

Russian Federation not to be treated in discriminatory fashion. Part of the solution may also lie in building into the disposition process a progressive handover of control to Russian partners whose safety and environmental practices have become arguably as good as those anywhere. The prospect of near full Russian control over a multilateral support operation could provide an incentive for Moscow to accept less to begin with. The notion of disposition as an equalizing handover is one to which we'll return. But a practice of proactive conditionality should and can do more than encourage us to find means of anger management.

When the notion of conditionality is pressed for more benefit, unexpected understandings emerge which help us to see disposition in new and more productive ways than the standard perspective allows. Disposition ceases to be essentially a multinational collaboration in cost-effective materials processing. It also becomes an exercise in Russian affairs and the political and cultural considerations that matter mightily there. Pressing further, disposition is revealed as an exercise in mutual enculturation in which Russia has much to impart to donors as well as much to receive from them.

The understanding here, which is to be revisited later in this study, comes down to the observation that whereas donor countries may require Russia to change itself in the course of the programme, the donors themselves will also have to change the way they normally do business if disposition is to be sustained in the particular conditions that Russia presents. Specifically, a multinational management entity that's controlled primarily by donor countries to begin with will have to depart from standard international practice quite substantially if disposition is to succeed. Not only will it have to underwrite and build agency for a culture of nuclear safety and environmental care in Russia, but in so doing it will set new standards of best practice for industry and government in the donor countries and globally. Minatom will take small comfort from the prospect of change for the better elsewhere. But the Federation Government may react differently when it's clear that disposition is, and can be presented as, an exercise in which donors and recipient alike are obliged to seek out new and better ways.

Contravention

What then of irreversibility? Not a lot has been said about it so far. This is mainly because it's centred on technical considerations which seem relatively cut and dried, and therefore tractable. There are, however, two problem areas. Both entail extra-negotiatory behaviour which runs counter to irreversibility but is not prohibited. The problem adds up to contravention. It's explicit in U.S. and Russian nuclear hedging, which will be considered in the following section. It is also implicit in the long-term civil energy strategy of Minatom, which aims at increasingly heavy reliance on closed fuel-cycle technology 30-50 years from now (Minatom, 2000). To consider what's at stake in contravention, let us outline the civil-military nuclear issues and then have a look at a view which says there is no real issue here.

If Minatom had its way, by the time that an arduous and expensive spent-fuel disposition programme was starting to make a real dent in 34 tonnes of WGPu, Russia would be getting ready to generate and reprocess tonnes of civil or reactor-grade plutonium (RGPu) for use in commercial breeder reactors. There is nothing illicit in this. But there is contravention. It is slight at present, but it's capable of undermining the disposition process later on. Later on must concern us now.