

What's needed is discrimination. Negotiations for a Multilateral Agreement are biased to a nuclear-industry view, but the industry does not have a single view. On the one hand, there is the can-do, no-problem tendency to minimize difficulty in matters of safety and environmental protection, to fend off views to the contrary, and indeed to stonewall in the face of criticism. But there is another approach. It is concerned more with the marketing than with the production of nuclear energy. It reflects, and acts on, obvious industry interests in an outstanding safety and environmental record. A proactive conditionality will endeavour to work with and enlarge this latter tendency at the expense of the former. It will do so in an effort to proof disposition activity in the Russian Federation against disability and disaster over a period that could be measured in decades. A practice of proactive conditionality, while it runs against the grain of can-do thinking on the use of civil nuclear reactors, is compatible with substantial and indeed heavy reliance on the know-how of the industry in executing a Multilateral Agreement that's fully adapted to Russian conditions.

But what's to be the proportion between donor and recipient know-how and technology when it comes to the avoidance of trouble and disaster in matters of nuclear safety and environmental protection? The question here is about equality in a collaborative venture which cannot but commence in unequal fashion. Might a discourse and a practice of conditionality help the parties to square the circle on a crucial issue such as this?

The donor-recipient relationship starts out as one of inequality for many reasons but in this case it is because the Russian Federation is not up to speed in safety and environmental affairs. That said, let us blow the whistle, take time out, and do a reality check.

Where is the basis for such a judgment? Furthermore, how can anyone speak to, or about, Russia in such a fashion and expect to get anywhere with Russian representatives? If this is where proactive conditionality takes us, isn't it likely to bring on a negotiating disaster all by itself?

A negative assessment of Russia's capacity in matters of nuclear safety and environmental protection is based more on cultural and political than on economic and technical variables. Minatom is certainly capable of self-correction. Its formidable human resources, designers at the forefront, could readily be marshalled in support of safety and environmental-protection priorities. The latest licensing and other regulations that Minatom must follow are evolving and promise to be excellent by world standards. But even if the money were there to make the most of it all, the cultural and institutional preconditions for thoroughgoing nuclear responsibility are lacking and unlikely to appear any time soon if the Federation Government does what comes naturally.

A culture of nuclear responsibility has to be rooted in society if it is to be effective. It's fair to suggest that the roots are not well established in a population which went along with Soviet ways for generations and is now very largely consumed by the need to put a subsistence together. And if the social base for nuclear safety and environmental protection is neither broad nor deep, what can be expected from an industry that survives as a Soviet-style production monopoly? That offers the resistance it does to regulation? That's ready to extend the service lives of even first-generation nuclear power plants? That presides over the environmental catastrophe, to cite but one example, at Lake Karachai (MacKinnon, 2002) near Mayak, where a substantial part of the disposition programme is to be carried out? The short answer to these questions is, first, that