

3.3.3 Multilateral Participation in Treaty Administration and Verification (Continued)

This question may in turn be broken into two logically distinct components. To what extent is it plausible to envisage a multilateral organization empowered to administer the treaty and discuss questions of compliance? And to what extent is it plausible to envisage such an organization possessing and operating verification assets such as Paksat for the purpose of ensuring compliance?

In considering these questions, the following points bear consideration. First, the interest of the Superpowers (and other states) in creating a multilateral verification capability is likely to be related to the degree of difficulty anticipated in verifying the provisions of the treaty, together with the potential significance of violations should they occur. Simply put, an agreement which is easy to verify using existing NTM's is unlikely to prompt interest in a multilateral verification capability. Similarly, an agreement which is unlikely to be violated (for reasons of prudence or military logic), or whose provisions are strategically inconsequential is equally unlikely to prompt such interest.

However, significant all encompassing outer space arms control agreements may be difficult to verify and the consequence of violations extremely serious. For example, the sensitivity of an ASAT arms control regime to small numbers of violations is considered to be high. A small number of concealed ASAT tests may be sufficient to develop confidence in an ASAT system adequate to contemplate operational deployment. Similarly, a relatively small number of deployed ASAT weapons may be sufficient to constitute a serious threat to key satellite communication, navigation, early warning and intelligence assets. The 'elasticity' which exists with regard to nuclear weapons, where a small number of warheads or launchers in excess of agreed limits would not create fundamental asymmetries or instabilities, does not exist with ASAT's.

In addition, it is widely agreed that a satisfactory verification regime for an outer space arms control agreement will be difficult to negotiate and to implement. This arises from the following factors: