



## NATO Deterrence and Arms Control Policy in a World without the INF Treaty

Artur Kacprzyk, Łukasz Kulesa, Marcin A. Piotrowski

*To maintain effective deterrence and internal cohesion in a post-INF Treaty world, especially in the face of the growing Russian missile threat to Europe, NATO needs to act in two areas. To enhance its military posture, the Alliance ought to quickly mobilise available defensive and offensive capabilities, plan and exercise their use, and be ready to further adjust its posture in the future. This includes studying the military rationale to deploy conventionally armed ground-launched intermediate-range missiles. To adapt its arms-control policy, NATO members should identify Russia's most destabilising missile systems, both existing and prospective, and propose arms-control initiatives aimed at limiting them. Although the likelihood of achieving new agreements with Russia is currently low, a more proactive NATO arms-control position could help shape the discussion in the longer term and counter Russian efforts to divide the Alliance.*

NATO is working towards a comprehensive response to the demise of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, an agreement recognised by the Alliance as “crucial to Euro-Atlantic security.”<sup>1</sup> Signed in 1987 by the United States and the Soviet Union, the accord banned ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 km, regardless of their payload. Citing Russian violation, the U.S. withdrew from the INF Treaty on 2 August 2019 with the full support of NATO countries.<sup>2</sup> Shortly beforehand, the Allies had agreed on a broadly-defined package of measures to enhance deterrence and defence in the face of new Russian missiles.<sup>3</sup> Some progress has been made in discussing NATO's posture, for example, force readiness levels or air and missile defence, but the Allies are still working on specific solutions and have yet to announce major decisions in this area.<sup>4</sup> NATO is also engaged in discussions on adaptation of arms control to new realities.<sup>5</sup> The most vocal calls for dialogue with Russia are coming from France and Germany.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g.: “Brussels Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels 11–12 July 2018,” NATO, 11 July 2018, para. 46, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>2</sup> “Statement by the North Atlantic Council on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty,” NATO, 2 August 2019, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>3</sup> “Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meetings of NATO Defence Ministers,” NATO, 26 June 2019, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>4</sup> “Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following a meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Defence Ministers' session,” NATO, 13 February 2020, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>5</sup> “Speech by NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg at the High-level NATO Conference on Arms Control and Disarmament,” NATO, 23 October 2019, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

Protracted deliberations on both deterrence and arms control reflect the complexity of the political and military implications of the demise of the INF Treaty for NATO. Some Allies argue that a major adjustment in deterrence posture is required to respond to Russia's new capabilities, whereas others seem to favour only minor changes, out of concerns about creating an action-reaction "arms race" with Russia and the high costs of fully adapting NATO's posture. For Western European countries, there is also the question whether public support can be generated for some of the defence-related proposals, such as the deployment of offensive weapons.<sup>7</sup>

NATO has to eventually move from reviewing options to announcing and implementing a comprehensive post-INF strategy. This paper suggests that an approach which visibly strengthens deterrence in the new strategic environment but also involves preparing specific arms-control proposals could be optimal to all Allies.

## Broader Technological and Arms-Control Trends

It is the Russian missile arsenal that poses the paramount threat to the Alliance, but wider developments regarding intermediate-range missiles are also relevant to Allied security. China's expansion of its intermediate-range missile force is a case in point, since the Trump administration concluded that while being ineffective towards Russia, the INF Treaty also put the U.S at a disadvantage in the Asia-Pacific region. Accordingly, the U.S. seeks to develop and deploy its own conventionally armed ground-launched intermediate-range missiles in this region.<sup>8</sup> Also, Iranian missiles are already capable of striking Turkey and large parts of south-eastern Europe.<sup>9</sup>

Ground-launched intermediate-range arsenals have been developed by a number of countries that were not party to the INF Treaty. Ballistic missiles with intermediate ranges were introduced by a number of countries in the Middle East. They are of growing importance for China, which possesses the largest arsenal of ground-launched intermediate-range missiles in the world. Such missiles are also the main pillars of the nuclear forces of India, Pakistan, and North Korea. Wider access to relevant technology and reduced costs of development or purchase of intermediate-range ground missiles also increase the likelihood that NATO partners (e.g., Ukraine) and some NATO Allies (primarily the U.S.) could decide to acquire and deploy such a capability in Europe.

