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# Germany's Stance on the Termination of the INF Treaty by the US

## Introduction

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, signed on 8 December 1987, required the United States and the Soviet Union to eliminate and permanently forswear all of their nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with the ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometres. Through its armament in this category of nuclear weapons since the late 1970s, the Soviet Union aimed not only to gain a strategic advantage over NATO in Europe, but also to undermine NATO's readiness to carry out its nuclear deterrence policy, and, thus, the allied solidarity of the organisation's member states<sup>1</sup>. At that time, the decision taken by NATO in response to this threat, concerning the so-called military build-up of the analogous nuclear weapon arsenal, made it possible to strike a nuclear balance. Yet, the numerous controversies that arose in the West around the plans to deploy American missiles became a major issue also for the security policy framework of the German Federal Republic, which, eventually, led to the demise of the then ruling SPD-FDP coalition led by Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. The lack of a consensus with regard to a follow-up of the Transatlantic orientation led to a coalition reshuffle in 1982, and the establishment of a CDU/CSU-FDP government under the leadership of Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

Three decades or so later, with Russia returning to a medium-range nuclear weapons scheme, NATO is once again confronted with the necessity to take up the gauntlet thrown down by Russia. US President Donald Trump's decision of 1 February

<sup>1</sup> J. Krause, 'Deutschlands Sicherheit und der INF-Vertrag', *ISPK Policy Brief*, Oktober 2018, no. 6, p. 3.

2019, announcing the intention of the US to terminate the INF Treaty, was the result of Russia's noncompliance, and its restoration of a medium-range nuclear weapons system. From May 2013 to December 2018, the US made over 30 attempts in its relations with Russia at various diplomatic and social levels, including the top level, to inform Moscow about its breach of the INF Treaty<sup>2</sup>. Likewise, the North Atlantic Alliance and its Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, as well as a number of European states, at least from the end of 2017 have accused Russia of being in noncompliance with the Treaty. Russia did not lag behind and kept blaming the US for violating the Treaty by deploying its Mk41 missile launching systems in Romania as part of the missile defence system that was being built across Europe. NATO and the US were reassuring the world that these launching systems were not offensive weapons, but rather ones that were targeted at intercepting missiles launched by Iran.

The goal of this paper is to attempt to provide an answer to the question of Germany's stance on yet another case of the aggravation of NATO-Russia relations, and in particular to consider the consequences that could arise for Germany's security policy. The paper first looks at the reorientation of Germany's security policy over the recent years. Then, following an in-depth overview of expert discussions related to the prospects for the development of the medium-range missile issue and the challenges posed for the German national security strategy, the analysis is shifted to Germany's current official reactions, as well as the multitude of views voiced by its political elites. This approach allows to determine to what extent various types of risk and threats are actually part of a common awareness and are taken into consideration for the formulation of both diagnoses and recommendations. Their critical juxtaposition with the different views offered by the experts should make it possible to determine the way in which Germany could react in the face of the termination of the INF Treaty, and the nature of the ensuing issues that German foreign policy will be confronted with.

## Reorientation of Germany's security policy

Admittedly, the gradual reorientation of German foreign policy since 2014 concerned the increase of the country's international responsibility by its active involvement in a number of anti-terrorist operations. Yet, indirectly, it was also related to issues that constituted the key security factors across Central and Eastern Europe, which, consequently, brought out the significance of this region for Germany. In particular, the conflict in Ukraine partly changed the German perception of Russia's policy and showed the partial convergence of Germany's security interests, and the countries of this region, with regard to allied defence and its vivid importance for the existence of NATO. The reorientation of the German security policy regarding the strengthening of the allied defence has proved that the country is able to reach a consensus on strategic issues and implement new solutions. This, in turn, provides a broader

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<sup>2</sup> *Diplomatisches Engagement im Zusammenhang mit dem INF-Vertrag*, <https://de.usembassy.gov/de/inf-vertrag> [accessed: 28.01.2019].

context for looking at Germany's reactions on the escalation of the dispute with Russia hinging upon medium-range missile armament schemes.

It is essential to note that NATO's gradual shift towards improving collective defence mechanisms in the aftermath of Russia's annexation of Crimea, and heavily influenced by the ongoing military conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine, was conditioned not only by the changes taking place within the US policy, but also in part by the new components of Germany's security policy. Indeed, not without several frequently voiced reservations coming from inside the ruling CDU/CSU-SPD coalition, a decision was made at the NATO 2014 summit in Wales to give the green light to the concept of creating the so-called Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) as part of the NATO Response Force, and an idea was launched to ensure the presence of allied forces in the territories of the member states in Central and Eastern Europe on a rotational basis. At the NATO Warsaw summit held in July 2016, Germany stood for the implementation by the Alliance of a double strategy towards Russia, based on dialogue and deterrence, and which still maintains the cornerstone of the NATO – Russia relations, i.e. the 1997 Founding Act, in which NATO, among others, declared its resignation from the deployment of permanent allied bases in the territories of the member states. A real manifestation of the principle of deterrence practiced by the Alliance was the decision to deploy four multinational battalions in Poland, Lithuania and Romania on a rotational basis. The German Bundeswehr was and still is involved in securing the Eastern flank of the Alliance by taking part in the already mentioned VJTF in 2015 and 2019 in the enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania, and the Baltic Air Policing mission<sup>3</sup>. Thus, Germany responded to the vested interests and expectations of central European states and also began to position itself as a close partner of such countries as the Czech Republic, Lithuania, or Romania – which keep striving to lay the foundations for a long-term cooperation of their domestic armed forces with the Bundeswehr, thus acknowledging the principle of the so-called framework nation<sup>4</sup>, i.e. launching multinational units based on the leading/managerial role of Germany.

The reorientation of Germany's policy was easier than expected, given the supra-regional nature of the conflict in Ukraine. This fact regards not only Central and Eastern Europe, but also Germany itself. From the outset of Ukraine's conflict, most Central and Eastern European states postulated searching for security and protection "against Russia". Poland and the Baltic states were the ones who took Frank-Walter Steinmeier's, Germany's foreign minister, statements and calls with particular distrust. In his numerous statements, he claimed that creating a durable security-based order in Europe is possible only with Russia, rather than against Russia, and for him, the NATO military manoeuvres held in Poland were an example of a militaristic anti-Russian demonstration of force<sup>5</sup>. Even if one of the tenets of

<sup>3</sup> N. Schüler, *Aufrüstung der NATO-Ostflanke Die Umstrukturierung der NATO-Politik vor dem Hintergrund von Ukraine-Konflikt und Russland-Krise*, Informationsstelle Militarisierung (IMI) e. V., <https://imi-online.de/download/NATO-Broschuere2016-NS-Rus.pdf> [accessed: 8.02.2019].

<sup>4</sup> C. Major, 'Ein schwieriger Gipfel für die Nato', *SWP-Aktuell*, Juni 2018, no. 33, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> R. Romaniec, *Kommentar: Steinmeier in Warschau – Richtige Worte, unvereinbare Blickwinkel*, <https://www.dw.com/de/kommentar-steinmeier-in-warschau-richtige-worte-unvereinbare-blickwinkel/a-44088845> [accessed: 8.02.2019].

German policy, stated in the “security only with Russia, and not in opposition to it” formula has been suspended as part of the official political stance of Germany, in the face of the numerous threats originating from Moscow, the German perspective began to change, and the country’s security interests, and those of its partners across Central and Eastern Europe, began to assimilate, it seems that given the risk posed by Russian policy, which rests firmly on its military power, there are still major discrepancies. Viewing itself still as a country that bears special responsibility for the strategy steeped in dialogue and a cautious approach to Russia, Germany keeps taking on a wait and see stance towards Russia. On this account, Poland’s attempts to obtain additional bilateral security guarantees from the US, including the initiative to enhance the US presence in Poland (Fort Trump), seem to the Germans to be antagonising Russia, and, more importantly, undermining the coherence of the North-Atlantic Alliance<sup>6</sup>. On the whole, however, in the face of the series of strains discernible in the Transatlantic relations, epitomised by the dispute over the 2% military expenditure index, Germany has feared the reduction of the US military presence in Europe, which could also lead to losing major defence capabilities and, consequently, dilute the sense of allied solidarity<sup>7</sup>.

