

Nongovernmental Actors in U.S. and Russian Chemical Demilitarization Efforts

A Need for Mutual Understanding and Cooperation

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Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) play an increasing role in shaping public policy in today's society. Occasionally they are involved in high drama, such as the disruption and redirection of the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle, Washington, by coalitions of labor and environmental organizations. Some of those groups were radical, others were conservative, but they were united in opposition to World Trade Organization policies. The street drama and violence of Seattle was atypical, however. Most of the work of the NGOs takes place through conventional processes such as consumer education, political lobbying, and consensus building. For example, moral suasion and political pressure by religious and environmental organizations have produced major changes in the policies of the World Bank.

NGOs are numerous and varied. The *Economist* quotes estimates that there are about 26,000 international NGOs and two million NGOs in the United States.¹ In Russia, where few existed ten years ago, at least 65,000 are present today. These organizations range from business associations to labor unions, and from scientific societies to activist environmental organizations. Each has its own issues, strategies, and tactics, but increasingly they are collaborating to advance their own agendas.

Various NGOs have had a major influence on policies for the control and disposal of chemical weapons. For instance, the procedures for verifying the destruction of chemical weapons, which are incorporated in the Chemical Weapons Convention, were strongly influenced by input from American chemical manufacturing organizations. On the other hand, activist citizens groups played a central role in blocking the U.S. Army's plans to incinerate chemical weapons at some storage sites. They also promoted the development and implementation

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of alternative technologies to replace incineration. Similarly, in Russia, local environmental organizations successfully opposed the operation of chemical weapons destruction facilities at Chapayevsk and Novocheboksarsk.

In comparing the U.S. and Russian chemical demilitarization experiences, it is important to stress that public participation in any such national program depends on three basic factors: the political culture of the country; the status of its legal system, and the resources available to the general public. Despite the large differences in those factors between the United States and Russia, some useful lessons and guidance can be derived from the U.S. experience as Russia moves toward strengthening its democracy.

In this article, we identify some of the NGOs that have influenced chemical demilitarization programs in the United States and Russia. We examine their motivations, actions, and goals. We single out two examples of constructive bridge building between the interested public and the governmental bodies responsible for carrying out chemical demilitarization in the two countries. From this background, we develop some preliminary ideas on how to engage NGOs positively in the chemical demilitarization area.

Major Players in the United States and Russia

The NGOs relevant to the American and Russian chemical demilitarization efforts fall into six categories, based on the motivations and objectives of the organizations, their membership, and other characteristics.

Grassroots organizations are typically associations of residents in a given area whose goal is either to challenge or supervise government practices—in this case, the implementation of chemical demilitarization operations in their locality. A common feature of these groups is distrust of the military who are in charge of the national chemical demilitarization programs in both Russia and the United States. That distrust often stems from years of unsatisfactory interaction with army leaders who did not seriously consider the impact of chemical demilitarization operations on local communities or how their activities would be perceived by the public. While the U.S. Army has become much more sensitive to the power of public opinion, it still has some distance to go in involving the public in decision-making processes and in regaining public trust. In Russia as in the United States, a major grievance toward the military was that, until the early 1990s, information about chemical weapons storage facilities was kept secret, even from the local population. In many cases, the Russian military successfully opposed economic projects in the areas where Russia's seven chemical weapons storage facilities are situated to keep them virtually off limits to outsiders. As a result, most of those areas are economically backward. (Under Russia's program, chemical weapons stockpiles will be destroyed at their storage sites.)²

Typical American grassroots organizations are Citizens Against Incineration at Newport (CAIN) and the Coalition for Safe Disposal, both of which challenged the U.S. Army's plans to incinerate the chemical weapons stockpiles in their communities (Newport, Indiana, and Aberdeen, Maryland, respectively). Many such

groups are affiliated with a national umbrella organization, the Chemical Weapons Working Group, which is discussed below. Although most local groups oppose incineration, their motivations are diverse. Most members of CAIN fought incineration because they feared adverse health effects from incinerator effluents (e.g., dioxins and other products of incomplete combustion) or from low levels of nerve agent released during routine operations. On the other hand, the Maryland-based groups had a broad assortment of concerns. Many had health concerns similar to those expressed by CAIN, but others focused on adverse environmental effects on the Chesapeake Bay, a major recreational area near the nation's capital. Many landowners near the bay also feared a decrease in the value of their property.