Ballistic missiles fly at high hypersonic speeds that—especially in the case of strikes at intermediate and shorter ranges—mean only short warning for the attacked side. In order to further limit the chances for successful defence, some states are fielding advanced quasi-ballistic missiles or missiles with Manoeuvrable Re-entry Vehicles (MaRV).<sup>10</sup> In parallel, the development and proliferation of stealthy subsonic and supersonic cruise missiles flying at very low altitude, combined with armed drones, make an attacking side capable of breaking through the traditional air and missile defences of potential adversaries.

Finally, broader introduction of separate hypersonic weapons is expected to occur during this decade.<sup>11</sup> The deployment of these weapons might result in a less stable strategic environment because they combine

---

<sup>6</sup> "Macron unveils nuclear doctrine, warns EU 'cannot remain spectators' in arms race," France24, 7 February 2020, [www.france24.com](http://www.france24.com); "Foreign Minister Maas on the end of the INF Treaty," Federal Foreign Office, 2 August 2019, [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en).

<sup>7</sup> This stems partly from the 1980s experience of implementing NATO's decision to deploy nuclear armed intermediate-range cruise and ballistic missiles in a number of Western European states. These measures, adopted in response to Soviet deployments of SS-20 nuclear armed ballistic missiles, spurred a massive protest movement in the UK, West Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium.

<sup>8</sup> I. Ali, "U.S. Defense Secretary says he favors placing missiles in Asia," *Reuters*, 3 August 2019, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

<sup>9</sup> These are medium-range ballistic missiles (estimated at 2,000 km) like the older-generation Shahab-3 and Emad-1, the last-revealed Khorramshar, and the solid-fuelled Sejil-2. For more, see: Defense Intelligence Agency, "Iran Military Power: Ensuring Regime Survival and Securing Regional Dominance," Washington DC, November 2019, pp. 43–47.

<sup>10</sup> Examples of these missiles are the Chinese medium-range DF-21D (CSS-5 Mod. 5), Russian short-range Iskander 9M723 (SS-26), and Iranian medium-range Emad-1 (modified Scud/Shahab-3).

<sup>11</sup> A hypersonic weapon is a missile or its warhead that travels at Mach 5 or higher. Its trajectory differs from a simple ballistic one of a traditional ballistic missile and/or its re-entry vehicle with a warhead.

short flight times with unpredictable flight paths, thus amplifying the challenges of detection and defence against missile attacks.<sup>12</sup>

## Russian Capabilities and Strategy

According to U.S. intelligence, Russia began testing the non-compliant 9M729 (NATO designation: SSC-8 Screwdriver) cruise missile, capable of carrying either a nuclear or conventional warhead, in the late 2000s and had deployed multiple battalions of the system by the end of 2018.<sup>13</sup> After the demise of the INF Treaty, Russia accelerated the growth of its ground-launched, intermediate-range missile arsenal. In “response” to the U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty, Russia is officially developing two such systems with deployment due in 2021.<sup>14</sup> One of them is declared to be a modification of the sea-launched 3M-14 Kalibr (SS-N-30A) cruise missile, which appears to be an actual reintroduction of the 9M729 missile under a different designation. Its reported maximum range of 2,000 to 2,350 km would allow it to strike most of Europe from Kaliningrad Oblast and reach Belgium, Germany, or the Netherlands if launched from the western parts of mainland Russia.<sup>15</sup> A second system is a variant of the sea-launched 3M-22 Tsirkon (aka Zircon) hypersonic missile, capable of striking both land and maritime targets.<sup>16</sup> With a range of around 1,000 km, the missile could reach almost all of Germany or Turkey from Kaliningrad or Crimea, respectively. Its deployment would also increase Russia’s abilities to impede the operations of NATO naval forces in the Baltic, Northern Atlantic, and (if placed in Syria) the Eastern Mediterranean. Russia could also relatively quickly and cheaply extend the range of the ballistic missile (9M723/SS-26 Stone) in its Iskander-M system above its currently declared range of 500 km.