## Perspectives

### Disrupting the strategic balance, and the negative effects for NATO’s security

The possible implications for European security, the North-Atlantic Treaty and Germany of the US terminating the Treaty were the object of vivid interest for German security experts. On the one hand, the need of the Alliance’s adequate reaction to Russia’s breach of the Treaty was regarded as a matter of top priority; on the other hand, there were still hopes for a possible return to dialogue with Moscow. The threats coming from Russia’s strategic advantage in terms of its nuclear weapons over NATO<sup>8</sup> were beyond dispute, and the accusations voiced by the US were fully grounded, although some admitted that withdrawal from the Treaty was to a larger or smaller extent motivated by fears of a similar armament inclination of China, which were, in fact, not covered by the provisions of the INF Treaty<sup>9</sup>. While some experts were quite clear-headedly assessing the minor significance of keeping the Treaty alive (Joachim Krause from the *Institut für Sicherheitspolitik* in Kiel: “The INF Treaty did not prevent these processes [Russia’s armament programme – KM]; hence. it has no relevance

<sup>6</sup> Ph. Fritz, ‘Warschau riskanter Flirt mit Washington’, *Die Welt*, 31.12.2019.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. C. Major, ‘Schwieriges Selbstständig werden. Zum Wandel der transatlantischen Sicherheitsbeziehungen und den Konsequenzen für Europa’, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 2018, no. 36–37, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> It is all about various types of missiles: SS-26 ISKANDER (ballistic missile and cruise missile with a range of up to 500 km allowing to transfer nuclear loads, ship missiles SS-N30 KALIBER with a range exceeding 2,000 km allowing to transfer nuclear loads; ground-based missile SSC-8 NOVATOR (ISKANDERA 9M729 type) with a range of up to 2,600 km).

<sup>9</sup> C. Mölling, ‘Drohender US-Ausstieg aus dem INF-Vertrag: Europa braucht eine neue Sicherheitsordnung’, *DGAPkompakt*, Oktober 2018, no. 27, p. 1; O. Meier, ‘US-Aufkündigung des INF-Vertrags: Punktsieg für Putin’, *Kurz gesagt*, SWP, 24.10.2018, p. 2.

for the security of Germany”<sup>10</sup>; Christian Mölling from the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik* in Berlin: “Still, it is a big mistake to believe that the existing treaty will ensure security”<sup>11</sup>), others, in turn, were pointing to the fact that the withdrawal of the US from the Treaty would imply a destruction of the pillar of the European security order (Oliver Meier from the *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* in Berlin), or were stressing the need to rescue it before it ultimately became extinct within six months from its termination by the US (Wolfgang Richter from the Berlin-based *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*)<sup>12</sup>.

In the face of the threat posed by Russian missiles, the most important consequence, however, was the split of NATO into two geostrategic security zones. One of them would be located within the reach of Russian medium-range weapons, including Germany, and the other, which would be made up by the US [or, possibly, also France and Britain – KM] would not be exposed to such a threat, and could possibly maintain its nuclear deterrence capability (Chr. Mölling)<sup>13</sup>. Professor Carlo Massala, an expert from the Bundeswehr University in Munich, has pointed to a similar threat for the coherence of the Alliance and the rise of uneven security zones:

[i]ntercontinental missiles are at disposal, which are based in the US. Using them to react to an act of aggression committed with a medium-range missile seems highly unlikely. the nuclear umbrella, which the US has put up over Europe, will, therefore, be leaky. Thanks to these missiles, Moscow can blackmail the European states, and Transatlantic security would then become divisible<sup>14</sup>.

Indeed, experts have concurred that NATO, regardless of the termination of the INF Treaty, will be forced to take steps aimed at safeguarding the security interests of the European members and, at the same time, those of the entire Alliance by restoring a strategic balance in its relations with Russia. DGAP experts Heinrich Brauß and Christian Mölling have highlighted the fact that “[p]lacing emphasis solely on diplomatic efforts, and ruling out certain military preventive measures in advance weakens Europe’s security and extends Russia’s range of options”. They argue that the following objectives ought to be prioritised: preserving the coherence of the Alliance, and maintaining the principle of deterrence as a major guarantee of security. They believe that on the part of Germany, no recommendations have been formulated to a satisfactory extent with regard to what its defence policy, as well as that of the Alliance’s, should look like in case the Treaty ends in a fiasco, and it is partly focused on launching the arms control concept<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> J. Krause, *op. cit.*, p. 4. Also: C. Mölling, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> C. Mölling, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> O. Meier, *op. cit.*, p. 2; W. Richter, ‘Der INF-Vertrag vor dem Aus’, *SWP-Aktuell*, November 2018, no. 63, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> C. Mölling, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Der Schutzschirm über Europa wird löchrig’. Interview mit Carlo Massala, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 1.02.2019, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/2/220/inf-vertrag-russland-usa-interview-1.4310955> [accessed: 8.02.2019].

<sup>15</sup> H. Brauß, Chr. Mölling, ‘Abschreckung und Rüstungskontrolle. Europas Sicherheit ohne INF-Vertrag: Politische und strategische Handlungsoptionen für Deutschland und die NATO’, *DGAPkompakt*, Januar 2019, no. 1, p. 3.

## NATO's military build-up, and possible disputes within NATO

In theory, the Alliance can follow into its historical footsteps, deciding to launch a rearmament scheme, which would be conditioned upon the US's readiness to deploy the ground-based missile defence system in Europe. However, following J. Krause "[t]here is currently no evidence that the US intends to deploy ground-based medium-range ballistic missiles in Europe"<sup>16</sup>. Acknowledging the military build-up strategy, however, would expose the Alliance to the risk of a dispute between different member states on the desirability of a decisive reaction and its range, and it may indeed weaken the prospects of its implementation. For O. Meier, the key factor underlying the dispute within the Alliance was, for example, the possibility of Donald Trump's successful attempts to bypass the rearmament strategy through bilateral agreements with Poland concerning the deployment of American missiles in the Polish territory<sup>17</sup>. Yet, until the termination of the Treaty by the US, he disregarded the fact that the real devastating element for the Alliance could be a lack of political consensus, above all in Germany. A similar perspective has been offered by Karl-Heinz Kamp and Wolfgang Rudischhauser, accomplished experts affiliated at the Berlin-based *Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik*, who note that the probable rift would currently be running between Western and Eastern Europe, primarily Poland:

Poland, but also other Eastern European NATO member states, which have historically felt threatened by Russia, could – in bilateral agreements and/or as part of NATO – not only welcome the idea of deploying such missiles in their territories for their safety and security, but also actively solicit it. In Western Europe, however, deployment or redeployment of ground-based nuclear missiles, but also possibly conventional short- and medium-range ballistic missile systems would trigger heated internal debates<sup>18</sup>.

A diametrically different standpoint can be seen with C. Massala, who criticised the views expressed by Minister Maas:

[t]he major problem of Heiko Maas's diplomacy rests on the fact that he categorically rules out one option, i.e. to respond to the termination of the Treaty by deploying medium-range missiles. Without this threat, there are no incentives for Moscow to return to abiding by the Treaty<sup>19</sup>.

Christian Mölling, in turn, has made it quite clear, realising the responsibility of Germany:

[o]n the whole, [the termination of the Treaty – KM] implies less security for Europe and Germany: either there's going to be a break-up of NATO, or a joint rearmament decision will be made, which, indeed, in Germany will be hard to push<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> J. Krause, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> O. Meier, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> K.-H. Kamp, W. Rudischhauser, 'Der INF-Vertrag – Europa muss handeln', *Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik, Arbeitspapier Sicherheitspolitik*, 2018, no. 29, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> 'Der Schutzschirm über Europa wird löchrig', *op. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> Chr. Mölling, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

He saw the risk of the breaking up of the Alliance in the resistance of Western European states to a military build-up in American weapons, but was also fully aware of the fact that for Central European and Baltic states, rearmament has truly existential significance, as proved by the discussion on the possible deployment of US troops in Poland. For these reasons, NATO's joint decision seemed impossible to him<sup>21</sup>. He noticed that yet another possible consequence of the escalation of conflict between the allies could be the so-called nuclear decoupling of the US<sup>22</sup>, and, at the same time, Russia's gaining strategic advantage over a disintegrated Alliance. Wolfgang Ischinger, a Transatlantic authority, former German diplomat and organiser of the Munich Security Conferences, made this aspect very clear, noting that

[i]f Russia, following the elimination of the restrictions set out in the INF treaty, begins to deploy new medium-range missile systems, this could lead to a strategic rift between Europe and the US; Europe would then become more susceptible to blackmail<sup>23</sup>.

