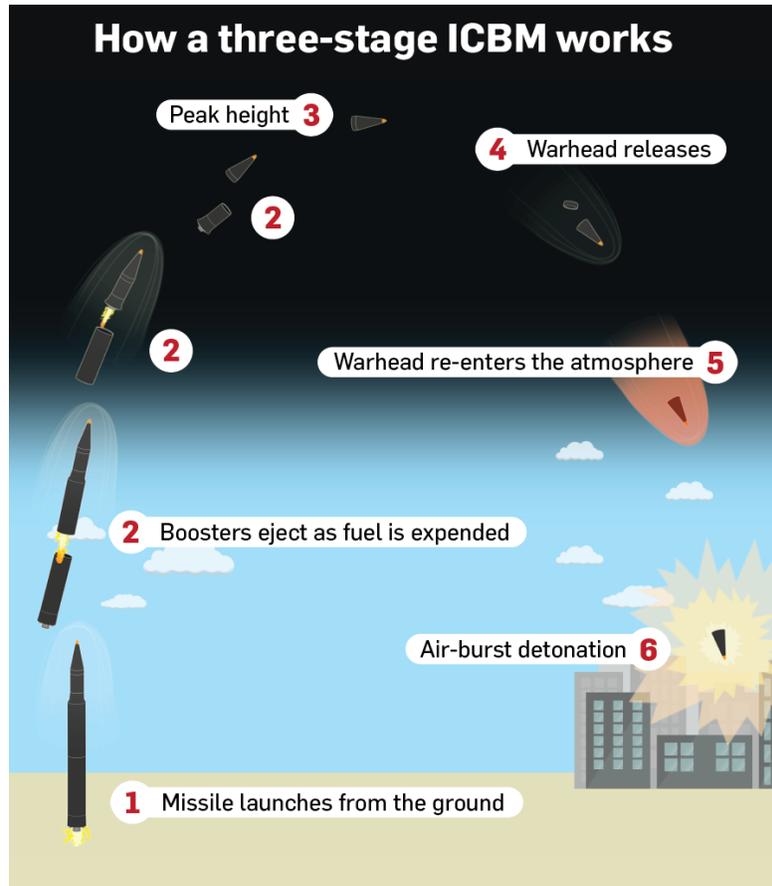


Figure 1: The deployment stages of an ICBM¹²

The increased flight time risks the possibility of detection or interference from the receiving state. ICBMs have to transition through the three stages before detonation, which would mean more time in the air is needed. Although ICBMs can reach farther targets than intermediate-range weapons, intermediate-range weapons can be deployed to various locations throughout the international community creating the opportunity to attack a greater number of targets. To put it

¹¹ William Barrett, “Comments from Oak Ridge National Laboratory’s Deputy Director of Nuclear Intelligence regarding the Ballistic Missiles,” interviewed by Leah Robinson Barrett, April 15, 2019.

¹² Josh K. Elliot, “How a three-stage ICBM works,” photo illustration, September 19, 2017, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/features/icbm-101-what-does-north-korea-need-to-do-to-strike-north-america-1.3589497>.

simply, ICBM's are meant to travel long distances, much farther than intermediate-range missiles.

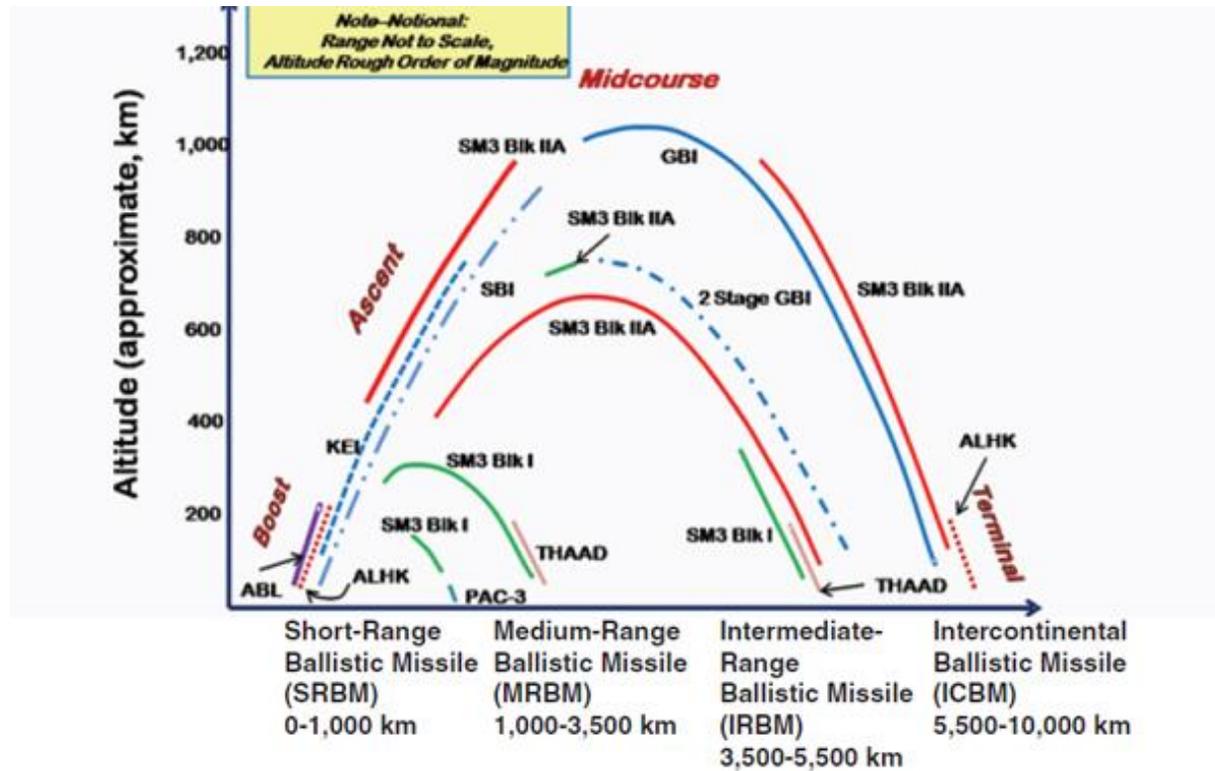


Figure 2: Altitude ranges of various missiles¹³

Due to the amount of air time and the three-stage deployment process, intercontinental ballistic missiles do not offer nuclear states the ability to attack undetected at a moment's notice. This ability provided by intermediate-range weapons renders a first-strike capability easier to achieve and more threatening to any and all states within the international community. Leaving the I.N.F. Treaty will allow both the United States and Russia the chance to pursue significant advancements to their nuclear arsenal, specifically in relation to the Pacific.

Lastly, intermediate-range nuclear weapons can significantly contribute to a state's influence and ultimately their status of power. For states like Russia, America, and now China, the lack of detectability and the reduced time to a target of intermediate-range weapons, this

¹³ "Making Sense of Ballistic Missile Defense," National Research Council of the Academies, pg.27.

capability could impact a state's nuclear influence or nuclear hegemonic status. Possessing the most destructive and inclusive nuclear arsenal within the international community would likely grant a state with the status of nuclear hegemony, influencing the overall power of the state itself. In theory, a state's second-strike capability and the looming threat of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) would provide security to a state that their nuclear arsenal is sufficient despite growth by other nuclear states within the international community. However, this may not necessarily be the case. According to Green and Long, when assessing the Soviet reaction to the late Cold War nuclear balance, stated: "Soviet leaders remained seriously concerned about the nuclear balance even in an allegedly deep-MAD environment where warheads numbered in the tens of thousands. Indeed, Soviet leaders were uncertain that they could indefinitely maintain a secure second strike.¹⁴ Being able to continuously secure a second-strike capability, and continue the stabilization offered by the MAD theory, nuclear arsenals must be equally as destructive. If not equal, a state may be able to influence another more easily.

Nuclear hegemony is so influential that it oftentimes impacts other types of power, like economic power as Peter Hayes states: "Nuclear hegemony is arguably the necessary complement to economic hegemony for a global superpower."¹⁵ Without the use of intermediate-range nuclear forces, that other states like China do have, it will prove difficult for the United States to continue to claim nuclear superiority if they have limited themselves from unrestrained nuclear exploration. Regardless of the status of nuclear hegemony, the contribution and influence of nuclear weapons to a state's offensive power is a significant reason as to why these weapons were desirable during the Cold War and today.

¹⁴ Brendan R. Green and Austin Long, "The MAD Who Wasn't There: Soviet Reactions to the Late Cold War Nuclear Balance," *Security Studies* Vol. 26, No. 4 (July 2017): pg. 608, DOI: [10.1080/09636412.2017.1331639](https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2017.1331639).

¹⁵ Peter Hayes, "Trump and the Interregnum of American Nuclear Hegemony," *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* Vol. 1, No. 2 (October 2018): 219-237, <https://doi.org/10.1080/25751654.2018.1532525>.

Although intermediate-range weapons had a significant impact on the strategic environment in the past, weapon technology developed significantly since the 1980's. Due to the technological advancement, some scholars argue that intermediate-range weapons no longer offer the same strategic benefit as they previously provided. For example, Tom Countryman and Kingston Reif explain this theory in their article "Intermediate-Range Weapons are the Wrong Weapon for Today's Security Challenges." "Fortunately, there is no military need for the United States to develop a new and costly intermediate-range missile for deployment... The United States can already deploy air- and sea- launched systems, which were not covered by the I.N.F. Treaty, that can threaten the same Russian targets that new ground-launched missiles could."¹⁶ The ultimate argument is that it is unnecessary for the United States to exert money and resources when similar targets can be reached with weapons already within American possession.

However, even though it can be argued that intermediate-range nuclear weapons do not offer a similar strategic benefit as they did in the 1980's, they remain useful in demonstrating force nonetheless and swiftly attacking an adversary, especially considering Russia's military strategies have changed since they signed the I.N.F. Treaty. As noted in the article "The Treaty on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces: History and Lessons Learned," Russia developed an interest in responding to threats with nuclear force as their conventional weapons arsenal declined in recent years. "Abandoning a decades-long no-first-use pledge, Russia now explicitly relies on the threat of nuclear weapons to repel a conventional attack 'when the very existence of the state is under threat.' Nuclear weapons have been integrated into its war-fighting

¹⁶ Tom Countryman and Kingston Reif, "Intermediate-Range Missiles are the Wrong Weapon for Today's Security Challenges," "War on the Rocks," last modified August 13, 2019, [Intermediate-Range Missiles Are the Wrong Weapon for Today's Security Challenges - War on the Rocks](#).

strategies...Russian non-strategic forces are now consisted essential to the defense of the homeland.”¹⁷

Additionally, as noted by James Andrew Lewis, allowing the U.S. to continue to grow their intermediate-range arsenal creates a threat to other intermediate-range capable states, such as Russia and China, potentially large enough to bring the states to the negotiation table.¹⁸ This is specifically important to note considering the Trump Administration attempted to recreate the treaty with China as an additional partner. If the United States is developing something that the Chinese or Russian states do not agree with, these states may be more willing to de-escalate their own arsenals to ensure American proliferation does not occur.