There are many local organizations in Russia that tackle a wide range of chemical issues. Their main tool is holding regional referenda, though there have been some mass protest demonstrations and even civil disobedience. Apart from environmental and safety concerns, their top priority is to pressure the government to provide material benefits and services in exchange for their consent and cooperation. Frequently, local branches of political parties attempt to capitalize on the local population's concerns and fears. For example, in 1998, leaders made a public appeal to the residents of Kambarka, in the Udmurt republic, where a major stockpile of lewisite, subject to destruction, is stored in bulk. Members not only of environmental organizations but also of the local branches of the Communist Party and Russia's National Patriotic Union signed the appeal.³

Such diverse local organizations can scarcely speak with one voice, and they often make contradictory demands. It is not surprising that in 1999 the Defense Committee of the State Duma (the Russian parliament's lower chamber) drafted a law concerning citizens commissions for chemical weapons destruction in a pioneering attempt to lay the groundwork for citizen participation. The draft, which the Duma has considered but not acted on, would not only mandate the existence of citizens commissions but also generally define their role as representing the interests of the local population and providing public control of the process of chemical weapons destruction in their respective regions.⁴

Advocacy organizations are critical of government decisions and offer alternative ideas. Examples include Greenpeace, the Chemical Weapons Working Group, and, in Russia, the Union for Chemical Safety. A common feature of these groups in the United States is opposition to incineration as a means to destroy chemical weapons stockpiles. Most share a distrust of the military, but they offer constructive alternatives to incineration and often show willingness to cooperate with the military when opportunities to do so are available.

Greenpeace has been implacably opposed to incineration in any context and was a pioneer in offering technological alternatives to burning chemical weapons materials. The Chemical Weapons Working Group represents a broad range of local groups opposing chemical weapons incineration in their communities. It works with legislators at both the state and national levels to effectively prohibit incineration at some sites and has successfully promoted exploration of alternatives.

The Union for Chemical Safety regards itself as a follow-up to the public ini-

tiative that in April 1989 disrupted the Russian government's construction of a regional chemical weapons destruction facility in Chapayevsk, Samara oblast. The union is involved in public discussions and actions at all seven chemical weapons storage sites in Russia. It is not opposed as a matter of principle to the destruction of chemical weapons but insists on what it calls a "civilized" approach to destruction, namely, that the government meet several important preconditions in exchange for Union for Chemical Safety consent.

Union for Chemical Safety leader Lev Fyodorov labels Russia's so-called military-chemical complex a "criminal organization" that failed to understand the basic standards of a civil society and carry out chemical disarmament. As a member of the official environmental assessment commission for the Shchuchie destruction facility in the Kurgan oblast, Fyodorov consistently voted against granting it an environmental permit. He believes that environmental and other NGOs must avoid being closely associated with government programs, financially or otherwise, so that they can remain independent and critical of government actions.⁵ The Union for Chemical Safety became antagonistic toward other NGOs that accepted the arguments of Russia's Ministry of Defense with respect to chemical demilitarization or that cooperated with it. Its uncompromising attitude won public support in Bryansk oblast for a proposal to withdraw the chemical weapons munitions from the Pochep storage facility and destroy them outside the oblast. At one time, the Union for Chemical Safety lobbied to end Russia's participation in the Chemical Weapons Convention because Russia was not financially and technologically capable of complying with its timetable and obligations.

Bridge-building organizations regard their overall mission as building understanding and consensus between the concerned public and the government. Examples include Green Cross International, the Moscow-based Center for Political Studies in Russia, and the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute for International Studies in California. These organizations tend to focus on broad issues of international peace, security, and the environment, but they have also played constructive roles in developing consensus on chemical demilitarization issues. The Center for Political Studies in Russia has focused on how to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, promoted ways to facilitate the safe and expeditious disposal of Russian chemical weapons stockpiles, and helped Western NGOs participate in Russia's chemical demilitarization debates.