C. Massala noted that

[t]he Alliance won't fall apart, but it rather faces the risk of increased dysfunctionality – if missiles were to be deployed in Poland, and Germany and France were to withhold their support for this, the principle of solidarity would clearly be abandoned<sup>24</sup>.

Likewise, O. Meier stressed the fact that the termination of the Treaty would limit the possibility to exert pressure on Russia and will give it a chance to open/unrestricted deployment of 9M729 missiles without the need to report their actual range.

While O. Meier, W. Richter and K.-H. Kamp pointed to the outdatedness of the potential military build-up, given the low effectiveness of the categories of ground-based weapons – as since the INF Treaty, such systems play a smaller role in striking a balance of power by the US and Russia at the expense of capabilities supported from the air or the sea<sup>25</sup> – W. Ischinger postulated the return to NATO's double strategy, which links enhanced defence with a comprehensive offer of negotiations. Yet, he argued that: "Western defence tools need no longer be ground nuclear systems, just as in the 1980s. [...] It is absolutely necessary to improve the European conventional defence capabilities"<sup>26</sup>. Having said this, DGAP experts recommended that the development and deployment of ground-based medium-range nuclear weapons should not be ruled out in advance<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> "Europa muss seine Interessen durchsetzen". Interview mit Wolfgang Ischinger, *Handelsblatt*, 04.02.2019.

<sup>24</sup> 'Der Schutzschirm über Europa wird löchrig', *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> O. Meier, *op. cit.*, s. 2; K.-H. Kamp, W. Rudischhauser, *op. cit.*, p. 4; W. Richter, 'Der INF-Vertrag vor dem Aus', *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> "Europa muss seine Interessen durchsetzen" ..., *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>27</sup> H. Brauß, Chr. Möling, *op. cit.*, p. 3.



Amidst the experts, opting for the rearmament variant aroused unambiguous associations with the tensions between the East and the West that had already been seen in the relations between the superpowers in the late 1970s and in the first half of the 1980s, as well as within the Alliance itself. One needs to bear in mind that currently such a reaction of the Alliance, based on a rearmament scheme, would imply carrying out the maximum risk option. From the perspective of the governments of such states as Germany, it would be hard to reconcile this not only with the views held by the country's own nationals, but it would also affront the economic interests, and a broader, thus far unfulfilled (and not shared by the whole German political elite) idea to create a somewhat more general *modus vivendi* with Russia related to European security and economic cooperation. Interestingly, it is clear to see from the various expert analyses that the fact that, given the lack of consensus, Germany is the major obstacle for taking a potential decision on military build-up, has been taken for granted, or neglected *a priori*.

### Boosting the potential of non-stationary arms and defence capabilities

The second option for the Alliance regarding the restoration of the former balance in Europe could be the attempt to boost the American potential of cruise missiles, launched from the sea or the air, in view of the fact that the provisions of the Treaty do not cover this category of weapons, and/or enhancing the American conventional armed forces in Europe. Alongside a military build-up, which was indeed hard for him to imagine, Mölling also put forward another option: "[i]nstead of nuclear rearmament of Europe, Germany could suggest a larger military presence of the US and extend its defence capabilities"<sup>28</sup>, or indeed:

[...] Germany could ask the US to increase its nuclear potential in Europe, operating from the air and the sea. This could, above all, reinsure the Central European states without triggering a further debate on rearmament. [...] Along with gaining offensive weapons, it is possible to improve the defence capabilities within NATO, i.e. the anti-missile defence mechanism<sup>29</sup>.

DGAP experts have also recommended improving NATO's defence capacity by deploying US combat troops across Poland, and the Baltic states. This variant seems probable, because the US is currently enforcing the European Deterrence Initiative, an initiative aimed at enhancing its military presence. An equally important aspect that needs to be noted is the permanent rise of expenditure for this programme (2018: USD4.8bn; 2019: USD6.5bn)<sup>30</sup>. Many NATO countries have confirmed a readiness to upgrade their national anti-missile systems, or to develop them. One of these countries is Germany, which is looking to expand the Medium Extended Air Defence System (MEADS), and Poland, which is interested in purchasing the Patriot system,

<sup>28</sup> C. Mölling, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> *The European Deterrence Initiative: A Budgetary Overview*, Congressional Research Service, August 8, 2018.



aimed at improving the defence capabilities by maintaining and/or increasing the presence of US troops in its territory<sup>31</sup>.

In a much more prudent tone than that of Ch. Mölling, K.-H. Kamp and W. Rudischhauer have postulated enhancing the deterrence strategy of the Alliance. This includes increasing the rotational presence of NATO troops in the eastern part of the allied area, and a possible development of NATO's anti-missile capabilities in Europe, which, however, ought to be "treated with due caution", as it would clearly not match NATO's current stance, which holds that "these capabilities are not targeted at Russia, but rather against threats originating from beyond the Euro-Atlantic area, i.e. from Iran, Syria, or North Korea".

### An offer of dialogue

One must not rule out the fact that within the next six months (i.e. from 1 February 2019) talks could be held regarding the need to renegotiate the provisions of the Treaty. The stake in such a scenario remains talking Russia into dialogue and possibly to certain concessions – even despite the US termination of the Treaty. Also, it is hard to say whether the US would be ready to deploy medium-range weapons in the European member states, regardless of whether the already mentioned NATO anti-missile scheme that shields them against the Middle East were to be carried out with their participation. Such a readiness of the US may weaken President Trump's approach, unwilling to maintain allied bonds with European states, given that some of them, like e.g. Germany, has not complied with the obligation of increasing military expenditure, not to mention the priority treatment by the US of the geostrategic dispute with China.

In light of this situation, German experts have recommended taking advantage of the period that remains from the termination of the Treaty until its ultimate expiry for intensified talks with Russia. "With this new approach, one could strive to make sure the INF Treaty is preserved, or should it be no longer attainable from the political angle, at least to prevent the rise of a new race in Europe, regarding the deployment [of missiles – KM]<sup>32</sup>. A necessary condition from the point of view of taking the US interests into account would be to include China, India and Pakistan in the dialogue, although there are little or no chances for this to happen, as this would clearly require covering other issues as well, such as China's projection of military power over the South China Sea, and the American missiles in South Korea and Japan.

The offer of dialogue could include creating transparency – which relates to the possibility for Russia to conduct inspections of NATO installations – to "prevent Russian accusations that the NATO missile system is now targeted at changing the strategic balance towards Russia"<sup>33</sup>. However, most importantly, prominent

<sup>31</sup> *Poles support the permanent presence of US troops in our country*, <http://en.mon.gov.pl/news/article/latest-news/poles-support-the-permanent-presence-of-us-troops-in-our-country-z2018-10-29> [accessed: 8.02.2019]. Since January 2017, in Poland a contingent of the American armed forces has been stationing in Poland, made up of 3,500 soldiers. The Polish government postulates that the US army be present in Poland on a permanent basis, rather than on a rotational basis.

<sup>32</sup> W. Richter, 'Schadensbegrenzung bei der Rüstungskontrolle', *SWP*, 12.12.2018.

<sup>33</sup> A similar postulate for inspecting the Mk-41 missile launchers has been formulated by SWP expert W. Richter. Cf. W. Richter, 'Der INF-Vertrag vor dem Aus', *op. cit.*, 4.

experts of the *Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik* have suggested that, once the Treaty expired, "Europe" should take a bigger initiative and it should formulate its own disarmaments offer or take over a greater role within NATO's conventional defence strategy to "ensure that redeployment of nuclear medium-range missiles is the *ultima ratio* as long as Russia does not deploy such systems in a larger number"<sup>34</sup>. According to W. Richter, the federal government should get involved in the efforts taken to activate the verification system in a multilateral format with the active participation of the allies. "They should reach an agreement to reject any new proposals concerning the deployment of INF systems as long as Russia refrains from deploying such systems"<sup>35</sup>.