Why is the United States withdrawing from the I.N.F. Treaty?

The Trump Administration outlined Russia’s failure to comply with the I.N.F. Treaty as the primary reason for American withdrawal. As stated by former Defense Secretary Dr. Mark T. Esper, “Russia has failed to comply with its obligations under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and as such the United States has withdrawn from the I.N.F. Treaty effective today, August 2, 2019. This withdrawal is a direct result of Russia’s sustained and repeated violations of the treaty over many years and multiple presidential administrations.”¹⁹ Similar to the concerns brought about by the SS-20 in the 1980’s, the SSC-8, also known as the Novator 9M729, has exemplified characteristics that were originally banned within the I.N.F. Treaty.

¹⁷ Avis Bohlen, et al. “The Treaty on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces: History and Lessons Learned,” *Foreign Policy at Brookings*, December 2012, pgs. 28-29, [30-arms-control-pifer-paper.pdf](#) (brookings.edu).

¹⁸ James Andrew Lewis, “Emerging Technologies and Next Generation Arms Control,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, last modified on October 21, 2019, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/emerging-technologies-and-next-generation-arms-control>.

¹⁹ C. Todd Lopez, “U.S. Withdraws from Intermediate-Range Nuclear forces Treaty,” U.S. Department of Defense, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/1924779/us-withdraws-from-intermediate-range-nuclear-forces-treaty/>.

Considering the I.N.F. Treaty minimized the capability of both states' delivery systems, the SSC-8 ground-launched ballistic missile (GLBM) exceeds the distance allotted.

“Russia initially flight tested the 9M729 – a ground based missile – to distances well over 500 kilometers (km) from a fixed launcher. Russia then tested the same missile at ranges below 500km from a mobile launcher. By putting the two types of tests together, Russia was able to develop a missile that flies to the intermediate-ranges prohibited by the INF Treaty and launches from a ground-mobile platform.”²⁰

The Russian disregard of the treaty's prohibitions is not a new development. According to Daryl Kimball, former Executive Director of the Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers, “In July 2014, the U.S. State Department found Russia to be in violation of the agreement by producing and testing an illegal ground-launched cruise missile.”²¹ “Russia first began testing the cruise missiles as early as 2008...the Obama administration concluded by the end of 2011 that they were a compliance concern. In May 2013, Rose Gottemoeller, the State Department's senior arms control official, first raised the possibility of a violation with Russian officials.”²² Russia consistently denied the violations accused by the United States.

Notifying his intention of withdrawal to the media in October 2018, President Trump's statement of termination of American participation within the I.N.F. Treaty should come of no surprise to Russia. According to the Department of Defense, the United States contacted Russia over 30 times since 2013 to ensure Russian leadership understood the American concern of their violations, as seen below.

²⁰ Daniel Coats, “Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats on Russia's Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty Violation,” speech by Daniel Coats, November 30, 2018, <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/speeches-interviews/item/1923-director-of-national-intelligence-daniel-coats-on-russia-s-inf-treaty-violation>.

²¹ Daryl Kimball, “The Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty at a Glance,” Arms Control Association, February 2019, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/INFtreaty>.

²² Michael R. Gordon, U.S. says Russia Tested Cruise Missile, Violating Treaty, The New York Times, July 28, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/29/world/europe/us-says-russia-tested-cruise-missile-in-violation-of-treaty.html>.

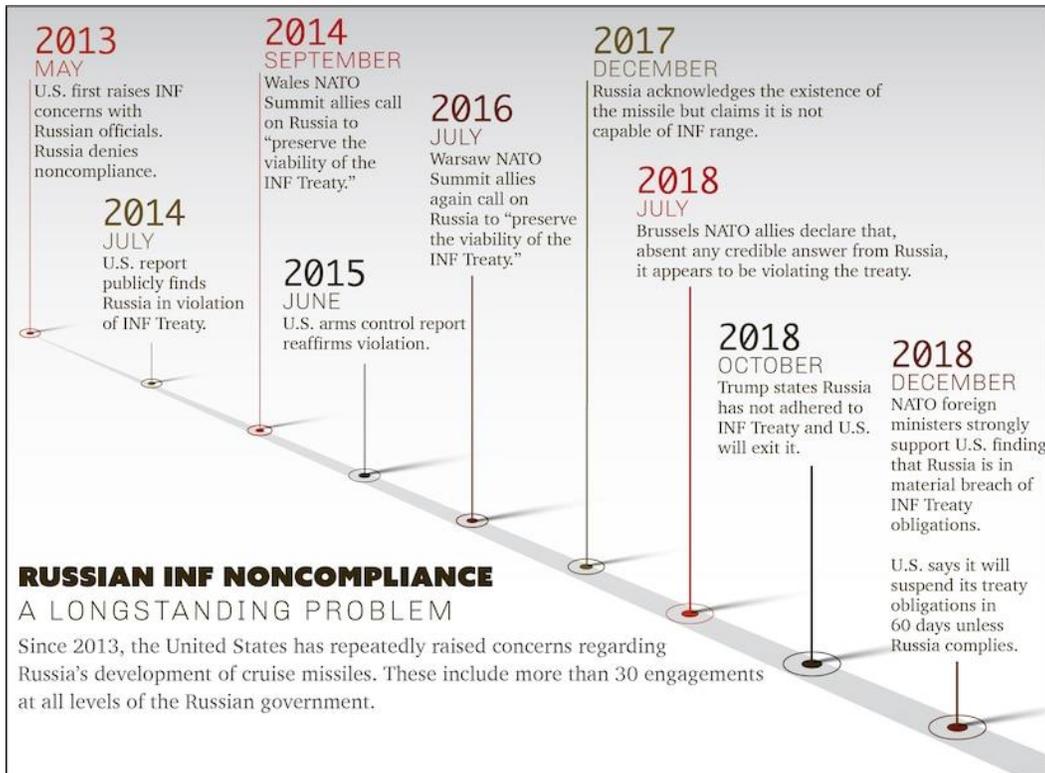


Figure 3: A timeline of Russian I.N.F. noncompliance²³

Also, in October of 2018, the Trump Administration prompted Russian leaders to work to scale back within the negotiated treaty limits or American withdrawal would ensue. Russia has not complied to these warnings, primarily due to their belief that violations did not occur, and they have yet to prove that their denial of the SSC-8's range is accurate. It is important to note that the United States has not announced how they have obtained the information on Novator 9M729, nor will they. It has been speculated that perhaps the Russian Federation did not violate the I.N.F. Treaty as the United States claimed. However, the American public, according to William Barrett, will likely never learn that information. "Right now, the United States has to make a choice," Barrett said. "If America outlines how they obtained this information, to prove the truth

²³ C. Todd Lopez, "U.S. Withdraws from Intermediate-Range Nuclear forces Treaty," U.S. Department of Defense, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/1924779/us-withdraws-from-intermediate-range-nuclear-forces-treaty/>.

of the Russian violation, they will risk exposing avenues of intelligence utilized to gain insight on Russian developments. If these routes of information are exposed, Russia will close those holes and the American opportunity to learn”.²⁴

Following through with his original statements, President Trump officially withdrew from the I.N.F. Treaty on August 2, 2019. With official American withdrawal, the administration noted their reasoning to be Russian abandonment of treaty norms. To President Trump’s point: Why would the United States adhere to rules, if it’s treaty partner is not doing the same?

In addition to Russia’s violation, the rise of China must be considered as a reason why the U.S. abrogated as well. China has been a concern for the U.S. across multiple sectors, potentially leading President Trump to form a more aggressive nuclear strategy, which leaving the I.N.F. Treaty would allow the U.S. to do.²⁵ For example, when announcing the U.S. abrogation, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo suggested China should be a participant within this arms control treaty as well, considering their intermediate-range arsenal rivals, and arguably outweighs, the treaty participants’ arsenals.²⁶ More specifically, John Bolton, former National Security Advisor to President Trump, noted that China’s rise in intermediate-range capabilities transformed the I.N.F. Treaty into “a bilateral treaty in a multipolar ballistic missile world.”²⁷

²⁴ William Barrett, “Comments from Oak Ridge National Laboratory’s Deputy Director of Nuclear Intelligence regarding the Ballistic Missiles,” interviewed by Leah Robinson, April 15, 2019.

²⁵ Jacob Stokes, “China’s Missile Program and U.S. Withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty,” a report from the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, February 4, 2019, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China%20and%20INF_0.pdf.

²⁶ Michael R. Pompeo, “U.S. Withdrawal from the I.N.F. Treaty on August 2, 2019,” Press statement from the U.S. Secretary of State, last modified on August 2, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-withdrawal-from-the-inf-treaty-on-august-2-2019/>.

²⁷ Jacob Stokes, “China’s Missile Program and U.S. Withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty,” a report from the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, February 4, 2019, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China%20and%20INF_0.pdf.

China's intermediate-range arsenal has been growing significantly in recent years. In 2017, the Commander of American Forces in the Pacific, Admiral Harris, testified in front of U.S. Senators regarding his concerns of Chinese nuclear power. To Senator Cotton, Harris claimed:

“China has a huge advantage over the United States when it comes to their stockpile of land-based short- and medium-range missiles – some which can carry nuclear warheads. Harris estimates that 90 percent of China's land-based missile forces fall into the category prohibited by the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.”²⁸

As many have argued the rise of China would be coupled by the decline of American power, this acknowledgement from the White House led some to question the timing of this withdrawal in relation to Chinese capabilities.²⁹ There have been speculations regarding China's growing power since the fall of the Soviet Union. China has not been limited in the growth of their nuclear and conventional arsenal, China has “an inventory of over 2,000 ballistic and cruise missiles of various ranges. China has the largest and most diverse ground-based missile force in the world. Most Chinese missiles can be tipped with either conventional or nuclear warheads.”³⁰

²⁸ Admiral Harris, “Hearings on the Treaty Restrictions giving China huge missile advantage over U.S.,” April 28, 2017, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/treaty-restrictions-giving-china-huge-missile-advantage-over-us-admiral-warns>.

