

compliance, it had not proved possible to obtain assurance that all nuclear explosions would be detected with the use of remote instrumentation. Once this was recognized by the negotiating parties, it was judged necessary to provide for on-site inspections on the territory of a state suspected of violation. The number and modalities of such inspections, however, soon became subjects of acrimonious and inconclusive disputes.

Underlying the verification issue was the overriding mutual suspicion between the Soviet Union on the one hand and the United States and the United Kingdom on the other. In this period of the cold war, growing mistrust was undermining the very concept of a comprehensive test ban. From the defence community of the United States came the objection that a test ban would debilitate US nuclear strategy by preventing the development of new weapons, while the Soviet Union could exploit possible loopholes in verification arrangements to clandestinely proceed with weapon modernization. Soviet obstructiveness on the question of "intrusive" inspections, and the escalation of Soviet military preparedness following the shooting down in 1960 of the US U-2 reconnaissance aircraft over Soviet territory, strengthened the sceptics in their claim that the ban was being sought by Moscow for the sole purpose of arresting Western weapon modernization and consolidating its own position. In spite of repeatedly affirmed intentions to achieve a test ban, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union seemed at that time to be genuinely interested in such a ban. Both sides were conveniently hiding behind the problem of verification: one insisting on measures which were obviously unacceptable, and the other refusing to accept measures which were obviously indispensable.

Nevertheless, the test issue remained on the agenda of international arms control discussions. In 1980, the UK, the USA and the USSR, then engaged in trilateral talks, seemed to be closer to a test ban treaty than ever before. The negotiators were agreed on the following important points. The treaty, initially to be valid for three years, would prohibit any nuclear weapon test explosion in any environment; a moratorium on nuclear explosions for peaceful