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Trends. Verification of Nuclear Weapons Treaties: Do "Open Skies" Make a Difference? Necessarily Enjoying It

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Was a tremor in the Kara Sea about 80 miles southeast of an underground nuclear testing site on the island of Novaya Zemlya a nuclear explosion or an earthquake? If the former, one might conclude that Russian political authorities knowingly violated a nuclear test ban treaty. If the latter, one might conclude that United States (US) officials who are against ratification of said treaty by the US Senate are making much ado about nothing.

In the past when such differences of opinion surfaced and so-called corroborating data were classified, informed citizenry could not be adequately informed. This is because "open skies" proposals to share the most accurate detection and monitoring means to decrease misperceptions of threat did not generate enough political support. One's opinion was then most often based on political commitment, faith, various conscious and unconscious cognitive and emotional schemata, and so on.

Now and in the future, the skies truly seem to be opening and the very need for "open skies" advocacy appears moot. Seismology and satellite technology has and is becoming available so that informed opinion concerning putative treaty violations can occur with data independent of government sources.

Does this mean that misperceptions and government deceptions leading to increased conflict and war will occur less often? IBPP says no. Instead there will be new opportunities for both misperception and deception--instead of being fooled by what one can't see, one will be fooled by what one sees but misinterprets. And as with all advances in science and technology from the beginning of recorded history, the psychological phenomena underlying mistrust, suspicion, and hostility merely will have new playing fields. "Open skies" will not open the close mind. (See Benjamin, R. D. (1995.) The constructive uses of deception: Skills, strategies, and techniques of the folkloric trickster figure and their application by mediators. *Mediation Quarterly*, 13, 3-18; Broad, W. J. (October 21, 1997.) Hints of nuclear test disparaged. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Broad, W. J. (October 28, 1997.) Spy tools let civilians eavesdrop on Earth. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Jones, P. (1992.) Open skies: A new era of transparency. *Arms Control Today*, 22, 10-15; Kardash, C., & Scholes, R.J. (1996.) Effects of preexisting beliefs, epistemological beliefs, and need for cognition on interpretation of controversial Issues. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 88, 260-271; Rice, C., et al. (1997.) When 3-year-olds pass the appearance-reality test. *Developmental Psychology*, 33, 54-61.)