²⁹ Pranay Vaddi, “Leaving the INF Treaty Won't Help Trump Counter Russia,” The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,” Last modified January 3, 2019, [Leaving the INF Treaty Won't Help Trump Counter China - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](https://www.carnegieendowment.org/policy-analysis/leaving-the-inf-treaty-wont-help-trump-counter-china).

³⁰ Admiral Harris, “Hearings on the Treaty Restrictions giving China huge missile advantage over U.S.,” April 28, 2017, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/treaty-restrictions-giving-china-huge-missile-advantage-over-us-admiral-warns>.

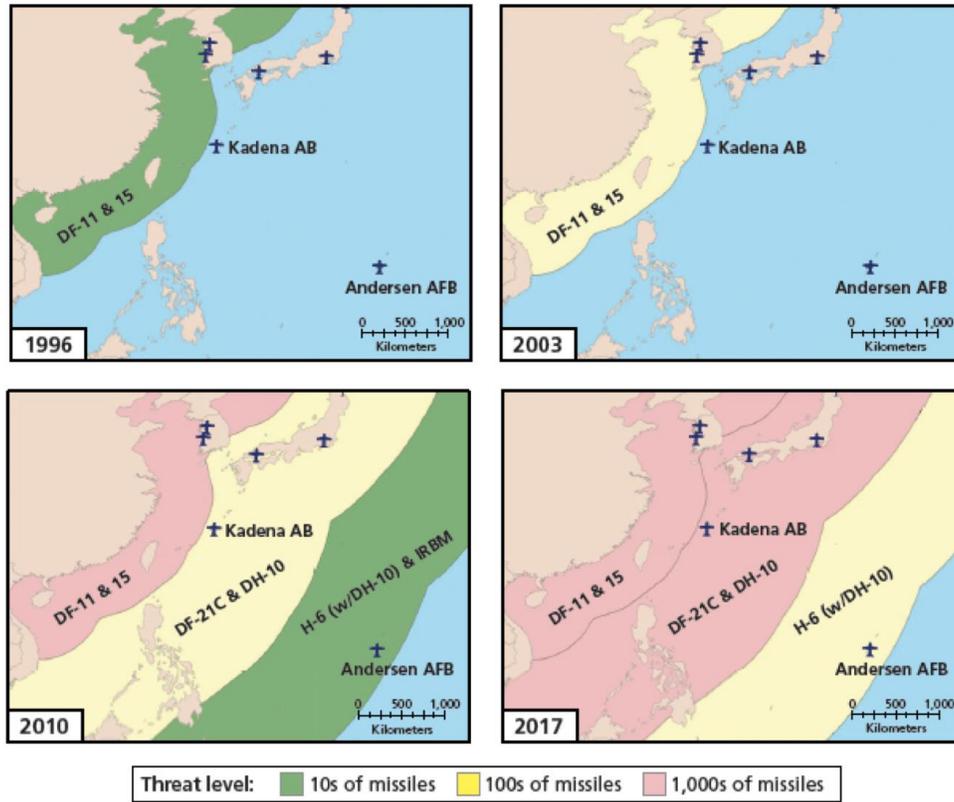


Figure 4: China’s increased missile count and threat range³¹

As evident by the above figure, China significantly increased their missile coverage within the Pacific, between 1996 and 2017. However, most notably, 95% of their 2,000 ballistic and cruise missiles (including conventional and dual-capable weapons) would be prohibited under the I.N.F. Treaty.³²

³¹ Eric Heginbotham et al., “The U.S.-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power, 1996- 2017,” *RAND Corporation*, September 14, 2015, 51.

³² Jacob Stokes, “China’s Missile Program and U.S. Withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty,” a report from the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, February 4, 2019, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China%20and%20INF_0.pdf.

Missile System	Would be Restricted under the INF Treaty?	Estimated Range	Launchers (mechanisms for moving and firing missiles)	Missiles
Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs)	Yes	3000+ km	16–30	16–30
Medium-Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBMs)	Yes	1500+ km	100–125	200–300
Ground-Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCMs)	Yes	1,500+ km	40–55	200–300
Short-Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBMs)	Yes, for the significant percentage of China's short-range missiles with ranges beyond 500 km	300 – 1,000 km	250–300	1,000–1,200
Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs)	Only the small number of missiles with ranges under 5,500 km	5,400 – 13,000+ km	50–75	75–100

Figure 5: China's intermediate-range weapons under I.N.F. Treaty restrictions³³

An arsenal primarily consisting of intermediate-range weapons is a strategic move on behalf of the Chinese military as it allows the state to posture themselves more assertively towards their neighbors and the U.S. without developing large amounts of ICBMs. Although Chinese intermediate-range weapons likely cannot reach the U.S., they can certainly strike American allies and complicate U.S. operations in the event of conflict in the Pacific. China's intermediate-range conventional and nuclear missiles create a difficult scenario for the United States when considering intervention on behalf of an ally should a situation present itself. China's intermediate-range arsenal poses more of a direct threat to Russian due to the proximity of the two states.

In summary, intermediate-range weapons are an integral part of the Chinese military strategy. Despite the perception of amassed Chinese nuclear power, China still has a smaller

³³ *Ibid.*

nuclear arsenal than both Russia and the United States.³⁴ The significant Chinese possession of intermediate-range weapons, however, allows China to threaten the giant military powers of Russia and the United States while asserting authority over other states within the Pacific region. Although Chinese intermediate-range power does not threaten the U.S. homeland per se, America's allies in the Pacific present scenarios for the Chinese to assert dominance. China's influence in the region does and will continue to impact other forms of international power such as trade and commerce. Continuing to allow the Chinese foothold in the Pacific to develop is likely the most threatening concern to the United States, not necessarily the Chinese threat of intermediate-range hegemony.

Responses to American Abrogation:

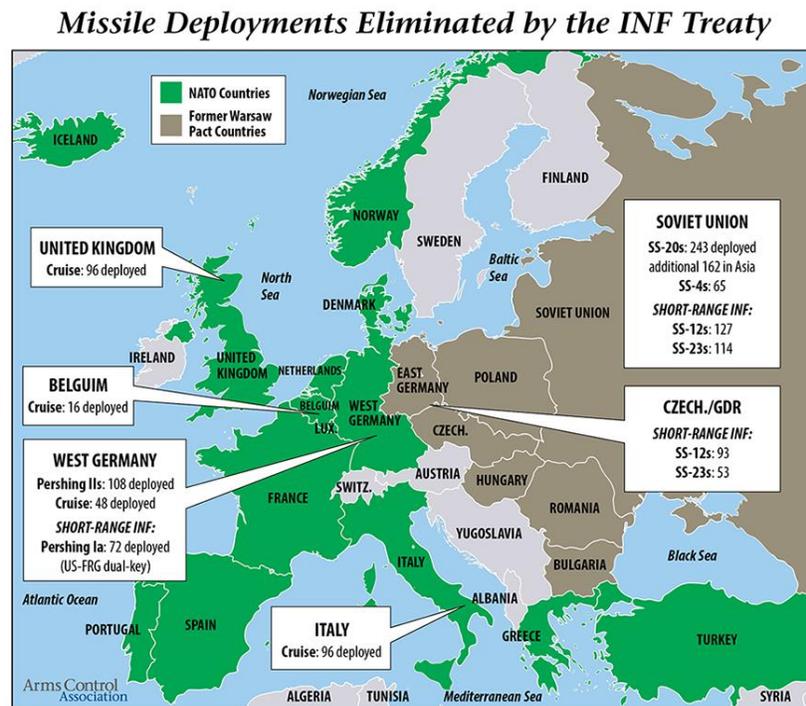
With the American intention to abrogate the I.N.F. Treaty announced, many analysts and government officials began to consider the withdrawal as a sign of impending Cold War tensions. For example, in October of 2018, the Washington Post announced the possibility of withdrawal and stated: "The breakdown of the treaty threatens to escalate a nascent arms race among Washington, Moscow, and Beijing and further chip away at an arms control architecture that American and Soviet diplomats painstakingly constructed during the Cold War."³⁵ Richard Burt, who helped negotiate the original provisions within the I.N.F. Treaty told *The Atlantic* that American abrogation of the treaty could lead to a deterioration of arms control treaties all

³⁴ Robert S. Norris and Hans M. Kristensen, "Global Nuclear Weapons Inventories, 1945-2010," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 44, No.4, pg.81, DOI: 10.2968/066004008.

³⁵ Paul Sonne and Anton Trianovski, "Cold War arms pact hangs in the balance as Bolton meets with Putin," *The Washington Post*, last modified October 22, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cold-war-arms-pact-hangs-in-the-balance-as-bolton-meets-with-putin/2018/10/22/d6c9c4b4-d62a-11e8-9559-712cbf726d1c_story.html.

together. “We’re in the process of sleepwalking into a new nuclear arms race,” implying that there is no longer a “hypersensitivity and awareness of the dangers of nuclear conflict.”³⁶

Although some analysts and officials have reported possible resumed Cold War tensions on the horizon, the primary concern has come from many European states. During the Cold War, Europe served as a battleground between the two nuclear powers. American allies in Europe played host to U.S.-owned intermediate-range weapons, while other states hosted U.S.S.R.-owned weapons with the additional pressure of the Soviet Union’s proximity. When the I.N.F. Treaty was signed in the 1980’s, the treaty outlined provisions that both powers must eliminate intermediate-range weapons, which included pulling more than 800 of these weapons out of Europe (as seen below).



³⁶ Uri Friedman, “Trump Hates International Treaties. His Latest Target: A Nuclear-Weapons Deal with Russia,” *The Atlantic*, last modified on October 24, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/10/trump-withdraw-inf-treaty-why/573715/>.

Figure 6: Missile Deployments Eliminated by the INF Treaty ³⁷

Additionally, former Prime Minister to Germany, Sigmar Gabriel, said the elimination of the I.N.F. Treaty puts Central Europe and Germany at risk as it creates the potential for these locations to turn into “a venue of nuclear madness.”³⁸ After the official dissolution of the I.N.F. Treaty, NATO reported that they have to prepare for a security environment that includes more “turbulent security” initiatives in the Asian region and where their alliances will be challenged.”³⁹ It is evident that some sources are concerned regarding what the future of international security will look like in a post-I.N.F. era. Some media sources and prominent political figures weigh the option of a resurgence of Cold-War era tensions, if not specifically felt within Russia or the U.S., at least by the European allies.

