

Potential New Bodies, Agreements and Regimes—A UN Verification Agency

In principle, the ultimate degree of harmonization and synergy should be attained by establishing under the United Nations an overall body charged with preventive diplomacy, implementing arms control agreements, handling non-compliance, limiting proliferation, and monitoring peacekeeping. However, although these functions are gradually converging toward a common goal of co-operative security, they are sufficiently different, their state of development is so far incomplete, and national acceptance of such a degree of sharing responsibility for security is sufficiently inadequate for such an overall and universal integration to be practical at the present time.

Somewhat closer to earlier feasibility would be an International Verification Agency, confining its activity to verification, both for compliance with negotiated treaties and for the less stringent undertakings of confidence-building and non-proliferation measures, and perhaps with some functions in support of peace operations. Many of the objections to a multilateral system for verification would disappear if its responsibility were restricted to monitoring, and did not include legal or political assessment of compliance. But, discussing the prospects for a universal mechanism for verification, it is the judgment of Serge Sur that "the obstacles for a successful implementation of such a mechanism remain overwhelming, and are likely to do so for the foreseeable future."² In 1990 a UN Group of Experts was unable to come to agreement on specific recommendations for a general UN system, judging that it would be more practical to support agreement-specific and region-specific verification organizations.

Studies of possible United Nations activities in various specific types of verification have suggested a number of new bodies, regimes or agreements that would combine the efforts of many countries for the conduct or improvement of one aspect or application of verification.³ In addition to consideration of international verification systems, the 1990 UN study focused on potential developments in the fields of data collection capability, exchanges between experts and diplomats, the role of the Secretary-General in fact-finding and related activities, and the use of aircraft and satellites for verification purposes.

On a regional scale, there is some support for a European Verification Agency. If confined to the verification of arms control agreements covering conventional military forces in Europe, it could deal with the verification aspects of the CFE Treaty and the confidence-building measures in CFE, CSCE and Open Skies. It could be integrated into the CSCE Conflict Prevention Centre at Vienna. A prime task would be to harmonize the definitions and counting rules incorporated into these agreements.⁴

A BTWC Verification Regime

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, signed in 1972, contained no provisions for verification, but some for confidence-building (such as consultations, and exchanges of scientific information, materials and equipment). Subsequent arrangements have added to the scope of the CBMs, but, while verification has been studied by an ad hoc group of government experts (in an exercise labelled "VEREX"), no agreement for the establishment of a regime has yet been reached.⁵ The experience of the Chemical Weapons Convention has been very

56

² Serge Sur, "UN Activities in the Area of Verification of Arms Control and Disarmament," Chapter 33 in J. Altmann, H. van der Graaf, P.M. Lewis and P. Markl, eds., *Verification at Vienna: Monitoring Reductions of Conventional Armed Forces* (Philadelphia: Gordon & Breach, 1992), pp. 316. See also "International Verification Organizations: Proposals for General Overview Organizations," Chapter 6 in Ellis Morris, *International Verification Organizations* (Toronto: York University Centre for International and Strategic Studies, 1991), pp. 149-173.

³ It must be remembered, of course, that the IAEA and the UNSCOM organizations are UN organizations

with a considerable history of verification, the former for global nuclear non-proliferation, the latter specifically for verifying compliance with UN resolutions involving Iraq.

⁴ See Johan Tunberger, "Prospects for a Future All European Verification Agency," Chapter 32 in J. Altmann, H. van der Graaf, P.M. Lewis and P. Markl, eds., *Verification at Vienna: Monitoring Reductions of Conventional Armed Forces* (Philadelphia: Gordon & Breach, 1992), pp. 302-313.

⁵ There are plans to assemble a conference to examine the VEREX reports.