To sum up, among the views subjected to scrutiny, it has been possible to discern a somewhat realistic evaluation based on the assumption that a termination of the Treaty would have negative consequences for NATO by undermining the strategic balance in its relations with Russia; on the other hand, there was no unanimity as to any adequate reaction to Russia's armament scheme. Doubts have been raised concerning the possibility to make another decision on the military build-up of NATO; break-up tendencies were anticipated within the Alliance itself, mostly in light of several attempts by Poland and a few other states on the eastern flank to obtain more security guarantees from the US through bilateral accords, and, ultimately, it was noticed only to a minor extent that a lack of intra-political consensus in Germany was the major obstacle on the road to taking a military build-up decision.

There was also no unanimity on the implementation of a back-up option, which entailed enhancing the defensive capabilities of NATO states in connection with the deployment of American missiles and manoeuvring projectiles based on ships and air platforms. This approach was preferred by such pragmatists as W. Ischinger, Chr. Moelling, and C. Massala. On the other hand, there was no shared conviction as to the sense of entering into dialogue with Russia by creating transparency related to Russian missiles and American anti-missile installations in Romania and Poland.

## Germany's government stance

Since the announcement by President Trump of the US intention to withdraw from the Treaty on 20 October 2018, the German government has voiced its official standpoint, which is made up of three premises. First of all, it unequivocally concurred with the diagnosis that Russia had been found in breach of the INF Treaty, and it made a number of references to the joint declaration of the North Atlantic Alliance made at its Brussels summit in July 2018, which admitted that the US was abiding by the provisions of the Treaty, whereas Russia was unable to provide convincing answers to the questions related the missiles, which, consequently, led the allies to the conclusion that Russia had in fact violated the Treaty<sup>36</sup>. Just as the other al-

<sup>34</sup> K.-H. Kamp, W. Rudischhauser, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> W. Richter, 'Der INF-Vertrag vor dem Aus', *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. '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', *Press Release* 2018, no. 074,

lies, Germany shared the US point of view and was advocating a 6-day deadline for a possible return to negotiations on the Treaty. At the same time, the German government – not only as part of multilateral relations, but also following several bilateral attempts – stressed the fact that it agreed with President Trump's standpoint blaming Russia for the breach of the Treaty<sup>37</sup>. Second, Germany's government highlighted the significance of the INF Treaty for the security and peace across Europe. The spokesman of Heiko Maas, the German minister of foreign affairs, in one of his first reactions stated that "[t]he INF Treaty [...] has for the last 30 years been a cornerstone of the European architecture of security. And especially for us in Europe, this Treaty bears a unique significance"<sup>38</sup>. In the autumn and winter of 2018, the government also declared its intention to get involved in measures aimed at a follow-up to the Treaty<sup>39</sup>. Steffen Seibert, the federal government spokesman, admitted that it was in line with the double-track strategy of the Alliance adopted at the Warsaw summit in 2016, which entailed strengthening the function of collective defence, and at the same keeping up dialogue with Russia. This needs to be seen in a larger context as evidence of the strong conviction that the ruling coalition feels obliged to full liquidation of nuclear weapons, i.e. to carry out the *Global zero*<sup>40</sup> concept, included in the CDU/CSU–SPD coalition agreement made in February 2018. Such an intention, however, is not reflected in NATO documents, and, thus, ought to be treated as a political manifesto pushed ahead by the SPD.

At the same time, German diplomacy – and this was the third component of Germany's stance – made it clear that Russia had to face the need to make a move that would be aimed at restoring compliance with the Treaty in a way that would allow to verify its provisions. Minister H. Maas remarked: "[w]e are ready to influence Russia to force through compliance with the INF Treaty"<sup>41</sup>. Yet, the government rejected Russia's reservations that the US, acting in concert with Poland and Romania by developing its bases in their territories, has also been found in non-compliance with the Treaty, claiming that these are parts of NATO's defensive anti-missile defence system<sup>42</sup>.

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Issued on 11 Jul. 2018. Cf. par. 46: "Allies believe that, in the absence of any credible answer from Russia on this new missile, the most plausible assessment would be that Russia is in violation of the Treaty. NATO urges Russia to address these concerns in a substantial and transparent way, and actively engage in a technical dialogue with the United States"; [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_156624.htm#35](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm#35) [accessed: 9.02.2019].

<sup>37</sup> E.g. 'Rede des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen, Heiko Maas, am 8. Januar 2019 in Dublin', *Bulletin der Bundesregierung*, 9.01.2019, no. 03-1. Cf. also: *Warum steht der INF-Vertrag vor dem Aus?*, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/themen/abruestung-ruestungskontrolle/inf-vertrag/2185722> [accessed: 7.02.2019].

<sup>38</sup> K. Schuller, 'Berlin warnt vor nuklearem Wettrüsten', *FAZ*, 21.10.2019, [www.faz.net/-gq5-9foi1](http://www.faz.net/-gq5-9foi1) [accessed: 28.10.2018].

<sup>39</sup> *Regierungspressekonferenz vom 5. Dezember 2018*, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/regierungspressekonferenz-vom-5-dezember-2018-1557620> [accessed: 8.02.2019].

<sup>40</sup> *Neues Wettrüsten verhindern*, 23.10.2018, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/sicherheit-und-verteidigung/neues-wettruesten-verhindern-1541050> [accessed: 8.02.2019].

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Regierungspressekonferenz vom 5. Dezember 2018...*, *op. cit.*

Following the already mentioned assumptions, the Merkel government kept signalling its vital interest in arriving at a *modus vivendi* concerning the missiles. On 4 December 2018, NATO declared that, admittedly, Russia's conduct undermined the arms control process, and this would not be tolerated by the Alliance; still, under the influence of Germany and France, it announced its readiness to restore dialogue with Russia<sup>43</sup>. This led to the US postponing the termination of the Treaty by 60 days. Announced by President Trump for 2 February 2019, the final date for the US withdrawal from the Treaty, if Russia failed to return to compliance, triggered a wave of diplomatic activity on the part of Germany, aimed at joining the efforts to solve the dispute that had arisen. The visits made by Minister H. Maas in Moscow (18 Jan 2019) and Washington (24 Jan 2019) served to probe the position of both the German and the American counterparts. In Moscow, Minister Maas unequivocally laid the blame for the escalating conflict squarely on Russia. He confirmed the government's stance, admitting that "it was now Russia's turn" to try to save the Treaty by verifying the missile disarmament, and the prospective fiasco of the Treaty "was posing a real threat to the German security interests in a major way"<sup>44</sup>. Clearly, Germany sided with the US, laying the responsibility for breaching the Treaty on Russia<sup>45</sup>. Looking at the matter from a broader perspective, which rests on the idea of offering Russia dialogue, Minister Maas announced that Germany, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, would invite Moscow to take part in a disarmament conference on nuclear weapons and new arms systems (autonomous weapons, or unmanned air systems) that it was planning to hold on 15 March 2019<sup>46</sup>. As part of this initiative, the INF issue was also included on the agenda. Minister Maas really cared about the idea to make sure that the Treaty, aimed at imposing a ban on medium-range weapons, would also cover India and China, as well as to thrash out new principles for inspection<sup>47</sup>. In Washington, Minister Maas declared readiness to set a homogeneous stance in close agreement with the US regarding the INF Treaty. He noted, however, that there were strategic differences which made this project more arduous: for example, the US made a unilateral announcement of their decision to withdraw from Syria and confirmed a similar perspective in the case of Afghanistan<sup>48</sup>.

A culminating point in the formulation of the German standpoint was the termination of the Treaty by the US on 1 February 2019. Following into its footsteps, the NATO member states put the blame for the crisis on Russia and called Moscow to destroy its arsenal of medium-range nuclear weapons, and to return to comply

<sup>43</sup> 'Statement on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Issued by the NATO Foreign Ministers, Brussels, 4 December 2018', *Press Release*, 2018, no. 162, Issued on 4 Dec. 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_161122.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_161122.htm) [accessed: 8.02.2019].

<sup>44</sup> D. Brössler, 'Ein Morgen mit Lawrow', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 19–20.01.2019.

<sup>45</sup> 'Maas will Verhältnis zu Amerika verbessern', *FAZ* 25.01.2019.

<sup>46</sup> J. Leithäuser, 'Dornen im Strauß der Freundlichkeiten', *FAZ*, 19–20.01.2019.

<sup>47</sup> A. Graw, 'Russland muss jetzt überprüfbar abrüsten', *Die Welt*, 6.01.2019, <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article186605834/Heiko-Maas-zu-INF-Vertrag-Russland-muss-jetzt-ueberpruefbar-abruesten.html> [accessed: 31.01.2019].