The development of a ballistic missile with a range of between 3,000 and 5,500 km, capable of striking the whole of Europe from deeper inside Russian territory, is also feasible, but more time-consuming. It could be derived as a variant of the RS-26 Rubezh (KY-26/SS-X-31), which had been tested in 2011-2016 at a maximum range of slightly greater than 5,500 km (see Fig. 1 for more details on the evolution of the Russian arsenal).<sup>17</sup>

Most likely, Russia sees mobile ground launchers as a cheaper addition to air and maritime platforms, which already carry several types of intermediate-range cruise missiles. Additionally, mobile ground launchers are difficult to detect, track, and destroy. This makes them more survivable than surface ships and aircraft and also suitable for surprise strikes. The greater diversity and size of Russia’s intermediate-range arsenal advances its ambitions to develop precision-strike capabilities for nuclear deterrence missions, “non-nuclear strategic deterrence,” and warfighting. The dual-use character of the majority of these systems is probably seen as an advantage. New ground-launched missiles will also broaden the spectrum of capabilities Russia could use for signalling, coercion, and escalation, short of employing its strategic forces.<sup>18</sup> Given the missiles’ reach, Russia could see its intermediate-range arsenal as particularly well-suited for attempts to intimidate Western European governments and societies.

All in all, the introduction of ground-launched intermediate-range missiles improves Russian coverage of targets in Europe. It would make it easier for Russia to impede the movement of Allied reinforcements and other operations by striking related infrastructure. It would also provide new options to threaten European NATO countries and thus stop them from helping Allies under attack. New missiles add to short-range strike

---

<sup>12</sup> See: D. Wilkening, “Hypersonic Weapons and Strategic Stability,” *Survival*, Vol. 61, Iss. 5, 2019, pp. 129-148.

<sup>13</sup> “Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats on Russia’s Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty Violation,” Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 30 November 2018, [www.dni.gov](http://www.dni.gov).

<sup>14</sup> A. Osborn, “Russia plans new missile systems to counter U.S. by 2021,” *Reuters*, 5 February 2019, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

<sup>15</sup> A. Panda, “U.S. Intelligence: Russia Tried to Con the World With Bogus Missile,” *The Daily Beast*, 18 February 2019, [www.thedailybeast.com](http://www.thedailybeast.com). For more on the sea-launched Kalibr family of missiles, see: Office of Naval Intelligence, “The Russian Navy: A Historic Transition,” Washington DC, December 2015, pp. 34–36.

<sup>16</sup> “Putin: Russia developing land-based version of Tsirkon hypersonic missile,” *TASS*, 24 December 2019, <https://tass.com>.

<sup>17</sup> For more on this missile, see: “Rubezh RS-26,” Jane’s Strategic Weapon Systems database, 1 May 2019; “Комплекс РС-26 ‘Рубеж’/‘Авангард’ KY-26 / SS-X-31,” *Military Russia*, 27 January 2019, <http://militaryrussia.ru/blog/topic-553.html>.

<sup>18</sup> See: D. Johnson, “Russia’s Conventional Precision Strike Capabilities, Regional Crises, and Nuclear Thresholds,” *Livermore Papers on Global Security* No. 3, February 2018, <https://cgsr.llnl.gov/content/assets/docs/Precision-Strike-Capabilities-report-v3-7.pdf>.

systems and advanced air defences that can already cover parts of Allied territory in the direct vicinity of Russia. Such capabilities and actions would be key to secure Russia's gains should it use its regional military superiority over NATO to capture a swath of Allied territory.

