

The Use of an International Organization

Although other international organizations engage in the verification of arms control agreements, the IAEA is probably the premier example of such a body. Its experience should reveal some of the implications of using such a body for verification tasks.

Standardization and Legitimization

An international verification organization can help to co-ordinate pre-existing safeguards systems, and to develop a standardized system. This has been the case with the IAEA. Co-ordination reduces the multiplicity of approaches, standards and mechanisms in safeguards systems. It eases the position both of recipients who may find themselves operating under two or more conflicting systems, and of third parties who will have to cope with assurances of differing types emanating from differing sources. For suppliers, it reduces the problem of undercutting by setting a floor for safeguards requirements. The uncertainty as well as the complexity generated by the existence of multiple systems is thus reduced.

As an aspect of standardization, we should note that, although the Agency may be requested to take on a safeguards function with respect to an interstate agreement, it does not seem obliged simply to apply whatever system the state parties require. Its safeguards agreements must be approved by its Board of Governors. It has tried to apply broadly similar guidelines, whether under INFCIRC/66 or INFCIRC/153, which helps the Agency avoid being saddled with a more varied set of safeguards systems. This matter is of importance for the Agency in that mere membership in it is neither sufficient nor necessary for the application of safeguards. Under a chemical weapons convention additional safeguards submissions, by non-members, should be considered. In such a situation, an approach by a chemical weapons verification agency similar to that of the IAEA would seem useful.

A standardized safeguards system developed and applied through an international organization representing both suppliers and recipients also may have greater legitimacy and political acceptability than a bilateral system. It can be a benchmark for acceptable practices, protecting the interests of both suppliers and recipients.

Verification by an international organization may well be more acceptable as an intrusion on state sovereignty than if it is conducted directly by another state. Not only might the organization be seen as neutral, but also safeguarded states may believe that their interests are better protected in an organization over which they have some influence than in a one-to-one relationship with a supplier.