<sup>48</sup> 'Maas will Verhältnis zu Amerika verbessern'..., *op. cit.*

with the Treaty<sup>49</sup>. German Chancellor Angela Merkel called the US and Russia to use the 6-month period until the ultimate expiry of the Treaty to try and reach a compromise. Minister Maas, in turn, blamed Russia for the Treaty's fiasco and, at the same time, revealed that he had offered the Russians an opportunity of dialogue on the idea to create criteria for the so-called transparency of potential verification of both parties' nuclear weapon stockpile<sup>50</sup>. However, a few days earlier, in an interview given for the DPA press agency, he made an indirect statement against deploying new American NATO nuclear medium-range missiles in Europe, voicing fears that the question of military build-up might deepen the political rift within Germany<sup>51</sup>. In press interviews and on social media, following the termination of the Treaty, Maas stated that to his mind missile deployment in Europe was a relic and voiced the need for comprehensive disarmament on a global scale<sup>52</sup>. Chancellor Angela Merkel, in turn, at a sitting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Bundestag, contrary to Maas, supposedly admitted that she was not expecting another debate on disarmament, pointing to the fact that apart from extra arming with ground-based missiles, there were also other defence possibilities<sup>53</sup>. The government's official stance, exposed on the website of the ministry of foreign affairs, was vague and stated that in order to solve the issue of medium-range nuclear weapons, Germany would get involved in a number of activities aimed at enhanced armament control to preserve the existing agreements, keep them on the international agenda, and create regulations related to new arms systems – all this in light of the fact that armament was also an issue that concerned China and India, and artificial intelligence and cyberattacks were posing new threats<sup>54</sup>.

## Political parties on the breach and termination of the INF Treaty

Since the announcement by the US President on 20 October 2018 of the intention to terminate the Treaty, the issue has become a matter of universal concern in the

<sup>49</sup> 'Statement on Russia's failure to comply with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty issued by the North Atlantic Council, Brussels, 1 February 2019', *Press Release*, 2019, no. 015, Issued on 01 Feb. 2019, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_162996.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_162996.htm) [accessed: 8.02.2019].

<sup>50</sup> "Rüstungskontrolle ist reine Realpolitik" – Interview mit Heiko Maas, *Berliner Morgenpost*, 2.02.2019, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/maas-funke/2185634> [accessed: 8.02.2019].

<sup>51</sup> *INF-Vertrag: Maas spricht sich gegen eine neue atomare Aufrüstung aus*, <https://de.euronews.com/2018/12/26/inf-vertrag-maas-spricht-sich-gegen-eine-neue-atomare-aufruestung-aussenminister-europa> [accessed: 8.02.2019].

<sup>52</sup> Tweet by H. Mass of 1 Feb 2019. "Die USA wollen raus dem #INFVertrag. Leider ist Russland nicht bereit, Vertragstreue wiederherzustellen. Ohne den Vertrag wird es weniger Sicherheit geben. Wir brauchen keine Aufrüstungsdebatte, sondern eine umfassende Rüstungskontrolle". Quoted after: 'Maas ruft zu weltweiter Abrüstungsinitiative auf', *Spiegel online*, 2.02.2019, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/inf-vertrag-bundesaussenminister-heiko-maas-ruft-zu-abruestungsinitiative-auf-a-1251276.html> [accessed: 8.02.2019].

<sup>53</sup> H. Monath, 'Union greift Heiko Maas an. "Das schadet dem Zusammenhalt der Nato"', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 18.01.2019.

<sup>54</sup> *Warum steht der INF-Vertrag vor dem Aus?...*, *op. cit.*

German political parties. Both Roderich Kiesewetter, head of the CDU/CSU in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag; Social Democrat Karl-Heinz Brunner, spokesman of an SPD faction advocating disarmament; as well as Agnieszka Brugger, spokeswoman for defence policy of *die Grünen*; and Stefan Liebich, foreign policy expert of *Die Linke*, took an undisputed stance, supporting absolute preservation of the Treaty and were highly critical of President Trump's initiative<sup>55</sup>. In their assessment of the situation, CDU/CSU politicians did not differ significantly from the Social Democrats. Such unanimity was indeed a rare occurrence. Having said this, the social-democrats were blaming the risk of squandering the disarmament heritage on the US and Russia to an equal extent<sup>56</sup>. During a broader discussion held in the autumn and winter of 2018, and at the beginning of 2019, it is possible to notice that the statements made by representatives of the social-democrats and the Christian-democrats were articulating different aspects of the issue. On 4 December 2018, Jürgen Hardt, CDU/CSU member and foreign policy spokesman, laid the blame for the escalation of the dispute on Russia, pointing to the fact that it was Russia that should respond adequately and introduce measures that would guarantee transparency regarding its missiles, and in the event of a lack of reaction, he called NATO to take measures to ensure security for all the member states. He also expressed his satisfaction that the US administration was pursuing agreements with its partners on this issue<sup>57</sup>. Dirk Wiese, SPD coordinator for social cooperation with Russia, in turn, held that Germany should do its best to prevent a debate on deploying new medium-range missiles in Europe, which implied a concealed objection to a potential debate within NATO concerning possible rearmament in this category of weapons. Unlike the CDU representative, he put forward the idea of "mutual inspections"<sup>58</sup>.

## Termination of the Treaty by the US (1 February 2019) and reactions of the parties

### Bundestag

The strong polarisation of the stances taken by the individual parties was becoming increasingly more discernible. Although during the statement made at an *ad hoc* interpellation during the *Aktuelle Stunde* put forward by *Die Linke*<sup>59</sup> as part of the debate dedicated to the Treaty on 1 February 2019 all the six parties represented in

<sup>55</sup> D. Brössler, M. Kolb, 'Entsetzte Einigkeit in Berlin, lautes Schweigen in Brüssel', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 23.10.2018; 'Maas will Verhältnis zu Amerika verbessern'..., *op. cit.*

<sup>56</sup> *Den INF-Vertrag erhalten – Es geht um den Multilateralismus*, Pressemitteilung der SPD-Bundestagsfraktion, 22.10.2018 <https://www.spdfraktion.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/inf-vertrag-erhalten-geht-um-multilateralismus> [accessed: 8.02.2019].

<sup>57</sup> J. Hardt, 'Russland muss Zweifel an Einhaltung des INF-Vertrags ausräumen', *Pressemitteilung der CDU/CSU-Fraktion im Deutschen Bundestag*, 4.12.2018.

<sup>58</sup> *SWR Tagesgespräch mit Dirk Wiese*, 5.12.2018.

<sup>59</sup> Motion by the name of *INF-Vertrag bewahren, atomare Aufrüstung in Europa verhindern und US-Atomwaffen aus Deutschland abziehen*, <https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2019/kw05-aktuelle-stunde-us-atomwaffen/589964> [accessed: 8.02.2019].



the Bundestag expressed their regret for the US withdrawal from the Treaty, their views on what stance the federal government should take were palpably divergent. Sevim Dağdelen, a representative of *Die Linke*, believed that President Trump's decision was putting Europe's security and peace at risk and called the federal government to guarantee that it would not consent to further deployment of American arms in Germany and make sure the arms deployed thus far were withdrawn<sup>60</sup>. Roderich Kieseweter from the CDU/CSU criticised the approach of *Die Linke*, arguing that such unilateral disarmament would be the implementation of the "German way" (*deutscher Alleingang*), and in the face of Russia's actions, Germany's withdrawal from taking an active part in NATO's nuclear policy would also lead to an increased sense of threat amidst Germany's eastern neighbours, which would, in turn, imply more intensified pursuits for the deployment of American nuclear weapons in their territories. In the statement made by Robby Schlund from *Alternative für Deutschland*, one could clearly notice a unilateral view. Criticism was addressed to the US, which, in his opinion, had terminated the Treaty in its own interest, and when its missiles were able to reach the Russian territory in several places, the Russian ground-based weapons could reach only a part of Alaska. Thus, the federal government could not turn into an "uncritical helper" of the imperialistic policy of the US. SPD representative Karl-Heinz Brunner highlighted the fact that Germany ought to mobilise the EU to solve the crisis, and at the same time dispel all doubts among the eastern partners and take the NATO alliance clause seriously. Alexander Graf Lambdorsorff from the FDP criticised Minister Maas's intentions related to the possibility of building a new disarmament regime on account of Chinese, French and British reluctance. The view expressed by Omid Nouripour, a representative of *die Grünen*, was truly realistic: for him, the termination of the Treaty was a big mistake, as it gave Russia the unfettered opportunity to further develop medium-range weapons and deploy them at its discretion. To his mind, the role of the government should be to launch an inspection, and take further measures aimed at disarmament<sup>61</sup>.

