



Learning Unit 01

Video Lecture 02 Challenges of Control

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For a government, it takes courage and determination to negotiate arms control agreements with potential enemies – after all, this is about national security! But when negotiations start, only challenges begin. Negotiating parties must define:

- the objective
- the control unit
- a balance
- the level of verification

Let us go through these challenges one by one.

First, the objective could be manifold:

Should the weapon in question be entirely prohibited? That would be disarmament.

Should the goal be a stable equilibrium between the parties? This would be arms control

Or is the goal of the regulation to stop the further spread of specific weapons? This would be non-proliferation.

Parties must, second, chose the **control unit**, that is, define what should actually be controlled:

Should the **effector** be addressed, that is the killing part of the weapon for example the nuclear warhead of a missile?

Or would it be better to target another part of the weapons system?

This is no trivial alternative: For example, in the SALT Treaties in the seventies, the Americans and Soviets decided to control strategic nuclear arms by addressing delivery vehicles, not warheads. As a consequence, both sides put more warheads on single missiles. This resulted in growing instability, because the number of warheads dramatically surpassed the number of strategic targets, increasing the possibility of a successful first strike. This is the worst fear in a nuclear arms race: that the rival has the capability to destroy one's deterrent in a comprehensive surprise attack, and one would be left in a wasteland without the means to retaliate.

Third: To enhance security, parties usually want to achieve a stable balance among them.

This seems easy when the goal is full disarmament for all. It is also easy when they can agree to an equal level, as, for example, in the original CFE Treaty which assigned equal number of tanks, heavy artillery, armored vehicles, combat aircraft and combat helicopters to both NATO and the Warsaw Pact. It is much more challenging when the subject of talks is disputed as presently between the United States, Russia and China: the latter two request that American missile defenses and conventionally armed ICBMs be included. In contrast, the US wants to not only talk about strategic nuclear weapons but also to address non-strategic, shorter-range



nukes, which Russia has in superior numbers. Russia, however, does not want to limit these weapons.

Finally, the level of verification.

President Ronald Reagan's famous saying "Trust but verify!" has become a classic. Each treaty partner wants to ensure the other does not cheat. Verification means all instruments in an arms control agreement to check that the other side implements all its commitments and does nothing that is prohibited. It is meant to discover – or to deter parties from – cheating. To put it positively, verification gives parties a chance to prove their faithfulness.

How much intrusiveness is needed, however, can be contested. Possibilities range from mere satellite observation to all-time, all-places inspections. From the beginning of arms control, there was a philosophical battle between those who wanted to make sure that every single instance of cheating would be promptly detected – in reality an impossibility – and those who were satisfied with a reasonable probability of uncovering major breaches. This dispute has to be settled for every new armament regulation.