



Russia, China and the INF Treaty

OE Watch Commentary: There has been considerable speculation over the past couple of months regarding the future of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with the Kremlin leadership claiming that Russia remains in compliance. In the accompanying excerpt from the moderate daily, *Vedomosti*, a Russian expert asserts that Chinese developments in Intermediate-Range missiles could be a contributing factor of the treaty's demise.

The article begins by tracing the development of the Chinese missile and nuclear programs, reminding readers that Russia's relations with the PRC have not always been so cordial. Indeed, as the author points out, "it was the Chinese missile threat that prompted Moscow to deploy the A-35 missile defense system which was very expensive but was also limited by the 1972 ABM Treaty." The author commends Beijing's nuclear and missile advances, claiming that they exemplify the Chinese "common trait... (of) long-term concentration of considerable resources for the achievement of a limited set of priority objectives under the highest leadership's direct control."

While at first the Chinese replicated Soviet missiles, by the early 1970s they "were able to design and produce increasingly sophisticated ballistic missiles which did not have direct Soviet counterparts." Instead of a policy of massive retaliation, the author notes that "China developed its missile forces exclusively for the purpose of exercising the so-called minimal nuclear deterrence." This strategy was further refined in the early 1990s when the Chinese began developing highly accurate conventional ballistic missiles "which made it possible to cancel out the technological advantage of a more developed state."

The author describes the impressive inventory of the Chinese missile program, pointing out that given "the special role of the short and medium-range ballistic missiles in China's military potential and the huge investment in their development, the PRC is very unlikely to engage in serious talks on the reduction and especially elimination of this class of weapons." The author concludes by asserting that "Russia does not have any hope of winning any scenario of a major conventional armed conflict with the PRC in the Far East," and that therefore, the "conflict will almost inevitably escalate and turn nuclear in the very first days of a war." Even though relations today with China are good, should the INF Treaty collapse, the Kremlin will likely orient its future intermediate-range missiles toward the west and south. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Considering the special role of the short and medium-range ballistic missiles in China’s military potential and the huge investment in their development, the PRC is very unlikely to engage in serious talks on the reduction and especially elimination of this class of weapons.”

Source: Vasiliy Kashin, "Как Китай развалил договор о ракетах средней и меньшей дальности (How China Destroyed the INF Treaty)," *Vedomosti*, 19 November 2018. <https://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/articles/2018/11/19/786779-dogovor-o-raketah>

The United States has cited violations by Russia as the formal reason for its decision to withdraw from the INF Treaty. At the same time, even its officials have made no secret of the fact that China, which is not a party to the treaty, is at least as serious a source of concern....

... It was the Chinese missile threat that prompted Moscow to deploy the A-35 missile defense system which was very expensive but was also limited by the 1972 ABM Treaty.... China made the political decision to create its own nuclear weapons as early as 1955 and the famous Two Bombs, One Satellite program appeared in 1958. There were plans to produce nuclear and thermonuclear bombs and to put [China's] own satellite into orbit around Earth in the next 10 years....

The nuclear missile project became an example for all subsequent Chinese programs of technological breakthroughs, including those that are being implemented now.... Their common trait is long-term concentration of considerable resources for the achievement of a limited set of priority objectives under the highest leadership's direct control.

China relied on Soviet aid and Soviet technologies when it began creating its own ballistic missiles. The first mass-produced missile Dongfeng-2 was a copy of the Soviet medium-range missile R-5 designed by Sergey Korolev. However, when a rift with the Soviet Union occurred in subsequent years, the Chinese were able to design and produce increasingly sophisticated ballistic missiles which did not have direct Soviet counterparts....

...For a long period of time, China developed its missile forces exclusively for the purpose of exercising the so-called minimal nuclear deterrence.... However, in the early 1990s, following the United States' routing of Iraq during Operation Desert Storm, the Chinese leadership revised completely the roles of different weapons systems. During that conflict, ballistic missiles turned out to be among the few means which made it possible to cancel out the technological advantage of a more developed state.

In the 1990s, China began mass deployment on conventional variants of several types of tactical ballistic missiles.... The number of these relatively simple and mass-produced missiles is quite large as there are likely to be around 2,000 of them.

...Considering the special role of the short and medium-range ballistic missiles in China's military potential and the huge investment in their development, the PRC is very unlikely to engage in serious talks on the reduction and especially elimination of this class of weapons.

Unlike the United States, Russia does not have any hope of winning any scenario of a major conventional armed conflict with the PRC in the Far East.... For this reason, conflict will almost inevitably escalate and turn nuclear in the very first days of a war.