Washington Will Not Spare its European Allies in its Nuclear Arms Race

Just a couple years ago, one could get an impression that the the problem posed by nuclear weapons was under control, if not solved completely. Project Syndicate notes that Russia and the US were gradually reducing their nuclear stockpiles, following the guidelines of various arms-control agreements encompassing both the intermediate and long-range delivery systems. But little did we know.

With an estimated 14,000 nuclear devices scattered across the globe today, the debate over the future of arms control is one that quite literally affects the fate of humanity. However, the existing arms control architecture is collapsing, with nobody being in a hurry to repair it or replace it with a new one. After the termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) originally signed in 1987, it became apparent that all of the treaties that have been regulating nuclear weapons since the Cold War were to suffer a similar fate.

As the Pentagon has been busy seeking funding and authorization to begin developing intermediate-range missiles that otherwise would have been barred by the INF Treaty, it was announced that cruise missiles could be ready for deployment next March. While most NATO allies backed the US decision to withdraw from the treaty, some of them remain uneasy about the implications of the dismantling of this key arms control treaty.

What’s even worse is that it is unclear whether the White House will stick with the New START Treaty when it expires in 2021. The agreement limits the number of strategic weapons Russia and the US keep deployed at all times, waiting to be unleashed.

The absolute majority of Democrats support the extension of New START, however, it’s a completely different story
with Republicans. It was revealed that both Tom Cotton and John Cornyn of the GOP are getting increasingly critical of New START, to the point when they introduced legislation that would block funding on extending the treaty unless it expands.

As the new nuclear arms race has gathered pace, it was announced that the US military is readying previously banned missiles for potential deployment in both Europe and the Pacific, even though it remains to be seen whether any allies would agree to host such missiles. Washington isn't sure about which countries in Europe would want to host those delivery systems, as at this point in time basically nobody is excited about the possibility of replaying the 1980s.

In spite of this, Washington carries on its nuclear buildup in Europe, which signals that it is willing to sacrifice its Old World allies should its new Cold War against Russia get out of control.

As it’s been revealed by the Foreign Policy:

* Despite U.S. President Donald Trump’s withdrawal from a key nuclear treaty with Russia and his promise to bolster America’s missile defenses, the administration is not asking for a significant boost to the U.S. Defense Department’s Missile Defense Agency (MDA) budget this year. Instead, the promised buildup will come in the form of additional cash to develop offensive capabilities, which are not part of the MDA’s charter.*

Prior to taking the oath of office, Trump would try to convince his supporters that he was the one to put an end to senseless overseas wars. However, since that moment the US has got itself involved in a number of military adventures across the globe, while being busy imposing sanctions left and right. With Trump being perceived as an unpredictable politician, there's no certainty that Europe could benefit it in any way from allowing Washington to surround Russia with its launch pads, as things may get out of control rather unexpectedly.

Russia has been pretty vocal over Donald Trump’s intention to put an end to the existing arms control architecture, announcing that it was prepared to provide a military response to the steps that it has been labeling "crude" and "dangerous" for quite a while.

As it was announced by Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister, Sergei Ryabkob:

* If the Americans continue to act as crudely... and unilaterally withdraw from all sorts of agreement and mechanisms from the Iran deal to the International Postal treaty, then we'll be reduced to taking action in response, including of a military nature. But we don't want to go that far.*

With the Pentagon steadily increasing the number of its delivery systems in Russia's immediate surrounding, the head of the Department of Security Policy at the Swedish Defence Research Agency, Mike Winnerstig revealed that by the year 2021, the overall number of F-35 deployed across Europe is going to increase by 50 jet fighters, bringing the grand total to over a hundred. Some may be unaware that this aircraft is capable of carrying nuclear B61 bombs, that are stockpiled at American bases at US bases in Belgium, Germany, Italy and Turkey.

According to projections made by researchers at Princeton University, some 90 million people would be killed or injured in a nuclear war between the US and Russia if a conventional conflict goes too far. Now, this scenario has become dramatically more plausible in the last two years.

Being mindful of the dangerous edge the world has approached yet again, Russia's Vladimir Putin sent his proposals to a number of European leaders, as well as the EU foreign affairs agency and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg last September, suggesting a moratorium on the deployment of the ballistic missiles previously prohibited by the INF Treaty.

However, this appeal was ignored, just like the overall nervousness of regular Europeans that don't want to be sitting ducks in the possible armed conflict between the US and Russia.

So far, Washington demonstrated neglect to a total of thirteen international arms control treaties, six of which are directly or indirectly related to the issue of nuclear nonproliferation. Essentially, it violated START III, IRNFT, NPT and PMDA, while unilaterally withdrawing from JCPOA. At the same time, it refused to ratify CTBTO. One can find a lot of info about these treaties and the way Washington perceives them on the Missile Defense Agency site. At the
same time, nobody can implicate Russia in actually violating the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

So there’s no surprise that Europeans believe that playing ball with Washington in its military campaigns may be acceptable, while suffering unimaginable civilian casualties as a result of those is definitely not. The overall discontent and frustration over the dismantling of the arms-control architecture is clearly visible across the Old World, as there’s voices demanding that America should take its nuclear devices back.

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