

### The INF-Treaty of 1987 – A Re-Appraisal

**Veranstalter:** Berlin Center for Cold War Studies; Institute for Contemporary History, Munich – Berlin (IfZ); University of Mannheim; German Foundation for Peace Research; Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt Foundation; Humboldt University, Berlin  
**Datum, Ort:** 30.11.2017–02.12.2017, Berlin  
**Bericht von:** Cedric Bierganns, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn

The international conference combined groundbreaking research and practical expertise to discuss a reappraisal of the INF Treaty signed on December 8, 1987. With the first disarmament treaty of the nuclear age both Reagan and Gorbachev agreed to scrap their intermediate- and shorter-range missile arsenals. Today, on its 30th anniversary, the INF Treaty is subject of controversy again between Russia and the US.

Day one of the conference focused on turning points until 1985. In his opening talk BERND GREINER (Berlin Center for Cold War Studies) argued that arms control and disarmament were matters of trust and that nuclear weapons, the currency of prestige and global power, constantly contributed to an arms race that fed on distrust. He explained that nuclear weapons set limits to the Cold War but also kept it alive. This particularly applied to the 1980s, when technological progress, the Reagan administration's belligerent rhetoric, national security planning, and American PSYOPs created a twilight zone of nuclear war.

LEOPOLDO NUTI (Roma Tre University) questioned the common narrative of challenge and response that finally led to the Double-Track Decision in 1979. Instead, he illustrated that NATO discussed the modernization of its LRTNF already well before the Soviet SS-20 arrived. Nuti called for a more nuanced periodization that pays attention to non-state actors and the transnational flow of ideas. He pointed out that even at the peak of détente, there were forces which remained highly critical about coexistence. Nuti advocated to locate our understanding of the crisis in the broader context of the evolution of the international system by applying a broader variety

of historical approaches.

BETH A. FISCHER (University of Toronto) argued that Ronald Reagan detested nuclear weapons due to his deeply held moral convictions, which ultimately led to the „Reagan Reversal“. She explained how Reagan introduced the largest peace-time military build in US history but also concluded the most comprehensive arms control treaty. Contrary to his closest advisors, Reagan rejected „mutual assured destruction“ and wanted to replace it with „mutually assured survival“. According to this interpretation, Reagan introduced SDI in the hope that a defensive system would make nuclear weapons useless. Fisher's remarks helped to explain Reagan's metamorphosis from hawk to dove – an image that many Europeans never really accepted.

Quoting from recently declassified documents TOM BLANTON (National Security Archive, Washington DC) demonstrated that the Kremlin's nuclear policy had already changed (but not surfaced) before Gorbachev came to power in March 1985. As early as the mid-1970s, Marshall Akhromeyev, Chief of the General Staff, and senior diplomat Giorgi Kornienko had developed a nuclear abolition program because they realized that a nuclear war in Europe would negate the Soviet conventional forces advantage over NATO. Gorbachev finally announced the proposal in January 1986 right after he got an acknowledgement from Reagan that a nuclear war could not be won and should never be fought.

A public panel discussion at Humboldt University dealt with the highly critical future of the INF Treaty. Given the recent tensions between the US and Russia, ANDREAS WIRSCHING (Institute for Contemporary History, Munich), OLIVER MEIER (German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin), and OTFRIED NASSAUER (Berlin Information-Center for Transatlantic Security) identified a trend from „denuclearization to renuclearization“. The vast progress in missile technology was discussed as well as the future of START. Ambassador SUSANNE BAUMANN (Deputy Federal Government Commissioner for Disarmament and Arms Control) outlined the Federal Government's approach to arms control. Wirsching finally outlined three unique key factors that contribut-

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ed to the historic success of the INF Treaty: First, the USSR's economic downturn; second, the relationship of trust between Reagan and Gorbachev and; third, the impact of the peace movement that nowadays barely exists.

The second day started with a panel on the road from Reykjavik to the Washington Summit. RONALD J. GRANIERI (Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia) introduced a „post-revisionist“ perspective and emphasized the continuity in Reagan's commitment to disarmament. For Reagan, long-held beliefs and political opportunities, military buildup and arms control, always were inextricably intertwined. In this light, the „zero option“ in November 1981 was both a bona fide offer and a clever dodge to avoid negotiations. Likewise, the INF Treaty was a natural culmination of the Reagan defense buildup. Reagan's complexity had been greatly misunderstood among scholars, who, depending on their political affiliation, have only seen the Reagan they wanted to see.

SVETLANA SAVRANSKAYA (National Security Archive, Washington DC) illustrated the early intellectual and political evolution of Gorbachev's views on arms control and US-Soviet relations. Gorbachev's conviction of Reagan's peaceful intentions, the support of Marshal Sergey Akhromeyev, chief of the Soviet General Staff, and the Chernobyl catastrophe finally opened the road for a breakthrough in arms control. This was anything but certain, given the fact that Gorbachev's concessions to the White House gradually cost him credibility among Soviet military hardliners.