### **Measures of Response: Deterrence and Defence**

NATO's military response to the demise of the INF Treaty should be incorporated into its broader adaptation to the challenge of Russia's strategy and posture. NATO needs to remain focused on ensuring that it can effectively reinforce and defend its members. The introduction of Russian ground-launched intermediate-range missiles significantly complicates this task. Since 2014, NATO has made significant progress in enhancing its reinforcement abilities and forward presence but it has yet to adequately address Russia's growing precision-strike capabilities, even though this problem was evident even before the deployment of the 9M729.

In practice, the Alliance will have to act comprehensively by intensifying some ongoing efforts as well as launching new ones. NATO appears to have adopted precisely such an approach, as suggested by remarks of top Alliance officials about a wide spectrum of agreed areas for further action in response to the Russian missile build-up. The highlighted areas include exercises; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR); air and missile defences; conventional capabilities; and, nuclear deterrence.<sup>19</sup> This package should be, however, operationalised and implemented without delay. Moreover, NATO may need to take additional steps in the future, depending on further developments in Russian force posture.

Effective deterrence and defence against the current Russian missile force require an improvement of active and passive defences against cruise missiles across Europe, as well as against short-range ballistic missiles. NATO should focus on defending a limited number of critical military and civilian "dual-use" facilities (e.g., major command and ISR nodes, bases, ports, storage sites). This necessitates adjustments to joint architecture under the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System, investments in new national assets, as well as hardening and concealment of key infrastructure and the preparation of dispersal options and damage reconstitution capabilities. The increased potential of Russian missile strikes shortens NATO reaction time and necessitates the improvement of its ISR capabilities as well. At the same time, comprehensive strengthening of air and missile defence will be costly and there will be inherent limits to its coverage and effectiveness. In addition, NATO will simultaneously continue to face the task of enhancing defence against other missile threats from the Middle East.

Beyond defence, NATO should strengthen its conventional stand-off capabilities as means to strike military targets and infrastructure supporting aggression against NATO members. Such enhancement would have a deterrent effect on its own. The most feasible short-term options include increasing the numbers of platforms, launchers, and missiles based on the existing air- and sea-launched cruise missile capabilities, introducing new modes of forward deployment, and introducing more visibly the use of such missiles into NATO exercises. A side benefit would be strengthening NATO's general abilities for out-of-area operations.

The military utility of deploying intermediate-range ground-launched conventional missiles deserves careful consideration as well. From an operational perspective, given their survivability and promptness, these missiles might provide additional options for a response to aggression, especially in its early phases. Missile attacks (or threat thereof) on NATO air bases across Europe could severely disrupt the operations of the air forces, which were previously assumed to be able to spearhead such a response. Fielding ground-launched intermediate-range ballistic missiles, which, unlike sea-based and air-launched cruise missiles, are not currently deployed by NATO nations, may address this weakness. Due to their high speeds, ballistic missiles would improve NATO ability to attack time-sensitive (mainly mobile) targets, and thus help suppress air

---

<sup>19</sup> "Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following a meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Defence Ministers' session," NATO, 13 February 2020, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int); "Press point by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on the INF Treaty," NATO, 2 August 2019, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

defences or strike groupings of enemy forces. While it is often assumed that any ground-launched missiles would stir Russian concerns about surprise strikes against key command and nuclear facilities deep in Russian territory, the actual impact of such systems on NATO-Russia stability would depend on the characteristics of particular weapons (types, ranges, flight-time) and their deployment pattern (numbers, locations). For example, a missile with a range of up to 1,000 km launched from western, northern or central Poland could engage Russian forces invading the Baltics as well as supporting operations in border areas, without threatening “strategic” strikes on Moscow.

