

The Munich Security Report: Once Again, No Solution to Arms-control Issues

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On the eve of the annual Munich Security Conference, which will be held this year from February 16-18, its organizers have published the traditional Munich Security Report under the very alarmist title: "[To the Brink – and Back?](#)" The document was prepared based on studies conducted by a large number of analysts from well-known international research institutions.

According to the chairman of the conference, the German diplomat [Wolfgang Ischinger](#), over the past year the world has come too close to the brink of significant conflict, which apparently explains the first part of the report's title. Some current events cited as examples are the precipitous decline in US-North Korean relations and the ongoing friction between NATO and Russia, as well as such "problems" as climate change and cybersecurity.

Yet only four of the 88 pages of the report are devoted to the absolutely critical agenda of reducing and controlling nuclear weapons.

The authors of the document welcome the fact that last year 122 states voted to adopt the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#). But yet they note that the process of forming an effective international legal framework to regulate arms control still lags behind the reality of the world today. The nuclear powers continue to update and expand their arsenals. What is being called the "second nuclear century" is arriving, characterized by the emergence of new players and a reduction in global stability overall. It has been speculated that under these circumstances, a military scenario may well be the likely outcome of the standoff between Washington and Pyongyang.

Thus it is extremely irresponsible of these international experts to have made such a superficial and inaccurate analysis of the issues surrounding the [INF Treaty](#), which was signed between the USSR and the United States in December 1987, as well as the Russian-American [New START](#) Treaty, which expires in three years. And distorting the true positions of the parties involved is not conducive to any potential resolution of the significant problems in regard to those agreements. Among other omissions, the report neglects to mention the fact that Russia has continued to abide by the requirements of the INF Treaty and has not produced or tested any land-based ballistic or cruise missiles of intermediate- or shorter-range (from 500 to 5,500 km), while the US has violated that agreement 93 times since 2001, by launching those banned missiles to use as targets in its tests of the American ABM system. Instead, the report offers a map showing the locations of non-existent Russian "intermediate- or shorter-range" ground-based missiles, in and around Europe.



The lack of attention the authors of the study have devoted to American air-borne tactical nuclear weapons on the European continent also raises serious concerns. Many of those carry far more powerful nuclear warheads than even some types of US strategic nuclear ballistic missiles. Nor is there any information on NATO's Baltic Air Policing operation, which has been patrolling Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian airspace since March 2004 with the use of aircraft carrying nuclear weapons.

The report notes the concern voiced by [Steven Pifer](#), the former US ambassador to Ukraine and current director of the [Brookings Institution](#)'s Arms Control Initiative, that any refusal to extend New START would lead to a situation in which there would be no international legal framework in place to regulate the US-Russian nuclear-arms relationship. But neither Pifer nor the authors of the report have anything to say about how that situation arose, nor do they offer any specific suggestions for how to escape it.

In fact, both the previous and the newest US administrations have done their utmost to prevent any agreement from being reached under the New START Treaty or its potential replacement.

The Pentagon continues to carry out sweeping upgrades of its strategic and tactical nuclear weapons. Huge amounts of money will be allocated for these purposes over the next 30 years – as much as \$1.2 trillion (not \$400 billion, as claimed in the report). As before, much of the US arsenal is being deployed as part of an “Enhanced Forward Presence” located inside the borders of many countries in the world. The new US Nuclear Posture Review 2018 loosens the criteria for the use of nuclear weapons, including as part of a preemptive strike. The current US military and political leadership has openly declared its readiness to employ what are known as low-yield nuclear warheads on an equal footing with its non-nuclear munitions. In addition, Washington intends to further expand the capabilities of its anti-missile system.

The report completely shuts its eyes to the issue of the uptick in conventional arms in European NATO countries, all while the alliance's military activity, according to its Secretary General [Jens Stoltenberg](#), has quintupled over the past few years. Two new transatlantic military command centers have been established. And eight new US military bases and six command posts have appeared in European countries, in addition to the ones already there.



In addition, the international analysts are obviously pulling out all the stops to make the threat posed by North Korea and its nuclear program look even more dire. In particular, the document claims that North Korea has been testing ballistic missiles of various ranges since 2002. Which makes the numbers cited – showing 16 launches in 2016 and 20 in 2017 – look quite intimidating. But nowhere does it mention that for a long time Pyongyang did not possess any missiles in this class, as the DPRK was a signatory to the [NPT](#) and was abiding by the [Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula](#), which it had signed with Seoul in 1992. It was not until the United States began threatening Pyongyang militarily and without justification, conducting large-scale military exercises in the immediate vicinity of the North Korean border, and demanding regime change that the North Koreans were forced to acquire nuclear status and develop long-range missile systems for their own self-defense.

So, as was also true of the similar report that was released last year, the military and

political sections of this document, drafted on the eve of the 2018 Munich Security Conference, contain both accurate judgments as well as, unfortunately, some dubious assessments. It ignores many urgent European and international security problems, although its mandate was to offer an objective evaluation of the military and political situation and to come up with broad, practical recommendations in this extremely important area.

It's quite alarming to think that the upcoming 54th Munich Security Conference will once again be unlikely to offer the world any effective arms-control solutions or the establishment of a security system that would be in the interests of all the countries involved.

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