The following section highlighted the socio-political dynamics of the peace protests. CLAUDIA KEMPER (Hamburg Institute for Social Research) focused on the heterogeneous American peace movement. By adopting three frames of reference she explained how peace groups gathered around the freeze movement that served as an important synthesis of ideas, critique and fear. Kemper illustrated that scientists, business people, and church groups contributed to the freeze movement and outlined that public awareness was vital to their cause. The INF Treaty was no deathblow for the peace movement which after 1987 continued to lobby for nuclear non-

proliferation.

PHILIPP GASSERT (University of Mannheim) analyzed how the INF Treaty affected the West German domestic scene and vice versa. He argued that internal pressure from Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher (FDP) and German public opinion, which had overcome Soviet enemy stereotypes, can explain Helmut Kohl's acceptance of the „double-zero option“ in August 26. Even though the peace movement failed on a short-time basis, it had a long-lasting impact on the political culture of West Germany. The INF Treaty created fractures in Kohl's government but his politics were in sync with public opinion which regarded the Washington Summit rather a consolidation of the post-WW2 order than the opening gambit in overcoming the Cold War.

TAPIO JUNTUNEN (University of Tampere) picked up the peace movement in Scandinavia. Most prominent among the initiatives that culminated between 1980 and 1983 was the petition to establish a Nordic nuclear-weapon-free-zone (NNFZ) which has been severely understudied in Cold War historiography. Juntunen illustrated how labor parties in Scandinavia started to push the NNFZ agenda that ultimately contributed to a long-term security dialogue between Nordic countries. While majorities in Scandinavia welcomed the INF treaty as a positive first step, some disarmament experts warned that it might refocus on nuclear deterrence policy in the Northern sea areas.

The next panel focused on the reactions of leading Western allies. OLIVER BARTON (UK Ministry of Defence, London) illustrated the mixed emotions of the Thatcher government. On the one hand, the INF Treaty was a vindication for Thatcher's support of Gorbachev's reforms, on the other hand, it removed weapon systems that had cost the Conservative party enormous political capital to deploy. The origins of Britain's mixed reactions went back to the „zero option“ in November 1981 which Thatcher supported upon the assumption that it would never be realized. For Britain, INF had always been more about maintaining Alliance solidarity. Later, Thatcher increasingly felt marginalized from the superpowers' negotiations. She warned of the dan-

ger posed by the USSR's remaining conventional threat and favored a modernization of SRINF.

CHRISTIAN WENKEL (Artois University, Arras) analyzed how the French road to the INF Treaty related to European integration. After November 1983, François Mitterrand considered himself as a bridgebuilder between East and West and embraced what Wenkel called a „comeback of French détente policy“. As for the French reactions to the INF Treaty, he distinguished between the mixed feelings in Quai d'Orsay and the press and the quite positive response of Mitterrand. He regarded the INF Treaty as a good kick-start and was lucky enough that it came just in time to ensure his reelection in 1988. To sum up, disarmament in the 1980s could be understood as a French way to solve the European question.

As for the Federal Republic, TIM GEIGER (Institute for Contemporary History, Berlin) reconstructed the Christian-liberal coalition's debate about the „double-zero option“ in 1987. Referring to West German inconsistencies, Geiger illustrated the CDU/CSU's concern that the US might sacrifice German interests in favor of an agreement among the superpowers. So far, Bonn had always pushed for serious arms control negotiations. Foreign Minister Genscher (FDP) finally took the offensive in mid-1987 and convinced Chancellor Kohl to include the Pershing IAs into the INF Treaty after the Soviets indicated that an agreement could fail over this issue. Geiger argued that arms control in 1987 triggered a process of rapprochement in Soviet–West German relations that ultimately helped to open a door for German reunification.

A final panel covered the reactions of the Eastern allies. As for Poland, WANDA JARZĄBEK (Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw) emphasized that sympathies among public opinion grew with Gorbachev's nuclear disarmament proposals while propaganda continued to portray NATO as warmonger. Polish elites had severe doubts whether Gorbachev would prevail against the Politburo's hardliners. Independent peace initiatives such as the Jaruzelski Plan of May 1987 followed Gorbachev's basic designs. All in all, the Polish role could be described as a passive

bystander, who welcomed the INF Treaty for economic relief.

HERMANN WENTKER (Institute for Contemporary History, Berlin) argued that Honecker supported the Soviet zero option for solidarity and image reasons. At the same time, he managed a dangerous balancing act regarding Gorbachev's reform policy that ultimately undermined the very existence of the East German state. Honecker's influence on Bonn's decision making was minimal and all attempts to prove otherwise were propaganda. According to Stasi reports, the East German public vehemently welcomed the INF Treaty – many in the hope for improvements in their own lives. Overall, it became obvious that the population preferred Gorbachev as a reformer to Gorbachev as a peacemaker.