In addition to the responses made by U.S. and European officials and analysts, both Russia and China agreed that this abrogation would have devastating effects on the stability of the international community. Russia and China made statements assuring the United States that, should deployment of these weapons happen in their surrounding regions, they would consider themselves unrestrained in response.⁴⁰

As the United States exited the I.N.F. Treaty on the grounds that Russia has been in consistent violation, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated the Russian Federation has no intention to deploy intermediate-range weapons unless the United States does so first. Should

³⁷ Daryl Kimball, “The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty at a Glance,” Arms Control Association, February 2019, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/INFtreaty>.

³⁸ Paul Sonne and Anton Trianovski, “Cold War arms pact hangs in the balance as Bolton meets with Putin,” *The Washington Post*, last modified October 22, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cold-war-arms-pact-hangs-in-the-balance-as-bolton-meets-with-putin/2018/10/22/d6c9c4b4-d62a-11e8-9559-712cbf726d1c_story.html.

³⁹ Jack Durkalec, “European Security without the I.N.F. Treaty,” *NATO Review*, last modified on September 30, 2019, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/09/30/european-security-without-the-inf-treaty/index.html>.

⁴⁰ “‘Destructive U.S.’: Russia Reacts to I.N.F. Treaty Withdrawal,” *The Moscow Times*, accessed on May 16, 2020, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/08/02/destructive-us-russia-reacts-to-inf-treaty-withdrawal-a66680>.

that occur, however, Russia will be “forced to deploy Russian hypersonic nuclear missiles on ships or submarines near U.S. territorial waters.”⁴¹ Some Russian experts contend that the absence of the treaty will likely lead to escalation or even war as the United States attempts to restructure the international order through unrestrained nuclear power, similar to their efforts during the Cold War. According to Konstantin Sokolov, a geopolitical expert at the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, “The U.S. realizes that they’re destroying the entire international security system because they want to build a new world order.”⁴²

Although some Russian scholars consider the possibility of a new war on the horizon, China “has for years seen the I.N.F. Treaty as a guarantee of its security.”⁴³ China perceives that U.S. abrogation of the I.N.F. Treaty limits international stability as the United States pursues its own self-interest. In a press conference on the day of withdrawal, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Hua Chunying, stated: “Withdrawing from the I.N.F. Treaty is another negative move of the U.S. that ignores its international commitment and pursues unilateralism. Its real intention is to make the treaty no longer binding on itself so that it can unilaterally seek military and strategic edge.”⁴⁴

Although the American withdrawal of the I.N.F. Treaty affects the U.S. and Russia, the reactions from Chinese and Russian leadership alike have not outlined how the absence of the Treaty influences their own relationship. At most, China noted that without the I.N.F. treaty, the

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Grzegorz Kuczyński, “The Collapse of the INF Treaty and the US-China Rivalry,” *Warsaw Institute*, December 30, 2019, <https://warsawinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-Collapse-of-the-INF-Treaty-and-the-US-China-Rivalry-Warsaw-Institute-report-v2.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying’s Regular Press Conference on August 2, 2019,” transcript from the live press conference, August 2, 2019, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t1685765.shtml.

stability of the Pacific region would be put in jeopardy.”⁴⁵ However, it is likely this statement primarily refers to the threat to the Chinese homeland via American allies in the Pacific should the United States deploy these weapons.

Despite American abrogation, along with Russian and Chinese dislike of the disintegration of the treaty, the Trump Administration provided both states the opportunity to join a new agreement that would limit Russia, the U.S., and China. According to Fu Cong, the director of the arms control department at China’s foreign ministry, any agreement limiting China’s ability to develop their nuclear capability is unfair considering Russian and American nuclear arsenals far outweigh their own.⁴⁶ Since the dissolution of the I.N.F. Treaty in 2019, Russia and the United States have discussed other solutions and arms control agreements to curb the potential of significant proliferation of intermediate-range weapons. Nothing promising developed from these discussions. However, the United States continues to request the participation of China despite being met with continued resistance. In the current climate, it does not seem plausible to consider the U.S. entering into a new agreement to limit their intermediate-range growth without China as a signatory. However, this may change with the election of Joe Biden.

To conclude, it is necessary to address the reactions to American abrogation as many question the possibility of a resurgence of Cold War tensions within the international community in a post-I.N.F. Treaty era. Ultimately, it is suggested through these reactions that the dissolution of the treaty may result in destabilizing effects. Due to this concern, this thesis aims to address

⁴⁵ Grzegorz Kuczyński, “The Collapse of the INF Treaty and the US-China Rivalry,” *Warsaw Institute*, December 30, 2019, <https://warsawinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-Collapse-of-the-INF-Treaty-and-the-US-China-Rivalry-Warsaw-Institute-report-v2.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Michael Martina, “China warns of counter measures if U.S. puts missiles on its ‘doorstep,’ Reuters, last modified August 5, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-usa-defence/china-warns-of-countermeasures-if-u-s-puts-missiles-on-its-doorstep-idUSKCN1UW044>.

the possibility of these effects by analyzing how the Russian-Sino strategic partnership may shift to prepare for a developing American intermediate-range arsenal.

The Context of the Thesis:

There are a few items that need to be discussed before continuing with the research introduced in this thesis. First to note, is the extenuating circumstances that occurred during the research of this thesis: COVID-19. Due to the devastating effects that have taken place, it is possible that the research presented in this thesis is subject to change. It is not possible to know how Russian-Sino relations would have been affected in the absence of the global pandemic the world now faces. This thesis will not investigate the potential impact of COVID-19.

Additionally, for the purpose of this research, I will be examining nuclear intermediate-range weapons rather than conventional intermediate-range weapons as the I.N.F. Treaty is the only treaty or agreement to restrict an entire class of nuclear weapons. For the remainder of this thesis, when referring to intermediate-range weapons, I will be referring to intermediate-range nuclear weapons unless otherwise noted.

For the purposes of this research, I will be examining how China, Russia, and the U.S. react and prepare themselves to deal with the growing arsenal of previously restrained international nuclear powers. More specifically, this thesis will examine the strategic partnership between Russia and China and how that partnership is affected with the American abrogation of the I.N.F. Treaty. They do not need intermediate-range weapons to strike one another. Secondly, I will lay out the thesis in the following manner: In Chapter 1, I will discuss three possible hypotheses that could occur from American abrogation of the I.N.F. Treaty. I will use historical examples from the Russian-Sino strategic partnership to formulate each hypothesis. Chapter 2 will explore various IR theories to provide additional context as to why each hypothesis may

occur. I will also explore how American deployment in various regions may affect the likelihood of each hypothesis. Lastly, Chapter 4 will compare the evidence presented in the previous chapters to determine the most likely hypothesis with and without American deployment.

Chapter 2: The Hypotheses and their Historical Implications

For the purpose of this thesis, I will explore the following hypotheses: U.S. abrogation of the I.N.F. Treaty strengthening the Russian-Sino strategic partnership, and U.S. abrogation irritating the imbalanced Russian-Sino relationship. It is important to note, however, that neither of these two hypotheses may occur. Instead, there could be no change in their relationship at all. This chapter will explore that possibility as well.

In this chapter I will use historical examples from the Russian-Sino strategic partnership to generate each hypothesis. Additionally, I will outline the current status of Russia and China's partnership within the explanation of the first hypothesis. Exploring the current status of the partnership will provide a comprehensive understanding of how the relationship has developed since the fall of the Soviet Union and create a foundation to introduce the theoretical concepts that will be explored in Chapter 3.

Hypothesis 1: Strengthened Russian-Sino Relations

The first hypothesis presented will explore the possibility that Russian-Sino relations would strengthen in the absence of the I.N.F. Treaty through their already formulated strategic partnership. The most fundamental aspect of this hypothesis lies in the history of the states' common interests, rather than common fears, that were largely sparked after the fall of the Soviet Union. For this hypothesis, I will outline the characteristics of a strategic partnership, how those partnerships are formed, and how the Russian-Sino partnership could- strengthen within the current environment. I argue that outlining strategic partnerships and what they entail is the most significant manner in which to address the historical instances that led both states to become formidable partners since 1987. Lastly, I will conclude the first hypothesis by outlining how the strategic partnership developed economically.

The term strategic partnership in reference to Russia and China dates back to 1996 when the two states announced the partnership at the Shanghai Summit. Russia and China signed their declaration of a strategic partnership on April 23, 1996. With the intention of eliminating hegemony and establishing a multi-polar international order.⁴⁷ The declaration of the Russo-Sino partnership stated their desire to open the communication lines between the two states to an unprecedented degree. Moscow and Beijing agreed to “regularize bi-annual presidential summits, maintain close contact between respective departments of foreign affairs, national defence, and trade, to create a telephone ‘hotline’ between the two capitols, and to establish a special Committee for Friendship Peace, and Development.”⁴⁸

The strategic partnership, and the commitment to one another, was reaffirmed and solidified in 2001. On July 16, 2001, the two states signed the “Treaty of Good Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation.” Most significantly, the treaty outlined that Russia and China would avoid military force against one another, in addition to increasing their reliance on each other militarily in handling adversarial conflicts. Besides its military significance, the friendly cooperation treaty of 2001 was the first friendship recognition treaty signed by the two states since the 1950’s.⁴⁹

Strategic Partnerships: The Fundamental Characteristics and Formation

The explanation of strategic partnerships outlined in this chapter illustrate why the Russian-Sino relationship developed over the years. However, the other hypotheses will consider their relationship as a strategic partnership as well. Although the history of the two states has multiple

⁴⁷ Thomas S. Wilkins, “Russo-Chinese Strategic Partnership a New Form of Security Cooperation,” *Contemporary Security Policy* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Fall 2008): pg.360, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260802284365>.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pg.360.

⁴⁹ Michael Chase, et al, “Russia-China Relations: Assessing Common Ground and Strategic Fault Lines,” The National Bureau of Asian Research,” July 2017, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/SR66_Russia-ChinaRelations_July2017.pdf.

points of contingency and divergence, the fall of the Soviet Union created similar interests between the two states, ultimately solidifying the future of their strategic relationship. According to Timothy S. Wilkins in his article “Russo-Chinese Strategic Partnership: A New Form of Security Cooperation,” a strategic partnership is not a traditional alliance, rather it is a collaboration that is goal-driven instead of threat-driven and has a low commitment cost.⁵⁰ To understand why a strategic partnership formed between the two states it is necessary to describe the fundamental characteristics of a strategic partnership and how it differs from traditional alliances. To note, all characteristics of strategic partnership can be found in traditional alliances individually, but not necessarily all four aspects in conjunction with one another.⁵¹

First, a strategic partnership is a systems-based partnership. This aspect is crucial to the Russian-Sino relationship as it explains why the partnership has endured over two decades. According to Wilkins, a systems-based relationship is one formed on common interests rather than a shared set of values. The intention to remain a unified front, despite the difference in values, can be seen within the 2001 Friendship Treaty itself: “The contracting parties respect each other’s choice for the course of political, economic, social and cultural development in line with their nation’s actual conditions so as to ensure a long-term stable development of relations between the two countries.”⁵² The acknowledgement of their own value systems is arguably the most fundamental aspect to their partnership as it ensures that their partnership will not be impacted, nor is it at risk, by the decisions of the other state politically, socially, economically, and culturally. Militarily, however, the two states will consider the actions of one another.