### Christian Democrats

The politicians assigned with the task of handling foreign and security policy in the CDU/CSU made themselves clear. A wave of regrets caused by the termination of the Treaty was accompanied by a sober assessment of the situation and putting the blame for breaching the Treaty on Russia. Another factor underlying the stance taken by the Christian Democrats was the clear emphasis placed on the need to maintain the Alliance's coherence in the face of Russian attempts at undermining its unity, and articulating Germany's allied loyalty by making open reference to the *Sonderweg* metaphor, an obvious denial of the Western Transatlantic allied bondage of contemporary Germany, and thus acting against its allies. In a communique by the CDU/CSU, its Deputy Chair Wadeputh noted: "[t]here must not be any German *Sonderweg*, particularly not on the part of Germany as a key European member state of NATO".

<sup>60</sup> It was all about the American nuclear tactical loads deployed in the German territory; therefore, having nothing to do with the category of weapons referred to in the INF Treaty.

<sup>61</sup> Deutscher Bundestag. Stenografischer Bericht. 77. Sitzung, Berlin, Donnerstag, den 1. Februar 2019. Plenarprotokoll 19/77, pp. 9194ff.



The third element lying behind the approach of the CDU/CSU was the assumption that as a result of this specific Transatlantic attitude, one could not rule out possible reactions of NATO, including e.g. a decision to deploy medium-range weapons across Europe. This is where a wave of criticism by Minister Maas was coming from, as he was the one who suggested that NATO would not respond to Russian armament in a similar way.

In the face of the situation, it was a major error of Minister Maas, who without being asked to do so, ruled out possible NATO reactions in advance. This clearly undermines the coherence of the Alliance and weakens its negotiating positions towards Russia. All the options need to be on the table<sup>62</sup>.

Following this approach, it was recommended to “carry out a comprehensive and well thought-out consultation process within NATO to respond appropriately to new threats. Any strategic discussion on a relevant response has to be held reasonably, collectively, and openly”<sup>63</sup>. In another respect, the Christian Democrats was offering support to Minister Maas: “the CDU/CSU advocated negotiations on a multilateral treaty-based regime that would oblige all the member states to destroy their nuclear medium-range missiles”<sup>64</sup>.

## Social Democrats

For SPD representatives, the core value lay within the INF Treaty itself, and its overall relevance as a cornerstone of Europe’s security. From this perspective, the initiative taken by President Trump appeared tantamount to a US shift towards further armament – a truly counterproductive step, and one that could even be regarded as putting Europe’s peace and stability in peril to the same extent as Russia’s extension of its missile arsenal. In a special open address given on 28 October 2018, nine prominent SPD leaders and former chairs of the SPD party – Gerhard Schröder, Björn Engholm, Sigmar Gabriel, Franz Müntefering, Matthias Platzeck, Kurt Beck, Hans-Jochen Vogel, Rudolf Scharping, and Martin Schulz – objected to President Trump’s termination of the INF, and the spiral of nuclear armaments<sup>65</sup>. The authors of the manifesto did not summon up the courage to offer a critical assessment of Russia and tried to stress the fact responsibility for armament lies, on the whole, on both parts, i.e. the US, and Russia. One needs to notice that this stance of most prominent SPD members differed from the approach manifested by Social-democrat Heiko Maas in his capacity of Germany’s minister of foreign affairs. He has enjoyed large support of

<sup>62</sup> J.D. Wadepfuhl, J. Hardt, ‘NATO muss geschlossen bleiben. Russland verletzt INF-Vertrag – Alle Optionen bleiben auf dem Tisch’, *Pressemitteilung der CDU/CSU-Bundestagsfraktion*, 1.02.2019.

<sup>63</sup> FAQ. *Der Vertrag über das Verbot nuklear bestückbarer Mittelstreckenraketen – Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF)*, CDU-CSU-Bundestagsfraktion, [https://www.cducs.de/sites/default/files/2019-02/FAQ\\_INF\\_Vertrag\\_1.pdf](https://www.cducs.de/sites/default/files/2019-02/FAQ_INF_Vertrag_1.pdf) [accessed: 7.02.2019].

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Kein neues atomares Wettrüsten in Europa! Für einen neuen Anlauf zur Rüstungskontrolle und Abrüstung*, <https://kein-wettruesten.de> [accessed: 31.01.2019]. Por. *Neun frühere SPD-Chefs warnen vor atomarem Aufrüsten*, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/inf-vertrag-neun-fruehere-spd-chefs-warnen-vor-atomarem-aufruesten/23234026.html> [accessed: 31.01.2019].

the SPD, which approves of the new course taken by the minister. According to Nils Schmid, SPD spokesman for foreign policy, he diverges from the policy represented by Chancellor Schröder, Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and Sigmar Gabriel, enhanced by numerous personal contacts, and is the result of a major disillusionment with a lack of concessions of Russia, e.g. as regards the Ukraine case. Its key assumption rests on a strong orientation to shaping peace and order based on norms, observing human rights, free elections, and democracy<sup>66</sup>.

In November 2018, Rolf Mützenich, Deputy Chair of the SPD, warned against the prospective deployment of American medium-range missiles: “[...] Germany cannot become the place for settling atomic war games. [...] We won’t agree to deploying new American medium-range weapons”. He explained this stance by pointing to what to his mind was the existing balance of powers between the US and Russia: “[t]here is no gap between the US and Russia, as some people believe. We should rather strive to do whatever it takes to make sure the nuclear-based line of reasoning never comes back”<sup>67</sup>. However, in January 2019, the SPD declared that they were in full agreement with the stance of NATO member states concerning Russia’s responsibility for noncompliance with the Treaty. The party’s spokesman for security policy Fritz Felgentreu admitted that for the North Atlantic Alliance, Russia’s armaments had created the risk of blackmailing the US and its Western allies to prevent them from succouring the endangered allies on NATO’s eastern flank.

In this sense, medium-range missiles could be treated as an attempt to challenge NATO’s unity as a military alliance [...]. It is important for us in NATO and the EU to refrain from being subjected to break-ups and, in the face of a variety of possible threats, to develop a set of joint strategies. Deterrence is just a part of the response. Getting out of the confrontation implies building trust, arms control, and disarmament – on a truly global scale, rather than merely because of Russia.

However, as the expert has also noted, one possible measure to restore the balance should not be the deployment of American weapons access Central Europe, e.g. in Poland, because this would result in an imminent demise of the NATO–Russia Founding Act, and on this account “Germany’s impact on NATO’s nuclear strategy would become unquestionably weaker. I am unable to tell in what way this could possibly help to safeguard Europe’s security in the long run”<sup>68</sup>.

On the eve of the US termination of the Treaty, Sigmar Gabriel formulated an acute diagnosis of the problem, arguing that the two super-powers did not care about continuing the Treaty, despite their intentions to oppose Chinese medium-range missile armaments, not covered by any disarmament regulation. By equating Russia with the US, he believed that “Germany was actually dealing with two nuclear super-powers for which Europe was clearly of secondary importance”. S. Gabriel thought that the Central European states would rather opt for the US than for Germany, or France.

<sup>66</sup> SPD strebt neuen Umgang mit Russland an, [www.tagesschau.de/inland/spd-russlandpolitik-101.html](http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/spd-russlandpolitik-101.html) [accessed: 7.02.2019]

<sup>67</sup> ‘US-Raketen in Deutschland? – SPD warnt vor neuem Wettrüsten’, *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 19.11.2018, [www.haz.de](http://www.haz.de) [accessed: 2.02.2019].

<sup>68</sup> L. Haferkamp, ‘SPD: Russland bricht den INF-Vertrag’, *Vorwaerts*, 23.01.2019, [www.vorwaerts.de](http://www.vorwaerts.de) [accessed: 2.02.2019].

NATO's Secretary General Stoltenberg unilaterally supported the US, and the allegations that Russia had breached the Treaty, included in documents of NATO member states, left a number of serious issues without an answer. Gabriel's proposal consisted of two elements. First, it concerned the EU's involvement in the dispute.

