



Overcoming Impediments to U.S-Russian Cooperation on Nuclear Non-Proliferation: Report of a Joint Workshop (2004)

More groups, including terrorist organizations and non-state actors, are now able to obtain nuclear weapons. With a shared interest in preventing the spread of nuclear-weapons capabilities, the U.S. and Russia initiated cooperative nuclear nonproliferation programs to focus on securing nuclear materials and containing weapons and technology. In September 2003, the National Academies and the Russian Academy of Sciences held a workshop to identify impediments to U.S.-Russian cooperation on nuclear nonproliferation and strategies to address these

impediments. This report is one of the first attempts at a joint, systematic examination of strategies to address these problems.

IMPEDIMENTS TO COOPERATION

Various programs were reviewed to identify the following impediments to cooperation.

Political Issues. Programs can be hindered by political issues such as internal interagency difficulties, visa requirements, issues regarding access to facilities and information, and linking U.S. funding for cooperative programs to actions outside of the programs.

Legal Issues. Legal impediments include taxation and nuclear liability. The following taxation issues need to be addressed: (1) lack of a clear tax exemption for scientific and technical assistance program participants; (2) lengthy procedures for granting tax-exempt status; and (3) lack of a federal law exempting projects from regional taxes. Regarding nuclear liability, U.S. and Russia are still negotiating about whether to include blanket protection to contractors.

Scientific and Technical Cooperation Issues. There is a lack of cooperation between the U.S. and Russia on promoting peaceful use of nuclear energy. Also, some U.S.-Russian agreements have required technical work that may not be scientifically feasible.

Program Organization and Management Issues. Bureaucracy created to implement cooperative programs can end up impeding the programs.

- Program implementers must balance managerial flexibility and work cultures in each country as they work together to carry out projects.
- Laboratories with cooperative programs want to avoid excessive administrative or bureaucratic burdens, but seek support from their departments when impediments arise.
- Participants often need permission from several government agencies for international travel.
- Personnel turnover prohibits program participants from being able to learn from experience and improve cooperative programs in the future.

Issues Related to the Legacy of the Cold War Mentality. Residual Cold War thinking can undermine cooperation. Mistrust and suspicion can cause tension during negotiations, delay or eliminate funding, and hinder efforts to establish effective arrangements.

Funding Issues

- U.S. appropriations, including continuing resolutions, create difficulties for both countries.
- Funding not transparent enough.
- U.S. preference for funding large research centers over smaller ones.
- Taxes make grants attractive funding option, but take a long time to get approved.
- Programs without measurable evidence of threat reduction do not receive ample funding.

TOOLS FOR OVERCOMING IMPEDIMENTS TO COOPERATION

The following tools and strategies are possible ways to overcome impediments.

Mechanisms for Interaction at Multiple Levels. This approach includes interactions within the international community, government-to-government interactions, joint coordinating committees, agency-to-agency agreements, manager-to-manager working methods, information-sharing and coordination, informal discussions, and exchanges of personnel as confidence-building measures.

International Development of Proliferation-Resistant Nuclear Energy Technologies. The U.S. and Russia should cooperate with the international community to embrace a more positive approach that facilitates the adoption of commercial nuclear energy in ways that strengthen rather than weaken the international nuclear nonproliferation regime.

Changes in National Law, Policy, or Procedures. Some laws not specifically directed at nuclear nonproliferation programs have had an enormous impact on programs, such as changes in visa regulations due to the USA PATRIOT Act.

Mechanisms for Disseminating the Benefits of Experience. It is important to encourage development of institutional knowledge to increase the effectiveness of personnel and institutions. It is also beneficial to establish a unified program evaluation system that is transparent to participants.

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