⁵⁰ Thomas S. Wilkins, “Russo-Chinese Strategic Partnership: A New Form of Security Cooperation?” *Contemporary Security Policy* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Fall, 2008): pg.361, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260802284365>.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation between the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation,” last modified on July 24, 2001, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t15771.shtml.

Considering strategic partnerships are not founded on shared values, their goals must provide a basis for the partnership.

Arguably the two states have prioritized other political interests over the years, but the shared interest that created the partnership persists. This common interest is promoting an international community that does not only adhere to the desires and interests of Western powers but rather is more inclusive. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the international community watched as these common interests developed. The collapse of the USSR provided the newly formed Russia with hostility towards Western power as “Russia failed to push through democratic reforms, NATO’s (military) presence in and near Eurasia aggravated Russian leadership, and (NATO’s) perceived lack of deference to Russian interests.”⁵³ China, watching Russia’s issues ensue, kept their own political system isolated, but developed their own aggravation with Western influence:

hegemonic ambition.

“Keeping it’s (China’s) political system closed, China liberalized markets, attracted foreign investors, and transformed itself into the world’s factory. China has since grown into the world’s second-largest economy, yet one that is largely dependent on the free flow of trade with key markets in Europe and North America. Still, despite its co-dependency with the West, Beijing is wary of perceived U.S. hegemony in both economic and security spheres.”⁵⁴

Their analogous motivations propelled both states to rely on each other when needed, specifically to aid in creating a multi-polar world where other interests besides Western interest were considered valid. Although it can certainly be argued that traditional alliances do not have to be rooted in similar values, most often traditional alliances are not goal drive but rather threat-driven.⁵⁵ In contrast, traditional alliances, “are formal associations of states for the use (or non-

⁵³ Paul Stronski and Nicole NG, “Cooperation and Competition: Russia and China in Central Asia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,” last modified on February 28, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/02/28/cooperation-and-competition-russia-and-china-in-central-asia-russian-far-east-and-arctic-pub-75673>.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Thomas S. Wilkins, “Russo-Chinese Strategic Partnership: A New Form of Security Cooperation?” *Contemporary Security Policy* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Fall, 2008): pg.361, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260802284365>.

use) of military force, in specified circumstances, against states outside their own membership.”⁵⁶

The systems-based goal-driven approach can be seen within the 2001 Friendship Treaty as the Treaty states that the intention of the partnership is founded in “the hope of promoting and establishing a just and fair new world order based on universally recognized principles and norms of international laws.”⁵⁷ This introduction to the treaty emphasizes that both states desire a ‘new world order,’ rather than their current international community that favors the Western political agenda. Consequently, the two states agreed to work alongside one another to achieve this goal.

The next characteristic that makes up a strategic partnership, according to Wilkins, is the low commitment cost, another place of divergence from traditional alliances. In traditional alliances, there are high costs as actors must assume the risk of provoking other states that feel they are being targeted or excluded by the alliance.⁵⁸ Additionally, low commitment cost can arguably be seen within the same section of the treaty that demonstrates the lack of shared values. To restate, “the contracting parties respect each other’s choice for the course of political, economic, social and cultural development in line with their nation’s actual conditions so as to ensure a long-term stable development of relations between the two countries.”⁵⁹ This clause adds flexibility to the partnerships by providing the individual states’ autonomy without affecting the partnership. In addition to the flexibility provided in the outlined clause, the treaty does not

⁵⁶ Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997): pg.4.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation between the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation,” last modified on July 24, 2001, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t15771.shtml.

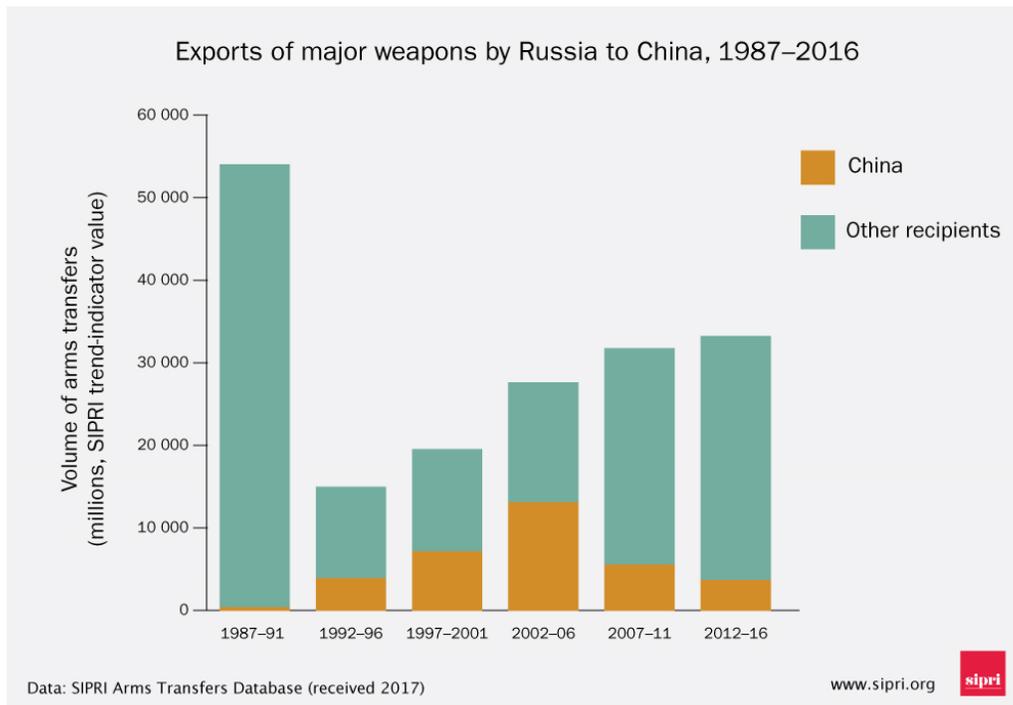
⁵⁸ Thomas S. Wilkins, “Russo-Chinese Strategic Partnership: A New Form of Security Cooperation?” *Contemporary Security Policy* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Fall, 2008): pg.361, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260802284365>.

⁵⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation between the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation,” last modified on July 24, 2001, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t15771.shtml.

include or mention any ramifications for violations. Wilkins describes the low commitment cost and informality of strategic partnerships beneficial as they “mitigate the entrapment dynamic common to orthodox alliances.”⁶⁰

Lastly, economic exchange is considered fundamental to the strategic partnership. The primary elements of the Russian-Sino strategic partnership are trade and infrastructure. Specifically considering the geographical location of the Pacific, both Russia and China have access to arguably the world’s most utilized trade region.

Arms trades are a major aspect of the strategic military advantage of the partnership. Arms trades between Russia and China primarily began after the fall of the Soviet Union. At the time, China just transitioned out of a fear of the growing Soviet military power and Russia, on the other hand, needed help in rebuilding their economy.



⁶⁰ Thomas S. Wilkins, “Russo-Chinese Strategic Partnership: A New Form of Security Cooperation?” *Contemporary Security Policy* 29, no. 2 (Fall, 2008): pg.361, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260802284365>.

Figure 7: Exports of major weapons by Russia to China, 1987-2016 ⁶¹

Russia was militarily contributing to a future adversary by aiding the expansion of China's weapons arsenal, but China was helping Russia reestablish, and continue to grow, their economy.⁶²

After reviewing the characteristics of strategic partnerships, their formation, and how it benefited and continues to benefit the Russian-Sino relationship, it is beneficial to review how the strategic partnership would be strengthened in the absence of the I.N.F. Treaty.

As stated in the Russian-Sino Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation: "When a situation arises in which one of the contracting parties deems that peace is being threatened and undermined or its security interests are involved or when it is confronted with the threat of aggression, the contracting parties shall immediately hold contacts and consultations in order to eliminate such threats."⁶³ Additionally, the treaty says, "the contracting parties are against any action which may constitute a threat to international stability, security, and peace and will conduct mutual coordination with regard to the prevention of international conflicts and bringing about their political settlement." As discussed in Russian and Chinese responses to American withdrawal from the I.N.F. Treaty, both states felt the regional and international stability would be threatened. As the treaty outlines, the two states agreed to aid each other in the face of a threat. Arguably, this threat layers on top of the goal-driven approach to the strategic partnership as neither state wants to witness the international community revert to an even less

⁶¹ Siemon T. Wezeman, "China, Russia, and the shifting landscape of arms sales," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, last modified on July 5, 2017, <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-background/2017/china-russia-and-shifting-landscape-arms-sales>.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation," last modified on July 24, 2001, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t15771.shtml.

inclusive environment, ignoring interests that are not Western in nature. However, as outlined in Chapter 3, American deployment may affect this hypothesis as well.

Hypothesis 2: Deterioration of the Russian-Sino Strategic Partnership

The Russian-Sino strategic partnership still lasts today and is arguably at its strongest point. Despite their desire for a multi-polar international environment, the two states diverge ideologically and in their approach to arms control. Additionally, the international landscape has significantly shifted since the formation of the I.N.F. Treaty in the 1980's. This section will address the aspects of the strategic partnership that may be negatively impacted in the absence of the I.N.F. Treaty, in addition to previous points of tension between the two states.

The original purpose of the I.N.F. Treaty aimed at relaxing tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States as both actors' intermediate-range weapons dramatically increased the fear of a nuclear attack. "The I.N.F. thus reinforced stability through mutual vulnerability by eliminating these dynamics."⁶⁴ China, at the time, did not have a significant arsenal of intermediate-range weapons or the military strength to counter an advance made by their neighbor, the Soviet Union. When the I.N.F. Treaty was in the process of negotiation, the Chinese felt the growing presence of the USSR in their backyard, considering the Soviets began deploying intermediate-range weapons in the Asian region. Consequently, the Chinese began to lean on the strength of the West. "The Soviet Union's 1977 deployment of SS-20's, 171 of which were based near the Urals, was seen as a direct threat to China...China's nuclear force was entirely land-based and thus vulnerable to a counterforce first-strike from Soviet I.N.F. missiles."⁶⁵ The Chinese relied on the U.S. arsenal to contain the expansive influence of the

⁶⁴ Samuel Charap, "The Demise of the INF: Implications for Russia-China Relations," Testimony given to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission," April 9, 2019, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT500/CT507/RAND_CT507.pdf.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

USSR and worked to ensure the I.N.F. Treaty did not restrict the development of Chinese intermediate-range weapons. As they succeeded in this endeavor, they have been unrestrained in their intermediate-range development ever since.