In the nuclear deterrence dimension, an increase in Russia’s options for executing a conventional or nuclear strike due to the introduction of the SSC-8 does not invalidate NATO’s present approach but necessitates re-assessment of preparations for nuclear operations during crisis or conflict. To counter nuclear coercion, NATO needs to be able to convincingly signal to Russia that any use of nuclear weapons, regardless of the means of delivery, is likely to bring a nuclear response. From the deterrence viewpoint, the reintroduction of nuclear ground-launched intermediate-range missiles by the Allies is not necessary for this task, nor is it plausible that such deployments could occur in Europe without triggering substantial public opposition and political tensions. Instead, the focus should be on ensuring the effectiveness of the U.S., UK, and French nuclear forces, as well as capabilities available to NATO. The Allies should enhance the survivability of dual-capable aircraft (DCA) and U.S. B61 bombs stored in Europe that they are assigned to carry, by 1) improving the protection of their bases and C2 systems; 2) modernising the aircraft, preferably to stealth variants; 3) preparing dispersal and alternative basing options, and 4) ensuring proper conventional support for their mission. NATO members could also explore additional ways to demonstrate their resolve in executing the nuclear deterrence mission, for example, through more visible exercises of DCA.

## Arms-control Response

With regards to the arms-control dimension, after the U.S. had publicly accused Russia of non-compliance with the INF Treaty in 2014, the latter not only denied it but also presented counter-accusations. These regarded the alleged ability of Aegis Ashore missile defence sites in Romania (now operational) and Poland (under construction) to launch Tomahawk cruise missiles, as well as the legal status of U.S. long-range armed drones and ballistic target missiles used in tests of missile interceptors.<sup>20</sup>

The Russian response to the 2019 U.S. withdrawal from the INF involved the diffusion of a false narrative about the history of the treaty’s demise. According to Russian officials, the U.S. falsely accused Russia of a treaty violation as a pretext to withdraw and refused its transparency proposals, in effect putting Europeans at risk of a new arms race.<sup>21</sup>

On the one hand, Russia has been trying to discourage NATO members from hosting new U.S. missiles by threatening to target those countries.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, Russia declared that it would not deploy ground-launched intermediate-range missiles in Europe (and other regions) unless the U.S. does so first and called on NATO countries to reciprocate this so-called moratorium.<sup>23</sup>

Even though the demise of the INF Treaty is definitive, NATO Allies should continue to bring up the Russian violation and counter the Russian narrative that blames the U.S. for the crisis. This may require putting into the public domain additional evidence and data related to the 9M729. At the same time, the Allies should formulate their own arms-control proposals. Otherwise, NATO would be forced to act in a purely reactive manner when faced with Russian initiatives that are aimed at shaping the discussion on this issue on terms

---

<sup>20</sup> “Comment by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the American accusations that Russia violates the INF Treaty,” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 30 July 2014, [www.mid.ru](http://www.mid.ru); “Refuting Russian Allegations of U.S. Noncompliance with the INF Treaty,” U.S. Department of State, 8 December 2017, [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov).

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g.: “Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov’s interview with *Kommersant*,” 5 March 2020, [www.mid.ru](http://www.mid.ru).

<sup>22</sup> O. Astakhova, A. Osborn, “Russia will target European countries if they host U.S. nuclear missiles: Putin,” *Reuters*, 24 October 2018, [www.reuters.org](http://www.reuters.org).

<sup>23</sup> “Report: Putin sends NATO proposal for moratorium on missile deployment to Europe,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 25 September 2019, [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org).

favourable to Russia (e.g. excluding the 9M729 missile) and use a “de-escalation” narrative resonating with some NATO publics. The lack of a proactive NATO approach could also increase the likelihood of individual Allies engaging with Russia on arms control entirely on their own. If conducted without consultation and coordination with other NATO members, such efforts might provide Russia with additional opportunities to divide the Alliance and use the talks to influence and constrain NATO work on strengthening deterrence. These are clearly the Russian goals and hopes behind its “moratorium” offer. It has proven unsuccessful so far, although France agreed to discuss this concept bilaterally while stressing it did not accept it.<sup>24</sup>

