



International Buckshot

Multiple Pathways and Venues Toward Agreement

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Lessons from the history of weapons negotiations

A world map with a color-coded overlay representing projected temperature changes. The colors range from red (warming) to blue (cooling). High-latitude regions like the Arctic and parts of the North Atlantic are shown in red, indicating significant warming. Most of the mid and high latitudes are in shades of yellow and orange. Some high-latitude regions in the North Atlantic and parts of the Arctic are shown in light blue, indicating cooling. The map is overlaid with a grid of latitude and longitude lines.

Why diversify?

Complexity of the task ahead

- Dangerous growth in greenhouse gas emissions demands further innovation in strategies, goals, and trajectories, in the UNFCCC and in other venues.

Opportunities for adjusting

Learn from regimes with more and different experiences

- Nuclear negotiations began late 1940s. Climate negotiations are relatively young.
- Lessons distilled from weapons negotiation history might help elucidate challenges and roadblocks to progress in the international climate regime.

A satellite map of the Pacific Ocean, showing the western coast of North America on the left and the eastern coast of South America on the right. A semi-transparent rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing text. The text is in black and white, with some words in bold and some underlined.

How are climate and weapons regimes similar?

Nuclear

Initially concentrated in the UN, with high expectations

- Visionary goals for “general and complete disarmament.”
- Acheson-Lilienthal proposal (1947) would place all the world’s nuclear materials and facilities under UN control.

Climate

- “Stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”



How are climate and weapons regimes similar?

Nuclear

Global, existential consequences

- Cuban Missile crisis brings world close to nuclear holocaust.

Originally unexpected actors change negotiations

- Impoverished China develops nuclear capability.

Climate

- Extreme weather, quickening pace of climate change and its impacts.

- India and China become major greenhouse gas emitters.



How buckshot can accelerate progress

- Open more lines of discussion and communication.
- Create narrower institutions focused on specific problems and solutions (for example, separate out GHG reporting and monitoring from broader mitigation and adaptation negotiations).
- Demonstrate smaller measures of progress as stepping stones toward bigger ones; consider requirements and verification that becomes more stringent over time as countries develop mutual trust; graduation (to recognize changes in status) with pre-agreed measures and markers.
- Show progress can be made even without the participation of some of the major players.
- Be flexible enough to respond to unexpected opportunities.



Resolve currently solvable issues

Example: 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty

- Prohibits nuclear testing in the atmosphere, space, and oceans (narrower than a comprehensive test-ban).
- Verification matched then-current technical capacity.

Lessons

- Separate out specific elements ripe for resolution. (*i.e.* Isolating the test ban from comprehensive disarmament negotiations made agreement feasible.)
- When complete agreement (*i.e.* banning all test types) is not possible, partial limits can still be beneficial. (It took 33 additional years to complete a comprehensive test ban, which is itself mostly effective despite incomplete ratification.)
- Small, concrete steps help. The arms race continued, but human health damage from fallout was reduced and possibility of nuclear agreements was demonstrated.



Work with willing partners; lead by example

Example: **The Non-Proliferation Treaty**

- Began in 1958 with 18 countries. Additional countries joined over time, reaching nearly universal participation today.
- US and USSR only engaged seriously after China's first nuclear test in 1964.
- Before the NPT, 25 nuclear powers expected by 2000. Today, only nine.

Lessons

- Entered into force despite refusal of key nuclear nations to sign completed treaty (*i.e.* France and China acceded 22 years later). Proceeding with positive agreements is important, despite outliers. Notably, outliers often only join later.
- Precipitating events can be leveraged, given negotiating flexibility (examples include Cuban Missile Crisis motivating action on 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty)
- For example, 49 of the poorest countries say “follow us” to cut greenhouse gas emissions