Today, intermediate-range weapons comprise the majority of China’s nuclear arsenal, leaving other major international players concerned. In recent years, both the U.S. and their strategic partner Russia have noted the concern of China’s unchecked weapon development. President Putin explains the need for Russia to have the ability to develop their intermediate-range weapons due to the unrestrained capability of their neighbor.⁶⁶ In Putin’s statement, it is evident that Russia is vulnerable to its strategic partner. Despite the benefits within the partnership, it seems the roles have reversed as Russia is concerned with Chinese expansionism.

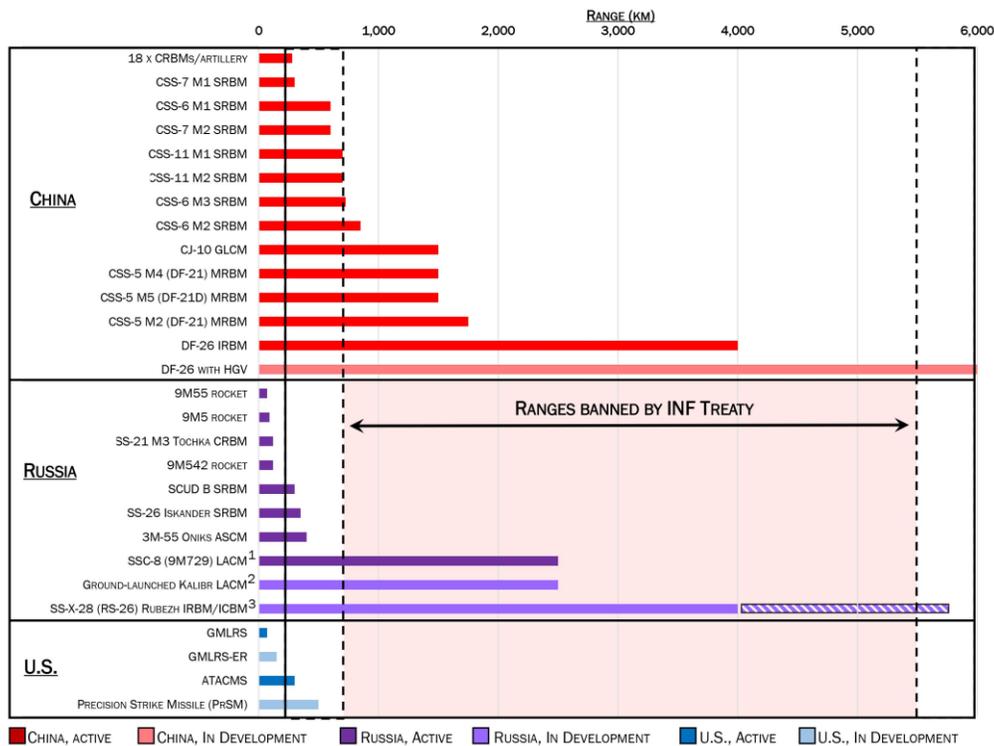


Figure 8: A comparison of intermediate-range capabilities ⁶⁷

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Ian Williams, “Ranges of Chinese, Russian, and U.S. Land-Based Missiles,” Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://breakingdefense.com/2019/05/beyond-inf-an-affordable-arsenal-of-long-range-missiles/>.

As the above figure indicates, China is the leading actor in terms of intermediate-range capabilities, with Russia taking the second-place spot. Russia already has and is currently developing their weapons with ranges banned by the I.N.F. Treaty. The United States, however, is less capable of competing with China regarding intermediate-range weapons. Russia poses the most significant threat to China strictly based on geographical location and their shared border. “Given the relatively modest size of Beijing’s arsenal, the capability of any potential adversary to strike launch sites or C2 nodes deep within Chinese territory would be an unwelcome development.”⁶⁸

Additionally, the United States terminated the I.N.F. Treaty for Russia’s violation of the agreement. Consequently, China could be frustrated with Russia’s actions as China wanted the treaty to remain in place. “Given China’s approach to the original I.N.F. negotiations, it is plausible that there are some significant concerns in Beijing about the treaty’s demise, or more specifically the implications of its demise for the U.S. and Russian force postures (both nuclear and conventional) in Asia.”⁶⁹ When China made their original statement regarding their view on the demise of the I.N.F. Treaty, Chinese leadership noted the importance of regional peace. Regional peace for the Chinese not only includes the United States and their influence, but possibly even more threatening Russian nuclear expansionism. As the Chinese previously experienced Soviet expansionism before the I.N.F. Treaty was originally signed, and the Chinese likely intend on avoiding a similar occurrence. The time when China relied on American military

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Samuel Charap, “The Demise of the INF: Implications for Russia-China Relations,” Testimony given to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission,” April 9, 2019, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT500/CT507/RAND_CT507.pdf.

strength out of their fear of the U.S.S.R. remains within the immediate memory of the Chinese. This will be further explored in Chapter 3 within the discussion of the wedge strategy.

Hypothesis 3: The Russian-Sino Strategic Partnership Remains Unchanged

In addition to the first two hypotheses presented in this chapter, there is also a possibility that neither hypothesis occurs, leaving the Russian-Sino strategic partnership unchanged. There are three significant factors that would support this hypothesis: the change in the international environment since the I.N.F. Treaty was signed, China's current capabilities, and the status of the Russian-Sino strategic partnership.

The international environment has evolved since the 1980's, including the major international players. Militarily, technology has vastly reinvigorated weapons and capabilities. Weapons have become more advanced, which has decreased the strategic capability and impact of intermediate-range weapons. Additionally, China is much less vulnerable to a disarming first strike or counterforce strike now than when the I.N.F. Treaty was originally signed. Consequently, should Russia redevelop and modernize their intermediate-range nuclear or conventional weapons, they do not pose as significant of a threat to the Chinese today. Specifically, according to Samuel Charap, "Beijing's nuclear forces have become much more survivable, with more mobile missiles and the introduction of submarine-launched ballistic missiles."⁷⁰

In addition to the Chinese ability to militarily withstand more pressure, the Russian Federation largely depends on trade from the Chinese for revenue. As seen in hypothesis 1, strategic partnerships must have a level of economic exchange. Per figure 6, the Russian and

⁷⁰ Ian Williams, "Ranges of Chinese, Russian, and U.S. Land-Based Missiles," Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://breakingdefense.com/2019/05/beyond-inf-an-affordable-arsenal-of-long-range-missiles/>.

Chinese economic relationship began to strengthen in 1987 as Chinese purchasing of Russian weapons helped the newly formed Russia begin to rebuild their economy. Although that economic exchange is mutually beneficial and served a specific purpose at the time, China’s growing power in terms of trade has increased substantially since 1987. China is no longer reliant on Russia for weapons as China has become the world’s second largest arms dealer.⁷¹

China-Russia Trade Disparities

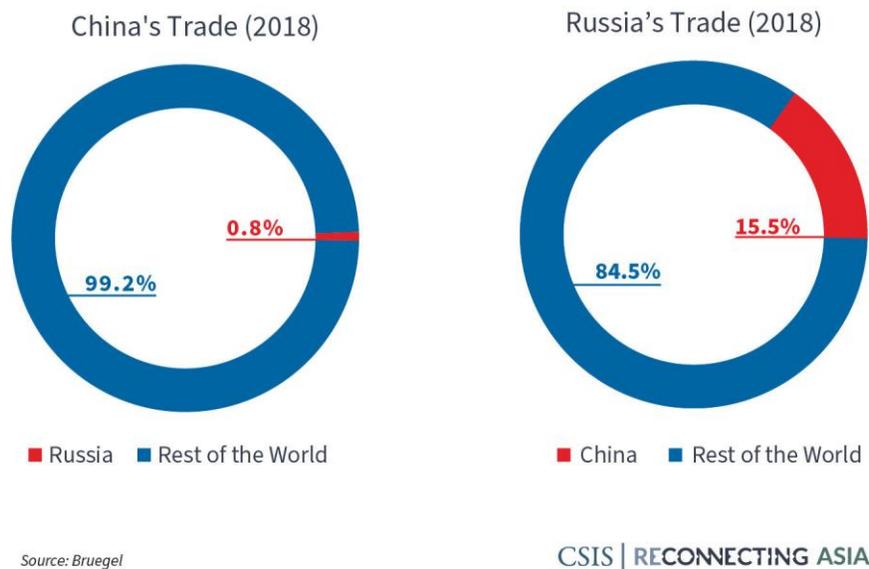


Figure 9: China-Russia Trade Disparities ⁷²

With the above figure as an example, it is likely that the Russian Federation does not want to put their economic benefits from the strategic partnership at risk simply to challenge China for the title of intermediate-range nuclear leader and, arguably, regional hegemon. It is more beneficial to the stability of Russia to not provoke China and continue the partnership as it is currently, rather than risking the relationship with their most prominent trade partner. Additionally, Russian

⁷¹ Johnathan E. Hillman, “China and Russia: Economic Unequals,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 15, 2020, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/200715_ChinaandRussia.pdf.

⁷² *Ibid.*

leadership already indicated their intention to increase trade with China to \$200 billion by 2024.⁷³

Lastly, with the election of Joe Biden, the United States and Russia may come back to the table to discuss a new nuclear arms agreement, similar to what occurred in the summer of 2020 under the Trump Administration. However, with the Biden Administration in power, it is plausible that the United States does not push to include China in that agreement. In addition, the Biden Administration may begin to scale back the American intermediate-range developments that began after abrogation in 2019. With the anticipation of a new administration on the horizon, China and Russia may wait to see what new developments will be made in the coming years before posturing to react to American withdrawal of the Treaty. Consequently, the strategic partnership, and military balance in the Pacific, between Russia and China would remain unchanged.

⁷³ Holly Ellyatt, "Are Russia and China the best of friends now? Its complicated analysts say." CNBC. Last modified September 27, 2019. <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/09/27/russia-and-chinas-relationship--how-deep-does-it-go.html>.