Green Cross International and its Russian and American affiliates, Green Cross-Russia and Global Green USA, have broad interests in promoting environmental safety but have also been strongly engaged in chemical demilitarization issues. Their Legacy program deals with the impact of armies and wars on the world's population. Global Green has held periodic seminars for members of the U.S. Congress and other interested parties to educate them on aspects of chemical demilitarization and chemical weapons control.

Green Cross-Russia has been involved in Russia's chemical demilitarization efforts since the mid-1990s. Russia's government officials initially distrusted it but gradually became more cooperative as it became clear that Green Cross-Rus-

sia was valuable as a facilitator and consensus builder. The Green Cross-Russia agenda goes beyond chemical weapons issues and includes environmental education for young people and energy-saving projects. It regularly holds public hearings at chemical weapons storage sites, operates information dissemination centers in the field, conducts independent medical monitoring around the chemical weapons sites, upgrades the skills of local medical personnel to respond to emergency situations, and improves health care services for children living near chemical weapons sites. Over the last five years, Green Cross-Russia has raised over a million dollars (mostly from foreign donors) for its chemical demilitarization projects. For Russia, that is an impressive funding landmark relative to the inadequately low budget allocations of about \$12 million annually for the overall chemical demilitarization program.

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Apolitical technical experts supported by government grants often provide technical advice and help develop moderate compromise solutions to chemical demilitarization issues. For example, Vladimir

Kolodkin, of the Udmurt State University, has conducted assessments of the risks associated with both storage and destruction of chemical weapons at several Russian stockpile sites. Irina Beletskaya, of Moscow State University, co-chaired a binational panel that evaluated the effectiveness of the Russian Ministry of Defense’s proposed chemical demilitarization technology.

In the United States, the National Research Council—the operating arm of the National Academies of Sciences and Engineering, a nongovernmental organization—has provided expert advice to the army and to Congress on chemical weapons disposal issues and has performed many studies that have profoundly influenced U.S. disposal programs. In addition to technical advice, National Research Council reports have encouraged the army to adopt more constructive approaches to working with citizens concerned about these issues.

Locally elected or appointed officials must balance their loyalty to their constituencies with their traditional mandates or their dependence on regional and federal authorities for funding. Examples include the American citizens advisory commissions, the county commissioners in states such as Utah and Colorado, and Russian regional and local administrators.

The citizens advisory commissions, which were mandated by Congress in 1992, are appointed by the governor of each state hosting a chemical weapons storage facility. The commissions have played a generally constructive role in helping the army to deal with the concerns of communities where there are chemical weapons stockpiles. For example, the Maryland citizens advisory commis-

sion forcefully presented citizens' concerns about a proposed incinerator at the Aberdeen site. However, when the army showed willingness to consider alternative technologies, the citizens advisory commission worked with the Maryland congressional delegation to secure legislation that facilitated testing and implementation of alternatives. When an acceptable alternative (neutralization followed by biotreatment of waste products) was identified, the citizens advisory commission helped educate the concerned public about the technology. Although the personalities and motivations of commission members differ widely from state to state, the commissions offer a useful model for positive interaction between the public and governmental bodies.

In some American states, local administrative bodies such as county commissions have played a significant political role in discussions of chemical demilitarization issues. In Tooele County, Utah, site of the largest chemical weapons stockpile in the United States, the commission has generally supported "getting on with the job" of destroying the stockpile, even when the army chose incineration as its preferred technology. However, the commission also lobbied vigorously for financial compensation to the county for possible adverse environmental effects and for the upgrading of emergency response facilities. These activities parallel those of many Russian local officials.

Elected officials in the Russian regions with chemical weapons storage sites and areas adjoining them commonly represent populations surviving at the poverty level or below. A significant project such as building a sophisticated chemical weapons destruction facility and its infrastructure would mean for them more jobs, investments, and exposure to national and international media. The leaders of the six regions where Russia's chemical weapons storage facilities are located formed an association whose main objective is to lobby the federal government for more chemical demilitarization funding and accelerated work on related projects. One of their demands is that the Ministry of Defense share its function as the state purchaser with them so that regional leaders can use some of the chemical demilitarization funds at their discretion. The most vocal promoter is Oleg Bogomolov, the governor of Kurgan oblast, where the project to build a Shchuchie destruction facility has been funded until recently by the U.S. Cooperative Threat Reduction program. Despite his affiliation with the Communist Party, he was cooperative with the Russian team involved in this bilateral endeavor. On the other hand, the regional leaders try hard to assure their constituencies that they will require the federal government to complete social infrastructure projects for the local population before they consent to building destruction facilities. Some regularly convene public hearings in the local communities. They tend to be reluctant to deal with more radical NGOs like the Union for Chemical Safety.