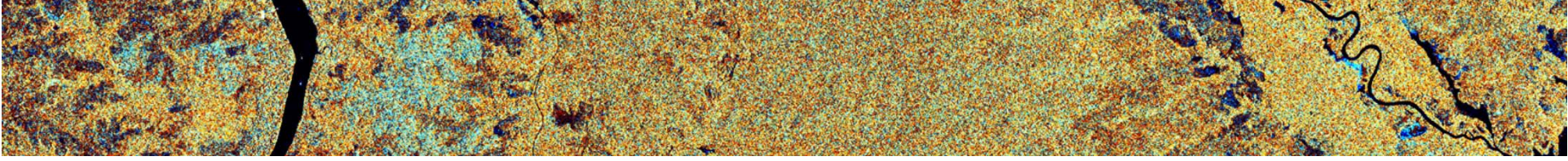


Explore a variety of venues

Example: **The changing UN role in weapons negotiations**

- Disarmament talks started in UN General Assembly, but moved, productively, to a specialized body (Committee on Disarmament).
 - Weapons-specific agreements emerged (*i.e.* BWC, CWC, CTBT).
- Eventual UN paralysis circumvented through productive regional agreements, *i.e.* Latin American nuclear weapon-free zone (1968 Treaty of Tlatelolco). Similar treaties for Africa, Central Asia, SE Asia, and South Pacific are beginning to take effect.

Lessons

- Allow for a variety of regional or issue-specific agreement configurations.
 - Develop specialized, alternative avenues where progress can be made. If agreement can be reached in a specialized venue, do not wait to integrate it into a larger agreement.
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Gains can be achieved without formalities

Example: **The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization**

- Treaty not yet legally in force.
- Nevertheless, “provisional” subsidiary body has built a world-wide network of sensors capable of detecting even very small, underground nuclear tests. This has aided ratification efforts by showing that the agreement can be verified with great confidence.
- Network has additional positive effects, such as detecting earthquakes and meteor impacts.

Lessons

- Do not overestimate formal ratification. Consider the success of less formal steps.
- Over time, less formal steps can create norms of acceptable international behavior.



Narrow discussions to major players

Major weapons countries built common language and mutual trust

Example: **40+ years of bilateral arms negotiations**

- US and Russia own more than 90% of the global nuclear arsenal.
- Years of bilateral negotiations led to mutual arsenal reduction, reducing risk of war.
- Both countries undertook reciprocal and unilateral actions at opportune times.
- Stockpiles reduced tremendously, from more than 25,000 each to about 8,000 each today.

Lesson

- Achieving agreement between those countries with the greatest impact on climate is crucial. Universal consensus, while ideal, may be unnecessary or even hamper meaningful progress.




Delegate specialized roles to independent authorities

Example: **International Atomic Energy Agency**

- Separate entity establishes and monitors safeguards on declared, peaceful nuclear facilities.
- Demonstrated competence → country confidence and trust, allowing more detailed, farther-reaching inspections over time.
- Now, additional protocols are in force in 119 countries.

Lessons

- Special, independent multinational organizations increased success of arms control agreements. General agreement is easier for a narrower mandate.
 - As experience and mutual trust develop, monitoring and implementation can expand.
 - Implementing organizations must be well-resourced and protected politically.
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Experience → Mutual trust → Greater stringency

Example: **From “national technical means of verification” to in-person inspections**

- US-USSR negotiations on SALT originally relied on “national technical means” of verification (*i.e.* each country’s own intelligence systems, satellites).
- Verification progressed to limited mutual on-site inspections.
- Later, permanent presence at each other’s production facilities.
- Currently, on-site inspectors can peer into missile silos and count warheads.

Lessons

- There is a trend toward greater intrusiveness and voluntary concessions of national sovereignty for verification of commitments.
- Over time, benefits of verification will become clear; confidence in the regime and its institutions will grow. Consequently, more stringent verification became possible in bilateral negotiations. What was originally considered out of the question is now familiar.



Challenged by competing priorities?

Bring “power ministers” to the table by speaking their language

Example: **Reframing climate change has raised its priority in some governments**

- US Department of Defense: rarely using the words “climate change.” DOD is radically improving its energy efficiency. Its rationale is to save lives in the field and control its massive fuel bill.
- US intelligence agencies now focus on climate change exacerbating conflicts over water.

Lessons

- Climate change is not an environmental issue; it is an issue of human survival.
Understanding climate change as a security challenge can provide leverage necessary to pursue a different strategy.
- Arms control formerly had a similar, fuzzy feeling, largely promoted by “do-gooders.” Today, the ministries involved in arms control and disarmament are powerful.

Resources

The original work

Ruth Greenspan Bell, Micah S. Ziegler, Barry Blechman, Brian Finlay, and Thomas Cottier. *Building International Climate Cooperation: Lessons from the Weapons and Trade Regimes for Achieving International Climate Goals*. Edited by Ruth Greenspan Bell and Micah S. Ziegler. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute, 2012.
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Shorter pieces

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Images courtesy of: NASA (GISS, GSFC, EO), NOAA, ESA