

Rather than attempt to make add-on conditionality into something more systematic, we are better advised to see what might be done with an alternative approach.

Proactive conditionality is performance-oriented. It is keyed not so much to the elaboration of agreement, but to envisioning and addressing the conditions in which agreed measures are likely to be implemented. It's heavily contextual. It directs attention to the circumstances in which disposition is to be done, as distinct from the work of disposition itself. It aims not so much to protect the parties as to see to it that collective action is a success. Proactive conditionality is thus more strongly future-oriented than add-on thinking and practice. It urges that downstream considerations which bear on the potential for performance failure be fully incorporated into the bargaining process here and now.

Basically, therefore, we are talking about evaluating alternative approaches to reactor-based disposition in the light of long-term sustainability criteria. This indeed is something the present paper will try to do. That said, let us cut short any further conceptual discussion and instead turn to what a proactive approach might do for us where nuclear safety and environmental protection are concerned.

Two main benefits stand out. They are interrelated. The first is to alert us to hitherto unexamined sources of surprise and accident in the work of disposition. The second is to assist Russia in becoming an equal partner in a programme which must seem intrusive and discriminatory.

A concern for proactive conditionality moves us to ask why a long-term perspective on nuclear safety and environmental protection does not feature more prominently in the discourse on disposition of the Russian excess. The answer is that there's a bias in the prevailing intergovernmental approach. It is to a nuclear-industry view of things. The bias arises when reactor processing of WGPu is selected as the prime means of disposition. Convergent economic interests underpin the bias.¹ It makes for overconfidence in the industry's problem-solving capacity. The tendency is to think that safety and environmental standards will be met in Russia, as they are elsewhere, with standard operating procedures.

But Russia rarely presents the standard case. To assume otherwise is to invite misadventure and worse, neither of which do we want in the course of disposition. Both are what a proactive conditionality seeks to avoid by looking hard at the circumstances in which disposition is to be done.

¹ On the one hand, the global nuclear industry, relevant government departments in the donor countries, and intergovernmental organizations all have an interest in seeing that there's no nuclear disaster in Russia. A positive attitude follows when it comes to helping modernize Russian nuclear technology and practices. Meanwhile, Russia's industry is interested in service-life extensions and new reactors, as opposed to non-nuclear sources of energy or doing what may be most responsible in some cases, which is to shut NPPs down. The combined effect of interests such as these is to move intergovernmental deliberation toward solutions that maintain and upgrade Russia's nuclear industry, which is where disposition is headed. Robert Darst (Darst, 2001) is especially good on the convergence of Russian and donor incentives in environmental cooperation.