NATO officials denounced Russia’s mutual non-deployment proposal as not credible, and they were right to do so.<sup>25</sup> Under such an arrangement, NATO would not be able to deploy any ground-launched intermediate-range missiles, whereas Russia would continue to field the 9M729 since it insists that this missile has a range shorter than 500 km. Even setting the 9M729 issue aside, Russia could reverse this “moratorium” at any time and quickly and openly introduce other intermediate-range missiles. In addition, Russia would inevitably link any such arrangements to demanding access to Aegis Ashore installations and, most likely, their dismantlement. Russia opposed the placement of missile defences in Central and Eastern Europe long before raising the alleged non-compliance of these sites with the INF Treaty. Even if the states directly concerned and NATO agreed on inspections of these sites and proven lack of offensive missiles there, Russia could still insist that they could be deployed in the future. For these reasons, it is highly questionable whether discussions focused on the 9M729 or establishment of a non-deployment zone for all types of intermediate-range missiles in Europe would bring added value for NATO.<sup>26</sup>

The Allies could, however, declare their readiness to support bilateral U.S.-Russian or multilateral negotiations aimed at achieving a legally-binding, verifiable arms-control agreement covering the most destabilising weapon systems in scenarios of a surprise attack in Europe, not focusing only on the 9M729. NATO members could collectively define the goals and conditions for such talks, beginning with identification of the weapon systems on the Russian side that they would want to see curtailed as a priority. The scope of the Allied proposals may include one or more of the following elements regarding prohibitions or limitations of ground-launched systems: 1) only nuclear-armed intermediate-range missiles (“putting the nuclear back into the INF”),<sup>27</sup> 2) only intermediate-range missiles utilising hypersonic technologies, or 3) intermediate-range ballistic missiles (but, unlike the INF Treaty, not cruise missiles).

The Allies should also consider incorporating ground-launched missiles with ranges below 500 km into some such concepts for the negotiations, especially if nuclear-armed missiles (option 1) are to be in focus. Short-range weapons already pose a strategic threat to NATO members in the vicinity of Russia, as well as to regional military and civilian infrastructure of key importance for NATO operations. In addition, existing Iskander-Astrolog mobile launchers can probably already carry both the intermediate-range 9M729 missile and short-range systems like the 9M728 (SSC-7 Southpaw) and 9M723, whose range is likely to be extended as well.<sup>28</sup>

Importantly, deliberations on arms control in NATO cannot be detached from issues related to its deterrence and defence posture in Europe and Allied military actions elsewhere. If a particular

---

<sup>24</sup> “France’s Macron denies accepting Putin’s missile proposal,” Reuters, 28 November 2019, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

<sup>25</sup> M. Peel, H. Foy, “Nato rejects Russian offer on nuclear missiles freeze,” *Financial Times*, 26 September 2019, [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com).

<sup>26</sup> For a different view, see, e.g.: L. Griffirith, “The US Should Accept Russia’s Proposed Moratorium on Post-INF Missiles,” *Defense One*, 13 February 2020, [www.defenseone.com](http://www.defenseone.com).

<sup>27</sup> As presented in “NATO Nuclear Policy in a Post-INF World. Speech by NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller at the University of Oslo,” NATO, 9 September 2019, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int). See also: P. Podvig, R. Snyder, W. Wan, “Evidence of Absence: Verifying the Removal of Nuclear Weapons,” United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 2018, [www.unidir.org](http://www.unidir.org).

<sup>28</sup> Russia is currently estimated to have 152 MAZ Astrolog-Iskander mobile launchers for SS-26 SRBM and SSC-7 GLCM in the Ground Forces and Navy Coastal Defence Troops. Each Astrolog-Iskander launcher carries two SRBMs or GLCMs per vehicle. This estimate does not include the quantity of dedicated SSC-8 launchers; there are also other types of GLCM launchers with Coastal Defense Troops. See: International Institute for Strategic Studies, “The Military Balance,” Vol. 120, Routledge, London 2020, pp. 196, 200. Note that there are plans to increase the number of Astrolog-Iskander launchers from 12 to 16 in each of the Ground Forces’ Operational-Tactical Missile Brigades—see: A. Рамм, Б. Степовой, “Ракетное объединение: бригадам «Искандеров» увеличили огневую мощь,” *Известия*, 16 December 2019, [iz.ru](http://iz.ru).