Due to Eastern Europeans' historical doubts of whether the West was ready to succour in case of trouble, one of the first steps would be to take over a lot more responsibility for the military security of these states. This, in turn, implies larger deployment of European conventional tactical formations across Eastern Europe. Such strengthening of defence capabilities in Eastern Europe has to be accompanied by dialogue and negotiations on armament controls and disarmament between Europe and Russia, including the nuclear area. Second, Gabriel suggested restoring the verification system as part of the Special Verification Commission, and abiding by the principle of reciprocity related to inspections of the Russian SSC-8 missiles and American installations in Romania. The task set for Europe and Germany as part of NATO, in turn, would be to convince the Americans to approve this solution. It should also include France and the UK. The overriding objective of this project would be to return to the reliable architecture of European security, and one of the integral components of this process ought to be solving the conflict in Ukraine. To do this, however, Gabriel argued, it would be of key importance to appoint the so-called "Blue Helmets" mission under the aegis of the UN, which would eventually lead to an armistice and withdrawal of heavy weaponry from eastern Ukraine<sup>69</sup>.

## Above political divisions: a proposal of the coalition, or the government?

The top politicians of the ruling coalition strove to halt the risk of a new nuclear arms race in Europe. Security policy experts of both parties – Roderich Kiesewetter, head of the CDU/CSU representation at the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Bundestag, and SPD Deputy Chair Rolf Mützenich – in independent statements given on 3 February 2019 as presented by the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung", the Sunday edition of a German broadsheet daily, urged Moscow to shift its new SSC-8 ground-launched cruise missiles towards the east – beyond the Ural Mountains – so that Europe would be outside its reach. According to Kiesewetter, this was supposed to be accompanied by the implementation of a strict verification regime. R. Mützenich, in turn, believed that was concerned about its capability to carry out a so-called second strike, given the increasingly more dense US and NATO missile defence system. The proposal voiced by German politicians was aimed at restoring an atmosphere of trust before potential negotiations. The Americans, in return, would have to agree for inspections of intercepting missile launchers deployed in Romania. By acting this way, Russia should be more inclined to return to the negotiating table.

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<sup>69</sup> S. Gabriel, 'Eine neue Zeitrechnung beginnt', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 30.01.2019.

Although there was general agreement among the parties on this direct appeal issued at Russia, there was also a major divergence concerning the way in which Germany should behave in case of any signs of a lack of compromise on the part of Russia<sup>70</sup>. Indeed, the SPD rejected the possibility for NATO to strike a balance by pursuing a military build-up, or deploying American medium-range missiles across Europe. As for the CDU/CSU, the situation was quite different, as its leading experts and politicians, such as Kiesewetter, Wadepfuhl and Hardt articulated the significance of the principle of deterrence and believed that the rearmament option could not be ruled out in advance. As for the backup option, which consisted in deploying American cruising missiles on submarines, SPD representative Muetzenich believed that in Europe there was no "missile gap". He referred to the decision by the US administration related to equipping submarines with nuclear missiles and admitted that the US was already in possession of an adequate potential that was able to maintain the balance of power. This, however, was regarded by the Christian Democrats as an insufficient instrument of deterrence. At this point, one has to note that the already mentioned recommendation put forward by S. Gabriel concerning the deployment of "European" conventional warfare was a certain novelty within the stance of the SPD, although this idea had a certain aspect in it that contested the Transatlantic relations, and at least the potential enhanced involvement of the US in NATO's eastern flank<sup>71</sup>.

Regardless of the proposals offered by the two experts, a dispute is taking place within the coalition over the adequate reaction to Russia. The post-pacifistic current, despite declaring a new course against Russia, keeps playing a major role in the SPD. Lars Klingbeil, SPD Secretary General, has criticised the above mentioned statement made by Wadepfuhl warning Minister Maas against premature relinquishing of the deployment of American weapons in Germany, and First Minister of Lower Saxony Stephan Weil appealed publicly to prevent new rearmaments, and to restore a peace movement<sup>72</sup>. This, in turn, triggered an acute reaction of CDU Secretary General Paul Ziemiak, who accused leading SPD politicians of being naive: "w[ith their statements, Social-Democrats Lars Klingbeil and Stephan Weil foment distrust towards NATO and act to the benefit of Vladimir Putin"<sup>73</sup>.

## Conclusions

Given its geostrategic location at the heart of Europe, its role as a unifying force of the Transatlantic system and its major military potential, as well as its persuasive potential towards Russia, Germany remains a key player in the dispute that is arising aimed at restoring strategic balance in Europe. "What would great strategist Putin

<sup>70</sup> 'Auf die andere Seite des Urals', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, 3.02.2019.

<sup>71</sup> The "European" aspect of allied defence has already come up in the above quoted statement made by W. Ischinger.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *Abgeordnete wollen INF-Vertrag retten*, [www.tagesschau.de/ausland/inf-vertrag-russland-103.html](http://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/inf-vertrag-russland-103.html) [accessed: 7.02.2019]

<sup>73</sup> 'CDU-Generalsekretär Ziemiak: SPD spielt Putin in die Hände', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3.02.2019, [www.faznet](http://www.faznet) [accessed: 7.02.2019].

do if he were in Western Europe's shoes?" wondered Stefan Cornelius, a close observer of German policy. "Well, he would shift EU soldiers (rather than NATO armed forces) to the Baltic states, he would reduce trade and put a halt to Nord Stream 2. Only then would he move on to talk"<sup>74</sup>. Having said this, the issue of whether Germany is not ready to internalise such a realistic strategy that rests explicitly on the historic twofold cold-war-era NATO strategy, based on the principle of deterrence and dialogue, still remains open.

Looking at the various statements and views voiced by the ruling coalition parties, one needs to note that first, there was, apparently a sense of unanimity on the fact that Russia was the sole culprit that was to blame for breaching the Treaty, although several SPD politicians held that the US did not care enough to maintain the Treaty alive either, given the potential threat posed by Chinese medium-range missiles, and – what is more – that the two super-powers were responsible for the crisis. Second, inside the parties of the ruling coalition, one could notice a lack of agreement as to the ways of taking appropriate measures in response to the deployment of Russian medium-range missiles. The basic allied option, consisting in rearming NATO in similar medium-range systems was challenged by the SPD. One of the characteristic features was SPD representatives' strong attachment to treating a potential decision of NATO to launch a military build-up scheme as a response to the deployment of Russian missiles as some kind of a taboo. This was clearly the result of a dominating conviction that the axiom of German or NATO security policy towards Russia should rely on endless dialogue beyond the principle of deterrence. The SPD message, ruling out NATO's rearmament and openly addressing the vision the Europe's strategic autonomy, started to provoke controversies within the ruling coalition. On the other hand, the Christian Democrats took a highly critical stance in advance that ruled out the deployment of American missiles in Europe, a lot more than it propagated this option itself. In the aggregate, this could prove the volatility of the Transatlantic orientation in the German political establishment and left a number of question marks concerning the government's readiness to support a possible decision by NATO to proceed with military build-up. On both sides of the dispute, fears were also arising that Donald Trump's policy would be the major factor that could trigger break-up tendencies within the Alliance, once the deployment of American medium-range nuclear missiles took place on NATO's eastern flank beyond the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty. Yet, no-one realised that this could possibly happen due to Germany's lack of consent to a potential decision made by NATO to launch a military build-up scheme.

Third, one can cautiously admit that in spite of the reluctance to the deployment of new American missiles as a consequence of a potential NATO decision, there are voices within the ruling coalition parties and the expert groups to a larger (CDU/CSU: R. Kiesewetter) and smaller (SPD: S. Gabriel) extent fostering the development of the option that consists in enhancing defensive capabilities by extending the NATO anti-missile systems, launching cruising missiles on sea or air platforms, or strengthening the eastern flank with the help of conventional forces. This option – standing

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<sup>74</sup> S. Kornelius, 'Höchste Zeit für Realismus', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 4.02.2019.

in opposition to a possible decision of NATO to deploy new nuclear weapons across Europe – was put forward by NATO's Secretary General J. Stoltenberg following the US termination of the INF Treaty on 1 February 2019<sup>75</sup>.