Chapter 3: The Effects of Theoretical Implications

In addition to the historical background for this research, it is necessary to discuss various international relation (IR) theories. IR theories are crucial to understanding future intentions, actions, and strategies of international players. Chapter 3 will address the following theories: the wedge strategy, the balance-of-power theory, and the balance-of-threat theory. The purpose of this chapter is to compare the history of each hypothesis to IR theories in order to determine future actions. This chapter will address the question, ‘how does the presence of American and Russian intermediate-range nuclear weapons and American deployment of these weapons alter the strategic partnership from a theoretical perspective?’ The question of American deployment will be strongly influenced by the possible strategic benefit outlined by IR theories.

The Use of the Wedge Strategy without Deployment:

Theorists have argued the definition of balance-of-power theory for decades. However, for the purposes of this thesis, balance-of-power will be understood as the definition provided by Kenneth Waltz in his book *Theory of International Relations*. According to Waltz, the balance-of-power occurs when, “They (states) are unitary actors who, at a minimum seek their own preservation and, at a maximum, drive for universal domination. States, or those who act for them, try in more or less sensible ways to use the means available in order to achieve the ends in view.”⁷⁴ Waltz’s definition outlines the self-interest of states and their motivation to ensure their own survival, even if that entails utilizing the self-interest of other actors as well. Waltz emphasizes the concepts of external and internal efforts in explaining his approach to the balance-of-power theory. External efforts are those that states use when positioning, or rather aligning, themselves in relation to other actors. Internal efforts, however, are actions taken to

⁷⁴ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 2010), pg.118.

increase a state's capability. For example, Waltz describes internal efforts as "moves to increase economic capability, to increase military strength, or development of strategies."⁷⁵ This section focuses on both external and internal efforts that could be taken by Russia and China to prepare themselves for a new era of weapon development. Ultimately, this research outlines how Russian-Sino relations, or rather their strategic partnership, shifts based on American withdrawal. Specifically, this portion of the chapter will outline how the U.S. may use the wedge strategy to impact the balance of power in the Pacific.

The United States would not withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty unless it served their own political interests. As mentioned in the introduction, both Russia's violations of the treaty and China's growing power are viable reasons as to why the U.S. abrogated. To press after American abrogation, Mark Esper, now former U.S. Secretary of Defense, stated he was interested in deploying intermediate-range weapons to the Pacific region as quickly as possible.⁷⁶ However, the United States has not yet made any movement or progress towards deployment of these weapons. In addition, the incoming Presidential Administration will likely have differing intentions regarding the development of these weapons than current President Donald Trump. With or without deployment, however, the Russian-Sino partnership checked American nuclear hegemony at the Central Asian "door," which leaves Russia and China to vie for regional nuclear hegemony in one of the most influential geographical regions in the world.⁷⁷ Consequently, this portion of the chapter will outline the wedge strategy as a possible theory to explain why the U.S. might not deploy these weapons.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pg. 118.

⁷⁶ Indrees Ali, "U.S. Defense Secretary says he favors placing missiles in Asia," Reuters, last modified August 3, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-asia-inf/u-s-defense-secretary-says-he-favors-placing-missiles-in-asia-idUSKCN1UT098>.

⁷⁷ Thomas S. Wilkins, "Russo-Chinese Strategic Partnership: A New Form of Security Cooperation?" *Contemporary Security Policy* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Fall, 2008): pg.373, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260802284365>.

A wedge strategy, according to Timothy Crawford in “Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics,” “is defined as a state’s attempt to prevent, break up, or weaken a threatening or blocking alliance at an acceptable cost. When the strategy is successful, the state (i.e. the divide) gains advantage by reducing the number and strength of enemies organized against it.”⁷⁸ The I.N.F. Treaty did not only curtail America’s military power, but also Russia’s. Should Russia have the option to expand their nuclear arsenal without restraint, China’s assumed power within the Pacific would surely be challenged. Although the United States accused Russia of violating the Treaty and pursuing intermediate-range weapons despite the prohibitions, without the I.N.F. Treaty Russia would not have to develop or test these weapons in a hidden manner.

Many classical scholars view division strategies, such as the wedge strategy, as imperative to international politics. Sun Tzu alluded to the importance of creating a wedge between allies when he said: “When he is united, divide him... Sometimes drive a wedge between a sovereign and his ministers; on other occasions separate his allies from him. Make them mutually suspicious so that they drift apart.”⁷⁹ According to Yasuhiro Izumikawa, the strategy of division is considered to be an important tool to influence the balance of power, but little IR work has been completed to illustrate this strategy in a modern international environment.⁸⁰

According to Timothy Crawford, there are certain characteristics that form wedge strategies. As presented in Chapter 2, this thesis assumes that the Russian-Sino relationship is a

⁷⁸ Timothy W. Crawford, “Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics,” *International Security* Vol. 35, No.4 (Spring 2011): pg.156, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41289683?read-now=1&seq=2#metadata_info_tab_contents.

⁷⁹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. by Lionel Giles, (Latus ePublishing, 2012): pg.309.

⁸⁰ Yasuhiro Izumikawa, “To Coerce or Reward? Theorizing Wedge Strategies in Alliance Politics,” *Security Studies* Vol. 22, No.3 (August 2013): pg. 502, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2013.816121>.

strategic partnership rather than a traditional alliance. Crawford assesses wedge strategies in terms of orthodox alliances, but I will note the characteristics that may differ in strategic partnerships. Specifically, the United States could be using the disalignment wedge strategy with their abrogation of the I.N.F. Treaty. According to Crawford, a disalignment wedge strategy is when “a divider seeks to weaken a target’s cooperation within an opposing bloc without trying to convert the target into a neutral or an ally.”⁸¹ If the United States was to use the wedge strategy, it is advantageous that Russia and China have a strategic partnership as strategic partnerships provide flexibility, autonomy, and has low commitment costs. Low commitment costs are beneficial for a divider, such as the United States in this scenario, as the actors at risk of influence do not feel the weight of formal retaliation from their partner, allowing both states more opportunity to leave should a more threatening or desirable situation emerge.

Without deployment, the United States would be taking a “selective accommodation” approach to their disalignment wedge strategy. The absence of deployment is a crucial aspect to the selective approach as the United States would not take overtly aggressive action, rather the United States would recognize that there is no longer a treaty restricting Russia to develop, build, and test more intermediate-range weapons and their delivery system. In selective accommodation, “a divider uses concessions and other inducements to lure a target away from other adversaries which are dealt with more firmly.”⁸² Here the United States would be using the Chinese fear of losing their growing influence with an unchecked Russian intermediate-range weapons program to entice China into the beginning stages of dismantling the strategic partnership. Additionally, intermediate-range weapons are more threatening to the strategic

⁸¹ Timothy W. Crawford, “Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics,” *International Security* Vol. 35, No.4 (Spring 2011): pg.166, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41289683?read-now=1&seq=2#metadata_info_tab_contents.

⁸² *Ibid*, pg.161.

partnership than many other weapons systems due to their quick flight time in conjunction with Russia and China's proximity. Without American deployment, Chinese leadership must turn their attention to Russian progress on intermediate-range weapons and protect their sector of nuclear hegemony along with their continuously increasing influence within the Pacific and the world.

The possibility of a more neutral American-Sino relationship can be seen Chapter 2, hypothesis 2 which outlined the international environment when the I.N.F. Treaty was originally signed. The Chinese relied heavily on the power of the intermediate-range development of the United States, along with the overarching military strength of the U.S. in general, to curtail a power-hungry Soviet Union. At the time, the Chinese were more concerned with the intermediate-range capabilities of the U.S.S.R. as the Soviets were in their backyard, even though the United States had allies in their region as well. The Chinese were more interested in a checked Soviet power, rather than a checked U.S. power. The wedge strategy argues that U.S. abrogation of the I.N.F. Treaty will cause a divide between the Russo-Sino strategic partnership as they would consider each other as challengers. However, the balance of threat theory, another approach to the balance of power theory, assumes that states with a perceived threat unite to mitigate that threat.

Balancing and U.S. Deployment

Stephen M. Walt, in his article "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," states that actors "join alliances in order to avoid domination by stronger powers."⁸³ The balance of threat theory has two primary forms of application: bandwagoning and balancing. This section argues that with American deployment to the Pacific region, the strategic partnership is likely to

⁸³ Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* Vol. 9, No. 4 (Spring 1985): pg.5, DOI:10.2307/2538540.

utilize the balancing theory to strengthen in order to protect their interests. Both options of bandwagoning and balancing, however, depend on how weaker states react to the threat of the more dominant states. When presented with the possibility of balancing in the face of a threat, rather than bandwagoning, states often consider two things. First, and as seen in the balance of power theory, states prioritize their own survival. If the state does not curb the threat they face, the state runs the risk of being overrun by the dominant power.⁸⁴ Secondly, a state is more likely to have greater influence if the actor allies themselves with another non-dominant actor. “Joining the stronger side, by contrast, reduces the new member’s influence... and leaves (the less powerful actor) to the whims of its new partner.”⁸⁵ This is arguably why the strategic partnership was formulated in the first place: both states desired more influence in the decision-making process within the international community. In order to assess whether or not a threat is large enough to push states to utilize the balancing option of the balance of threat theory, the following characteristics must be considered: aggregate power, proximity, offensive capability, and offensive intentions.⁸⁶

The first characteristic in determining a threat, according to Walt, is aggregate power. It asks the question ‘what resources does the dominant power (or threatening power) have?’ For both Russia and China, the United States is arguably more powerful than the two states individually. Overall the United States is more influential within the international arena, a capability that China has been attempting to achieve for decades. “The overall power that states can wield is thus an important component of the threat they can pose.”⁸⁷ Russia and China perceive the U.S. as a primary challenger to the influence and power of both states in all sectors.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

If any international state can pose a threat of aggregate power to either Russia, China, or the two states collectively, it would be the United States.

Secondly, proximity influences the severity of a threat. Here, the United States is likely to pose less of a threat. Without the consideration of deployment of intermediate-range weapons, it is a challenging argument to make that, in this scenario, proximity would impact the level of threat. However, the United States poses a significant threat should leadership choose to deploy to the Indo-Pacific region as Mark Esper previously noted as a possibility.

Offensive power and offensive intentions are the last two characteristics to be weighed when assessing a threat. Similar to the characteristic of aggregate power, the United States poses a significant threat. The aspect of offensive power is relatively simple in concept: the more power a state has militarily, the more able they are to threaten others. There is little argument to be made that the United States is more powerful militarily than both states. China and Russia recognized this imbalance when creating their strategic partnership. Both actors understood that they had a similar goal in thwarting Western influence, but neither state could face the strength of the United States alone.