intermediate-range system is deemed necessary from the military viewpoint and is to be deployed by NATO countries, then suggesting a global ban could be counterproductive. At least until the 2020 U.S. presidential and Congressional elections, NATO considerations will be hindered by the lack of clarity around future U.S. plans. The Trump administration seeks to place conventional ground-launched intermediate-range missiles in Asia. The need for the acquisition and deployment of ground-launched intermediate-range missiles has, however, been broadly questioned by Democratic Party members in Congress.<sup>29</sup>

At this stage, the proposals developed within the Alliance would first and foremost serve to state NATO preferences regarding the scope and framework of any further arms-control discussions. Such offers could be put forward even if the Russians were sure to initially reject them as not acceptable.

Convincing Russia to agree to new arms-control arrangements would require more complex bargaining. One option for influencing the Russian decision-makers would be for NATO to move forward with the development and massive deployment of conventional ground-launched intermediate missiles, and use this process as leverage. Such weapons would undoubtedly attract Russian attention, especially if their range allows them to strike targets deep inside Russia. But an attempt to recreate the “arm to disarm” approach from the 1970s/1980s (build-up of NATO capabilities and their later reduction in exchange for cuts on the Russian side) would be risky. Even if only conventional systems would be under consideration, this approach would require planning for extensive forward deployments and would likely cause internal tensions in NATO and public opposition, which Russia would try to exploit portraying the deployments as “escalatory.” Another option would be to aim to address ground-launched intermediate-range missiles as part of a broader package arms-control deal. For example, they could be part of any future U.S.-Russian comprehensive agreement on nuclear arms control, even if such a deal is not achievable in the short term at least.<sup>30</sup> Importantly, any missile-focused negotiations with Russia must include the U.S. The European Allies alone would not have adequate leverage and flexibility in such negotiations.

## Conclusions

NATO cannot turn back the clock to the times when the possession of intermediate-range systems was limited. The importance of ground-launched intermediate-range missiles is increasing globally, and Russia will continue the growth of its arsenal, of which the SSC-8 is just one element. NATO must adapt accordingly.

The Alliance’s objectives should be to ensure the continued credibility of its deterrence and defence posture and to maintain cohesion within the Alliance. NATO members need to develop more specific arms-control proposals to support these main goals. Close consultations and coordination will be crucial. Individual initiatives of Allies going beyond the NATO consensus in either the deterrence or arms-control area would risk damaging the unity of the Alliance.

NATO’s upgrade of its deterrence posture needs to be comprehensive and adequate to the evolving character of the threat. As a side-effect, such a restrained but resolute and adaptable approach might help influence Russia’s calculations regarding the future expansion of its missile forces.

The likelihood of reaching new arms-control agreements on intermediate-range systems, bilaterally with Russia or multilaterally, is currently low. Formulating their own proposals and declaring readiness to support negotiations could nevertheless allow NATO countries to regain the diplomatic initiative, put a spotlight on Russia’s destabilising activities, and shape the longer-term arms-control discussion in line with their wider interests.

Finally, an effective information and counter-propaganda strategy will remain of key importance. Russia’s transgressions and Allied reaction need to be explained to the people of NATO member states, as well as externally to fight back against sustained Russian propaganda.