From the German point of view, in the face of several doubts concerning Russia's threat and stability of US policy for Europe, withdrawing support for deterrence option, which along with the dialogue option was the applicable formula of NATO's strategy towards Russia set at the Warsaw summit in 2016, would be pointless. Acceptance for the element of deterrence and defence is limited within the German political class and remains the object of internal disputes that could eventually weaken NATO. For Germany, one should rather expect diplomatic attempts at restoring dialogue with Russia and, at the same time, at convincing the Americans to pursue a general agreement on renegotiating the Treaty. In statements made by a variety of representatives of political parties, one can clearly see some hope for a return to compliance with the provisions of the Treaty, restoring the verification regime, or launching new solutions in this respect; not to mention the hope that it will be possible to carry out the German disarmament initiative at the UN forum. The Merkel government firmly believes that, first of all, the initiative to resolve the crisis is on the part of the Russians, who should create absolute transparency related to its missiles, rather than just a possibility of inspecting them; second, one should include the issue of medium-range missiles in the attempts made to attain a broader disarmament agreement with the participation of the US and Russia – one that would correspond to state-of-the-art armament technologies. By doing so, Germany intends to play the role of organiser. The line of Russian argumentation may have implications for Germany and the government of the great coalition, since the notion of US responsibility seems to be hitting fertile ground in the case of the SPD, which proves to be highly concessive towards Russia, and at the same a pacifist attitude to armaments in connection with a general reluctance towards President Trump. One can risk admitting with a high probability that the government does not want a debate on rearmament, especially the Social Democrats, given its unpredictable effects for the political stability of Germany and the coherence of the Alliance. This factor does not make it easier for Maas to represent a uniform stance of the government, but, indeed, it helps to explain its ongoing diplomatic attempts to save the Treaty<sup>76</sup>.

On the other hand, from the point of view of the US, in order to play a more active role in a potential burying of the hatchet or finding another indirect solution, Germany's assets are not so significant. They are particularly weakened by

<sup>75</sup> See J. Stoltenberg's statement made at a press conference held on 12.02.2019 dedicated to NATO's response to the threat posed by Russian missiles: "Any steps we take will be coordinated, measured and defensive," Stoltenberg said during a press conference in Brussels on NATO's response, adding that "we do not intend to deploy new ground-based nuclear missiles in Europe". That leaves room for conventional ground-based weapons, as well as sea-based nuclear missiles, and would thus at least spare European countries an otherwise foreseeable split between those begging for new American land-based nuclear weapons and those uncomfortable having them on their soil". Quoted after: "No new nuclear arms in Europe", POLITICO Brussels Playbook, by F. Eder with Z. Sheftalovich, 13.02.2019, [www.politico.eu](http://www.politico.eu).

<sup>76</sup> K.-D. Frankenberger, 'Beim Sicherheitspartner', FAZ, 25.01.2019.

Germany's low military expenditure, and the potential lack of coherence within the ruling coalition as to the future of Transatlantic relations, combined with an unclear attitude of the coalition to the so-called strategic autonomy, i.e. the EU's independent actions taken based on the French and German axis. These issues cannot be considered without making reference to the Transatlantic dispute over trade, and several discrepancies on Iran.

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## *Niemcy wobec wypowiedzenia traktatu INF przez USA* *Streszczenie*

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie stanowiska Niemiec na decyzję prezydenta Donalda Trumpa z 1 lutego 2019 r. o wycofaniu się przez Stany Zjednoczone z traktatu INF w związku z jego naruszaniem przez Rosję. Chodzi o rozpatrzenie, jakie konsekwencje mogą wynikać dla niemieckiej polityki bezpieczeństwa. Niemcy ze względu na położenie geostrategiczne w środku Europy, swoją polityczną rolę jako zwornika układu

transatlantyckiego oraz potencjał wojskowy są ważnym uczestnikiem sporu z Rosją dotyczącego przywrócenia równowagi w zakresie broni nuklearnej średniego zasięgu w Europie. Rząd Merkel uważa, że inicjatywa na rzecz zażegnania kryzysu leży po stronie Rosji. Niemcy będą podejmować dyplomatyczne próby przywrócenia dialogu z Rosją i jednocześnie przekonywać USA do szukania porozumienia w sprawie renegotjowania traktatu. Rząd Merkel zamierza włączyć sprawę rakiet średniego zasięgu do rozmów na temat szerszego porozumienia rozbrojeniowego z udziałem USA i Rosji, ale także Chin. Akceptacja dla stacjonowania amerykańskich rakiet jest ograniczona w niemieckiej klasie politycznej i pozostaje przedmiotem wewnętrznego sporu, który może osłabić także NATO.

**Słowa kluczowe:** traktat INF, niemiecka polityka bezpieczeństwa, niemieckie partie polityczne

## *Germany's Stance on the Termination of the INF Treaty by the US*

### *Abstract*

This paper aims to discuss Germany's stance on the decision taken by US President Donald Trump on 1 February 2019 to withdraw from the INF Treaty, given Russia's non-compliance with its provisions. It looks at the numerous consequences that may result for the German security policy. Given its geostrategic position at the heart of Europe, the political role of Germany – the cornerstone of the transatlantic system and military potential – makes the country an important player in the dispute with Russia regarding the restoration of the balance in medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe. The Merkel government believes that the initiative to overcome the crisis lies with Russia. Germany will undertake diplomatic attempts to restore dialogue with Russia and at the same time persuade the US to seek agreement on the renegotiation of the treaty. The Merkel government intends to include the issue of medium-range missiles in talks on a wider disarmament agreement with the US and Russia, but also China. Approval for deployment of American missiles is limited in the German political class and remains the subject of internal disputes, which may eventually weaken NATO.

**Key words:** INF Treaty, German security policy, German political parties

## *Deutschland angesichts der Kündigung des INF-Abkommens durch die USA*

### *Kurzfassung*

Der Beitrag hat zum Ziel die Darstellung der deutschen Position zum Entschluss von US-Präsident Donald Trump vom 1. Februar 2019 über den Rückzug der USA vom INF-Abkommen infolge seiner Verletzung durch Russland. Es geht um die Erörterung, welche Konsequenzen sich daraus für die deutsche Sicherheitspolitik ergeben können. Deutschland ist hinsichtlich der geostrategischen Lage in Mitteleuropa, seiner politischen Rolle in der Nordatlantischen Allianz, wie auch seines Militärpotentials ein wichtiger Akteur im Konflikt mit Russland. Merkels Regierung findet, dass die Initiative für die Abwendung der Krise bei Russland liegt. Deutschland ist aber bereit, den Dialog mit Russland wiederherzustellen und möchte gleichzeitig die USA von den eventuellen Neuverhandlungen des Abkommens im breiteren Kontext zu überzeugen. Merkels Regierung ist daran interessiert, dass die Frage der Mittelstreckenwaffen in die Gespräche über weiteres

Abrüstungsabkommen mit der Teilnahme der USA, Russland, und auch China aufgenommen werden sollte. Die Akzeptanz für die Stationierung der amerikanischen Raketen ist in der deutschen politischen Klasse beschränkt und wird zum Objekt der inneren Streitigkeiten, die auch NATO unterminieren könnten.

**Schlüsselwörter:** INF Abkommen, deutsche Sicherheitspolitik, deutsche politische Parteien

### *Германия и проблема выхода США из Договора о ликвидации ракет средней и меньшей дальности* *Резюме*

В статье представлена позиция Германии вызванная решением президента Дональда Трампа от 1 февраля 2019 г. о выходе США из Договора о ликвидации ракет средней и меньшей дальности, в связи с нарушениями этого договора Россией. Рассмотрены возможные последствия этого решения для немецкой политики безопасности. Германия, ввиду ее геостратегического положения в центре Европы, политической роли в трансатлантической системе безопасности и военного потенциала, является важным участником переговоров с Россией, касающихся восстановления равновесия ядерного вооружения средней дальности в Европе. Правительство Ангелы Меркель считает, что инициатива по урегулированию кризиса находится в руках России. Германия будет предпринимать дипломатические попытки восстановления диалога с Россией и одновременно убеждать США найти консенсус в вопросе восстановления действия договора. Правительство Меркель намерено включить проблему ракет средней дальности в переговоры о разоружении с участием США, России и Китая. Вопросы базирования американских ракет на территории Германии, остаются предметом внутреннего спора немецких политиков, который может ослабить НАТО.

**Ключевые слова:** Договор о ликвидации ракет средней и меньшей дальности, немецкая политика безопасности, немецкие политические партии