In addition to the offensive power of the United States, as noted by Esper, the U.S. does intend to develop and deploy their intermediate-range weapons to the Pacific. According to Walt, “Even states with rather modest capabilities may trigger a balancing response if they are perceived as especially aggressive...states that appear aggressive are likely to provoke others to balance against them.”⁸⁸ Although Esper mentioned his desire to deploy these weapons to the Pacific region, substantial work towards this goal has not been completed, rendering offensive intentions minimal.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

When assessing the characteristics of the balance-of-threat theory, the United States poses the most significant threat in terms of aggregate and offensive power. The threat of proximity can be significantly affected through deployment. However, there are characteristics that would likely create a more significant threat, that the United States and American abrogation of the I.N.F. Treaty does not meet, such as legitimate offensive intentions.

To summarize and conclude, the theory of balancing is relevant here as both Russia and China view U.S. abrogation as a threat to international stability and the American desire for influence. As China and Russia formed their strategic partnership to thwart Western influence, any American action that may lead to increased influence by the U.S. is likely threatening to the interests of the strategic partnership. The balancing approach provides perspective as to why U.S. abrogation and deployment could strengthen their relationship by adding another layer of alliance: a common threat. American deployment to the Pacific region could motivate the two states to rely on their partnership for additional security.

Chapter 4: Comparing and Contrasting Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated by historical evidence in Chapter 2, in addition to the IR theories discussed in Chapter 3, outline the likelihood of the various outcomes. In Chapter 4, two hypotheses will be presented as the most likely options, as the evidence presented in the previous chapters do not lend hypothesis 2 as plausible. This chapter will outline the primary reasons as to which outcome may occur. The first likely outcome presented in this chapter is that American abrogation of the treaty, without deployment, will result in an unchanged relationship between Russia and China primarily due to the economic codependence created through their strategic partnership. However, with American deployment to the Pacific region, the strategic partnership will likely strengthen as the partnership's primary purpose is to limit the influence of Western powers in the Pacific. Whether or not the relationship between Russia and China strengthens or remains unchanged depends upon the deployment of American intermediate-range weapons.

An Unchanged Strategic Partnership

I argue that certain aspects of the Russian-Sino partnership will ensure that the strategic partnership in the Pacific remains unchanged in the absence of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, if deployment does not occur. Most notably, Russia is unlikely to welcome any situation that would lead China to posture aggressively towards their state. Russia needs the strategic partnership to remain intact. As Figure 8 indicated, only 0.8% of China's trade happens with Russia. Whereas, 15.5% of Russian trade is with China. Russia needs to ensure the longevity of the strategic partnership for the stability of its own economy.

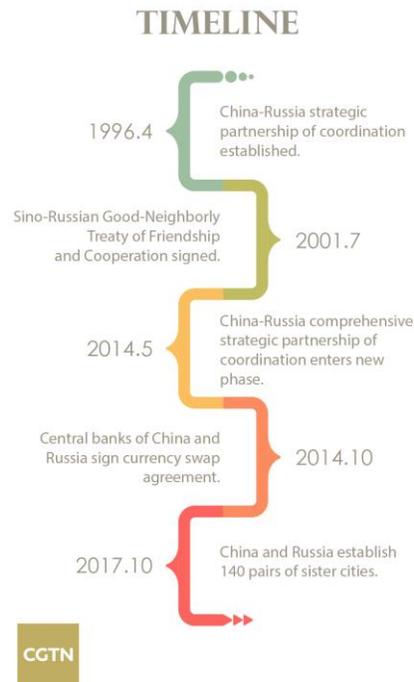


Figure 10: Significant events in the Russia-China strategic partnership⁸⁹

As seen in Figure 9, the Russian-Sino relationship has also created more economic dependence between the two states when China and Russia signed a currency swap agreement in 2014. The swap allows both states to use their domestic form of currency when trading between one-another in order to eliminate the effectiveness of the U.S. dollar within the trade sector. Despite the argued effectiveness of this swap agreement, the use of balancing to dilute Western influence remains. Overall, the economic ties between the two states are the primary motivation for the strategic partnership to remain unchanged in the presence of additional American intermediate-range weapons. Because of the economic ties between the two states, and Russia's

⁸⁹ "China-Russia economic cooperation on fast track," CGTN, September 11, 2018, https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d514e7945544d7a457a6333566d54/share_p.html.

increasing codependence, I argue that if the United States were to try and utilize the wedge strategy would not be successful.

In addition to Russia's economic codependence created within the strategic partnership, there is an incoming administration to consider. Russia publicly stated that they will not deploy any intermediate-range weapons unless the United States does so. Although the United States initially stated they were interested in deploying these weapons within the Pacific region, as stated by President Trump's former defense chief Mark Esper, with the election of Joe Biden, this may change.⁹⁰ Although on August 2, 2019 the United States was no longer in an arms pact to limit the intermediate-range weapons, without the re-election of President Trump, the United States could be looking at a new agreement within the foreseeable future. Should the President-elect assume the same nuclear-free outlook as former President Barack Obama, it would be safe to assume the Biden Administration will look towards continuing to participate in the New START agreement, as well as limit the growth of other sectors of nuclear weapons.

Strengthened Russian-Sino Relations and the Current Environment

As indicated, American deployment of intermediate-range weapons will likely strengthen Russian-Sino relations in multiple ways. American deployment of intermediate-range weapons to the Pacific increases Western influence within the region, adding an additional level of threat to the common interest that brought the strategic partnership together. This section will discuss American deployment to the Pacific region as I argue this is the primary reason Russian-Sino relations would strengthen in a post-I.N.F. Treaty era. Increased western influence creates a threat that allows Russia and China to call upon their 2001 Friendship Treaty agreement

⁹⁰ Indrees Ali, "U.S. Defense Secretary says he favors placing missiles in Asia," Reuters, last modified August 3, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-asia-inf/u-s-defense-secretary-says-he-favors-placing-missiles-in-asia-idUSKCN1UT098>.

outlining that both states would aid the other when threatened militarily. Third, as outlined in Chapter 3, when assessing the likelihood of a state to utilize the balancing option of the balance of threat theory, the level of threat must be analyzed. The balancing option considers aggregate power, proximity, offensive capacity and offensive intentions to determine the threat level. Currently, the threat level is minimal considering the United States does not have proximity or offensive intentions. However, with deployment to the Pacific, the United States would fulfill the threat requirement of offensive intentions and increase their proximity dramatically. Figure 9 outlines a strategic partnership and reliance that continues to grow in varying international landscapes. Based on historical evidence of the partnership since 1987 in addition to the characteristics that form a strategic partnership, the relationship will continue to strengthen with or without U.S. abrogation of the I.N.F. Treaty.

It is important to emphasize that American deployment is unlikely as it currently stands, making Hypothesis 3 the most likely option to occur in the present moment. Although it stands subject to possible change Russian-Sino relations will likely remain unchanged. However, if deployment should occur, then the Russian-Sino relations will strengthen. With a new incoming presidential administration, time needed to develop these weapons, in addition to the threat the strategic partnership poses to the U.S. in the Pacific, deployment is likely an undesirable option to the United States now. This would render the first hypothesis, strengthened Russian-Sino relations due to the absence of the I.N.F. Treaty, the less plausible option. The historical analysis that formulated the hypotheses, along with the analysis of the wedge strategy demonstrates the likelihood that the Russian-Sino partnership will remain unchanged. These analyses are similar to the balance-of-threat analysis. The American abrogation of the I.N.F. Treaty is not the first time members of the partnership have felt threatened militarily since their formation in 1996.

Arguably, American-Sino relations over the Spratly Islands are more contentious than the idea of American development of intermediate-range weapons. With the Spratly Island dispute, China felt that the United States was threatening and questioning the sovereignty of their country. This conflict would have been an opportunity for China to utilize their strategic partnership due to encroaching Western influence. Considering the amount of developments that have threatened Russia, China, or both states since 1987, it is difficult to imagine that the partnership would align themselves even further, perhaps through another form of alliance, in order to combat American withdrawal of the I.N.F. Treaty. Without American deployment of these weapons, the balancing of the two states is highly unlikely.

Conclusion:

To conclude, I argued that it is unlikely that the United States will deploy intermediate-range nuclear weapons to the Pacific when they become available and ready for use. Consequently, Hypothesis 3 is the most likely option at the current moment: the Russian-Sino partnership will remain unchanged in the absence of the I.N.F. Treaty. The Russian-Sino strategic partnership has been increasing significantly for the past three decades. The partnership has not only impacted their relationship militarily, but also their economic relationship. For Russia, the strategic partnership is fundamental to the well-being of their economy as they heavily rely on the revenue generated from trade with China. It would not be strategically advantageous for the Russian Federation to risk their current relationship with China in order to threaten the state's nuclear status within the region by immensely developing their intermediate-range nuclear arsenal. Therefore, if the United States aims to implement or utilize the wedge strategy to position the two neighbors against one another, I argue this is unlikely to be a successful strategy.

The strategic partnership is already strong as it currently stands, and taking the I.N.F. Treaty out of the equation, the partnership is projected to continue that trend. Should American deployment occur, however, Hypothesis 1, the strengthened relationship between Russia and China, is the most likely option. The Russian-Sino strategic partnership was founded on the intention to thwart Western influence. With the United States in their backyard with a threatening first-strike capability, Western influence is immensely amplified and adds an additional layer to the partnership. In addition to a common interest, Russia and China would have an immediate common threat.

As deployment includes an agreement with an ally, future research should analyze the use and role of allies. Specifically, where might intermediate-range weapons may be deployed in order to strategically benefit the United States? How might the ally's relationship with either member of the strategic partnership be affected by American deployment? Specifically, future research should focus on deployment to Europe, or even more specified locations within the Pacific as this thesis did not address specific deployment locations. For example, future research may look at deployment to Japan or South Korea for the Pacific region. For Europe, American deployment to the region could spark Russia to utilize the intermediate-range capabilities of China, and their strategic partnership, in order to combat a growing Western influence. Additionally, similar to the Cold War, American allies within Europe may call upon U.S. influence of intermediate-range weapons within the region considering Russia is no longer legally bound to withhold developing or possessing these weapons. However, since the Cold War, nuclear capabilities have increased within some European countries making American influence not as necessary.

The I.N.F. Treaty not only eliminated certain intermediate-range nuclear weapons, but also intermediate-range conventional weapons. As this thesis did not address intermediate-range conventional weapons, future research of these weapons may be beneficial to understanding how the strategic partnership could be affected by their presence or rather if deployment of conventional weapons presents a different outcome than nuclear intermediate-range weapons. An additional avenue for research on conventional intermediate-range weapons may include analyzing the strategic benefit of deploying one type of intermediate-range weapon over the other.

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