Business associations may be primarily an American institution. Typically, they wish to influence decisions about chemical demilitarization issues to avoid any negative impact on their business climate. In Russia, the industrial associations have had little influence on the chemical demilitarization process. Most Russian

chemical plants and enterprises simply struggled to survive throughout the 1990s; in addition, they were either state-owned or joint stock companies still controlled by the government. On the other hand, numerous civilian research centers and universities developed and submitted for consideration their own chemical weapons destruction technologies. Before the current two-stage technology was selected, the government commission involving NGOs considered over fifty other options.

In the United States, the Chemical Manufacturers Association played a significant role in facilitating the establishment of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Its motivations appear to have been twofold: (a) Chemical Manufacturers Association members supported the design and ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention because they were concerned about possible sanctions on their international trade if the United States did not participate in the Chemical Weapons Convention; and (b) the members foresaw the need for international inspections of chemical manufacturing facilities. They sought to ensure, however, that such inspections would not compromise confidential aspects of their business operations; to that end, both the Chemical Manufacturers Association and the Synthetic Organic Chemical Manufacturers Association gave significant input on the wording of the regulations promulgated by the Commerce and State Departments for implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention verification protocols.⁶

U.S. Experience: Evolving Dialogue between NGOs and the Army

The past decade has seen a steady evolution in the attitude and skill of the U.S. Army in dealing with citizens interested in its chemical demilitarization activities. The interaction has progressed from grudging dissemination of information to acceptance of public input on subjects such as decision-making criteria and technology selection. Several NGOs played a substantial role in facilitating this transformation. Local citizen groups and later the Chemical Weapons Working Group and the citizens advisory commissions were especially effective. The National Research Council also contributed significantly, although its nominal task was only to provide advice concerning technological options for chemical weapons destruction. Some stages in the evolution of army-public interactions are described below.

Early Interactions between the Public and the Army

During the cold war years (1945–1990), secrecy dominated discussions of the American chemical weapons stockpile. As in Russia, the location and nature of the U.S. stockpile were classified in the name of national security. Local citizens usually knew little about the chemical weapons stockpile in their locality and were not informed of movements of weapons into or out of the area. Near some stockpile sites, incidents occurred that led to severe mistrust of the army by local residents, such as the 1968 death of several thousand sheep near the Dugway Proving Grounds in Utah, generally attributed to drifting nerve gas from the test range. In a 1979 incident in Kentucky, smoke from open burning of chemical obscurants drifted across an interstate highway and sickened more than forty

motorists.⁷ The latter incident appears to have been a key factor in stimulating local residents to become involved and to oppose incineration as a means to dispose of chemical weapons. The local organization Common Ground, which was founded to oppose an incinerator at the Blue Grass Arsenal, was the nucleus for the Chemical Weapons Working Group.

In the 1980s, when the U.S. Army prepared to destroy its chemical weapons stockpile under a congressional directive, it chose incineration as the most generally effective approach. The army built a pilot-scale incinerator on Johnston Island in the Pacific, where the American chemical weapons stockpiles from Germany and Okinawa had been moved, and then established a test facility in Utah. The military communicated to the local communities its decision to use incineration as the so-called baseline technology at all chemical weapons storage sites but left only limited opportunity for comment. This “decide-announce-defend” approach strengthened public opposition to incineration at many sites.

Emerging Maturity in Public-Army Interactions

Under the 1990 Bilateral Destruction Agreement, Russia and the United States agreed to begin destroying their chemical weapons arsenals. By then, operational testing had begun in the Johnston Island incinerator. However, the anti-incineration movement was gathering strength, and the army found it difficult to gain public acceptance of its destruction plans. A 1990 conference on the environment and defense, organized by the Department of Defense, brought together citizens from several of the chemical weapons stockpile sites and representatives from NGOs such as Greenpeace and the Sierra Club. One unexpected outcome of the conference was that the local citizen groups banded together under the name of Chemical Weapons Working Group with the goal of gaining army and Department of Defense acceptance of citizen input on chemical weapons disposal decisions.