The third day focused on the practical implementation of the INF Treaty and its follow-up. WILLIAM ALBERQUE (NATO, Brussels) described the underexplored dismantling of the missiles. Starting with the US-Soviet „Technical Talks“ in 1988, he illustrated how the geographic scope of the treaty posed a special challenge in logistics to the newly founded On-Site Inspection Agency. In Soviet territory there were 130 elimination sites that could only be entered through a few port-of-entry points. As for verification issues it became obvious that inspection procedures were complicated by site size, operations tempo, monitoring, and short-notice inspections.

OLIVER BANGE (University of Mannheim) analyzed how the INF Treaty affected the two Germanies and the deterrence gap. He argued that during site inspections East German military experts gained valuable insights into Soviet nuclear technology that ultimately formed a basis for the negotiations on Soviet troop withdrawals within the context of German reunification. Bange illustrated the strategic implications of the remaining tactical nuclear weapons and ICBMs that finally were covered by the START Treaty in 1991. Compared to the total number of the superpowers' warheads, arms control in the 1980s had only a marginal impact. Today, Russia circumvents the INF Treaty by deploying sea-launched KALIBR-NK missiles off the Kaliningrad coast.

A final summary concluded that the success

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of the INF Treaty back then was not as certain as it seemed today. It became obvious that nuclear fears have always been around, but at some high points during the Cold War they gained more momentum. Finally, it was made clear that trust-building measures in the late 1980s described volatile moments and that much more research needs to be done to find out how trust was institutionalized during the Cold War.

Overall, the stimulating conference served as a kick-start to discuss innovative ideas and modified views on the INF Treaty. It revealed many recently declassified documents, defined windows of opportunity for further research and reflected on the future of arms control and disarmament.

### **Conference Overview:**

*Welcome and opening talk*

*Welcome address*

WOLFRAM HOPPENSTEDT (Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt Foundation, Berlin)

*The INF Treaty in Perspective*

BERND GREINER (Berlin Center for Cold War Studies)

*I. Turning Points until 1985*

LEOPOLDO NUTI (Roma Tre University): At the Nadir: The Breakdown of the Geneva Talks and the Deployment of Missiles in East and West, 1979–1983

BETH A. FISCHER (University of Toronto): Revisiting the Reagan Reversal: US Soviet Policy, 1984–1986

TOM BLANTON (National Security Archive, Washington DC): Turn of the tide: Gorbachev and the Change in the USSR's Nuclear Policy, 1984/5-1986

*Public Panel Discussion: Der INF-Vertrag von 1987: Warum Abrüstung kein Hirngespinnst ist*

ANDREAS WIRSCHING (Institute for Contemporary History, Munich)

OLIVER MEIER (German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin)

OTFRIED NASSAUER (Berlin Information-Center for Transatlantic Security)

SUSANNE BAUMANN (Deputy Federal Government Commissioner for Disarmament

and Arms Control)

*II. Breakthrough to Disarmament: From Reykjavik to Washington, 1986–1987*

RONALD J. GRANIERI (Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia): The American Road to INF, 1986–87

SVETLANA SAVRANSKAYA (National Security Archive, Washington DC): The Soviet Road to INF, 1986–87

*III. Socio-Political Dynamics, Peace Protests and Public Debates*

CLAUDIA KEMPER (University of Gießen/Hamburg Institute for Social Research): The United States of America

PHILIPP GASSERT (University of Mannheim): West German Society, the INF Treaty, and the Popular Dynamics of Peace

TAPIO JUNTUNEN (University of Tampere): „We just got to keep harping on about it.“ The INF Treaty in the Nordic Countries

*IV. Reactions of the Western Allies*

OLIVER BARTON (UK Ministry of Defence, London): „Special no more?“ Britain and the INF Treaty

CHRISTIAN WENKEL (Artois University, Arras): Ostpolitik à la française? France and the INF Treaty

TIM GEIGER (Institute for Contemporary History, Berlin): The Controversy Surrounding the Double-Zero Option: The Federal Republic of Germany and the INF Treaty

*V. Reactions of the Eastern Allies*

WANDA JARZĄBEK (Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw): Poland and the INF Treaty

HERMANN WENTKER (Institute for Contemporary History, Berlin): The GDR, Gorbachev, and the INF Treaty

*VI. Realization of the Treaty*

WILLIAM ALBERQUE (NATO, Brussels): Implementing the Treaty, Dismantling the Missiles: When, Where and How?

OLIVER BANGE (University of Mannheim): „The Left-Overs“: From INF to START and CSE

*Final Discussion*

PHILIPP GASSERT (University of Mannheim)

TIM GEIGER (Institute for Contemporary History, Berlin)

BERND GREINER (Berlin Center for Cold War Studies)

HERMANN WENTKER (Institute for Contemporary History, Berlin)

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