

3.3.1 The Negotiation Process (Continued)

On the basis of this historical pattern, it can be plausibly asserted that it is unlikely that serious negotiations concerning outer space arms control will be conducted on a multilateral basis. This assessment is based on several factors.

- (a) The Superpowers are the primary owners and operators of satellite systems for military use.
- (b) Weapons for use in outer space are currently deployed and under development only by the Superpowers. This is likely to remain the case for the foreseeable future.
- (c) Because satellites and other space systems are considered to be national territory, and since space itself is considered to be international in nature, the involvement of other parties is legally unnecessary.
- (d) Satellites and weapons technologies and systems are considered by both Superpowers to be critical to their central strategic interest.
- (e) The sensitive nature of these systems in terms of technological characteristics and capabilities may be such as to make the Superpowers reluctant to disclose such information through a process of multilateral negotiation.
- (f) The issues confronting outer space arms control negotiations, ranging from differing interest to problems of definition and verification are sufficiently difficult so as to create a lack of interest in third party involvement, which might be seen as unhelpful interference.

Historical precedent would seem to support this assessment. The most significant restrictions on Superpower military activities in space are embedded in bilateral agreements which were negotiated between the two parties, in particular the ABM and SALT I and II accords. Restrictions contained in multilaterally arrived at agreements, such as the Outer Space Treaty, are widely considered to be less significant in terms of their consequences.