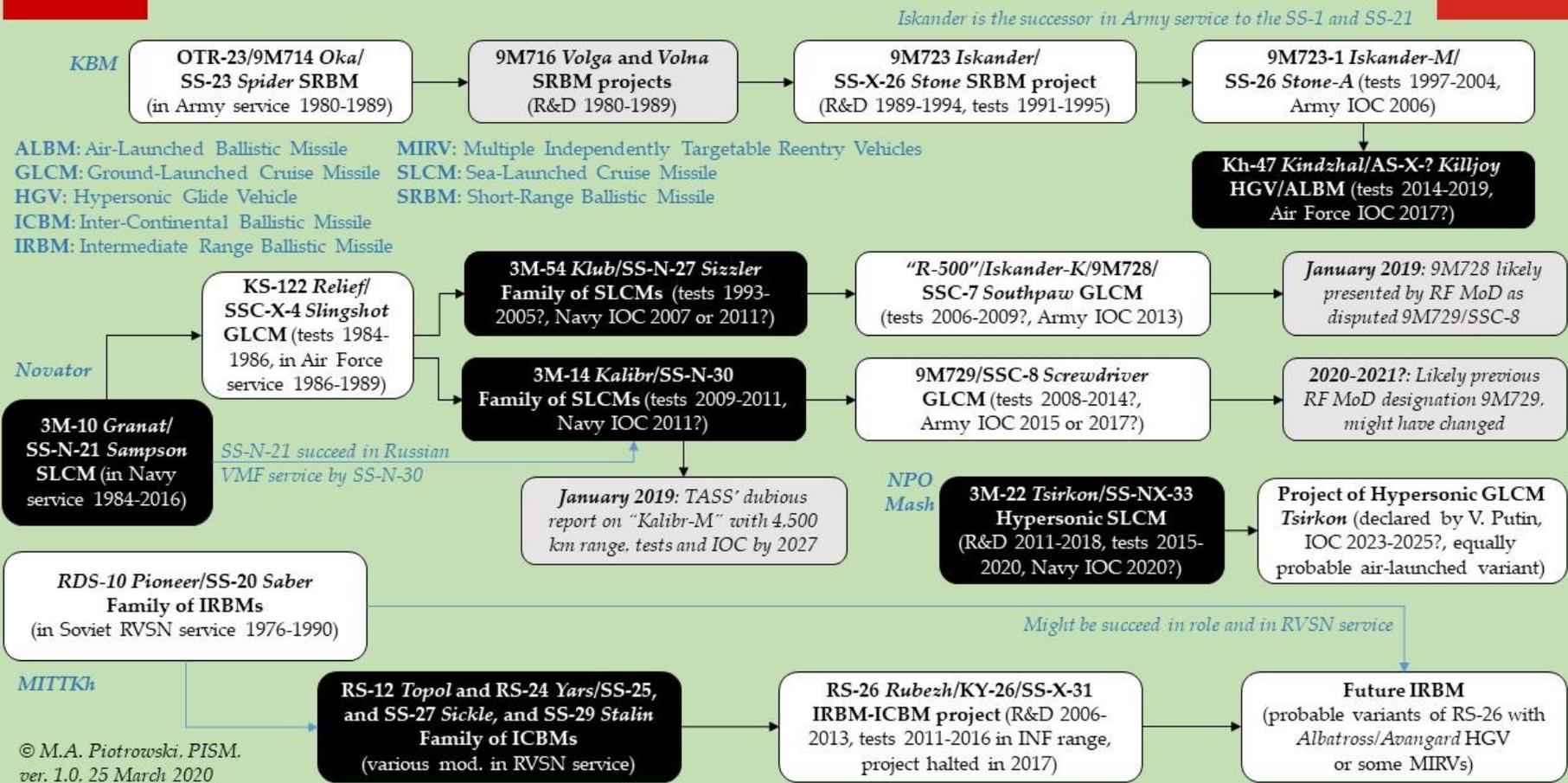
---

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g.: T. Hitchens, “Congress Stalls INF-Busting Missiles & Nuke Treaty Withdrawal,” *Breaking Defense*, 11 December 2019, <https://breakingdefense.com>.

<sup>30</sup> See: A. Kacprzyk, “The Future of U.S.-Russia Strategic Arms Control,” *PISM Bulletin*, no. 15 (1445), 31 January 2020, [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl).



Fig. 1: Evolution of Soviet/Russian INF-Range Ground-Launched Missiles (Simplified)



© M.A. Piotrowski. PISM. ver. 1.0. 25 March 2020

Sources: IHS Jane’s and „Military Russia” missile profiles. Note: There are discrepancies regarding their testing timelines.