

Verification in New Political-Cultural Contexts

To what extent are contemporary ideas about arms control, confidence building and the verification of agreements a creature of Northern European and North American thinking? If this thinking is significantly ethnocentric, what might happen if it is (mis)applied in parts of the world that do not share the same intellectual and cultural history, social norms or political culture? Does this mean that arms control and confidence building (and their verification measures) — or some types of them — are ethnocentric and thus not easily transportable to other regions with other cultures? What can be done about this, if it is true?

Could cultural differences lead to unanticipated problems — or opportunities — in the use of what are seen to be standard verification approaches in the Soviet-American and CSCE context? For instance, might the whole notion of challenge inspections create serious political difficulties in cultures that view trust, honour and truthfulness in non-Western ways? Would other dimensions of the verification enterprise meet similar unanticipated problems? Would the cultural characteristics of some regions create new opportunities for verification approaches that might not seem obvious to Western observers?

Where might arms control and confidence-building efforts be undertaken next in terms of geography? Are there conflict- and tension-prone regions of the world where existing or new arms control and confidence-building approaches might be applied? What are the new or non-traditional approaches? How might existing verification approaches serve those efforts? Would new verification approaches be necessary to complement region-specific arms control and confidence-building agreements? What new considerations might interfere with the smooth application of existing ideas and approaches?

The Legal Dimension

To what extent does the current generation of verification regimes for arms control and confidence-building create legal problems or difficulties for national governments? Does this vary depending on the type of arms control agreement, its subject matter and the participating states? To what extent is this likely to change in the next generation of arms control agreements and verification regimes? Will this be a more difficult problem for multilateral forums than for bilateral forums? Will some multilateral and international agreements pose more problems than others? What issues of international law will emerge in the design of the next generation of verification regimes? Will maritime arms control and confidence-building agreements encounter unique and troublesome legal difficulties? Will multilateral arms control efforts in space encounter special legal difficulties?

Domestic Politics and Verification

What impact do domestic politics (i.e., “bureaucratic politics” and partisan legislative politics) have on the design and operationalization of arms control and confidence-building verification regimes in various countries with different political systems? Does the impact vary according to the type of agreement or the type of verification measure? Does it vary according to the number, type or size of states participating in an agreement? Does it vary according to the type of government system? Are there ways of insulating the design and operationalization of verification regimes from the negative effects of domestic politics?

Conclusion

As the preceding discussion amply demonstrates, there is a rich menu of questions available to guide research into the role of verification