As the time for building chemical weapons incinerators on the U.S. mainland approached, public concerns increased and the NGOs became more active. Greenpeace proposed specific alternatives to incineration.⁸ Also in 1991, the Kentucky Environmental Foundation organized the first Chemical Weapons Working Group conference to develop a united front among the many local groups opposing incineration. In response to their effective lobbying, Congress required the army to report yearly on its progress and plans for chemical weapons disposal.

In a further response to lobbying by Global Green, the Chemical Weapons Working Group, and Maryland citizens groups, Congress passed a very significant piece of legislation in 1992 (Public Law 102-484, subtitle G, section 172, 23 October 1992). The law required that the army establish citizens advisory commissions and that army representatives meet with each commission “to receive citizen and State concerns” regarding its disposal program at each stockpile site. The act also required the army to evaluate alternatives to incineration with input from the National Research Council.

A 1994 National Research Council report found that the baseline incineration system is safe and effective for disposal of the chemical weapons stockpile.⁹ However, it also recommended that the army vigorously pursue four alternative

technologies based on chemical neutralization. In addition, it urged the army to seek out greater community involvement in decisions regarding the technology selection process and oversight of operations. In particular, the report recommended that the army work closely with the citizens advisory commissions.

The newly appointed citizens advisory commission leaders regarded themselves as conduits for information and concerns from their public to the army, to Congress, and, in this instance, to the National Research Council. They held public meetings and hearings and also consulted and cooperated with NGOs such as the Chemical Weapons Working Group, the Coalition for Safe Disposal of Chemical Weapons, the Aberdeen Proving Ground Superfund Citizens Coalition, and the Henry L. Stimson Center. The last organization published an influential report that helped set the context for discussions of the American chemical weapons disposal program.¹⁰

Despite early tensions between the army and the citizens advisory commissions, both sides continued to work at the dialogue and communications improved. The army responded to input from a wide range of NGOs (the Chemical Weapons Working Group, citizens advisory commissions, the National Research Council, and local groups) by establishing a formal program to develop alternative technologies for chemical weapons destruction at two "low-volume" sites. As urged by all the NGOs, greater public participation in the technology selection process was to be a component of the program.

A 1996 National Research Council report recommended specific technologies to be used for destruction at two sites and again advised the army on the need for public participation and on approaches to gaining it.¹¹ The army concurred in the technology selections and explained the process and its outcome to the public and to the citizens advisory commissions. Both the Maryland and Indiana commissions responded positively and supported the legislation needed to implement the technology recommendations in their states. The Chemical Weapons Working Group also supported the technology selections. Accordingly, the army was able to confidently announce its choice of technologies in December 1996.

Public Participation under the Assembled Chemical Weapons Assessment Program

The American NGOs provided much of the driving force for a major innovation in the U.S. chemical demilitarization effort, namely, the Assembled Chemical Weapons Assessment program. The Kentucky-based Chemical Weapons Working Group, in particular, worked with the Kentucky congressional delegation to amend the fiscal 1997 Defense Appropriations Act to require that the army take a fresh approach in selecting technologies for use at the Kentucky and Colorado stockpile sites. The army responded positively and set up an independent management structure, the Assembled Chemical Weapons Assessment program. A distinctive feature of the program was the establishment of a formal process to gather input from a wide range of individuals, groups, and agencies with a significant interest in the outcome of the technology selection process. The Assem-

bled Chemical Weapons Assessment leadership contracted the management of those discussions to the Keystone Center, a nonprofit, neutral NGO that specializes in resolving environmental and health policy disputes.¹² The Keystone facilitators played a major role in identifying and recruiting authentic stakeholders to participate in discussions about chemical demilitarization technology selection. The group ultimately consisted of around forty people representing the army, federal and state regulators, the relevant citizens advisory commissions, and several public interest groups, including the Chemical Weapons Working Group, Global Green USA, and local NGOs from Alabama, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, and Utah.

Through the dialogue process, the Assembled Chemical Weapons Assessment sought to attain consensus for its major decisions, a difficult challenge given the diverse interests involved. They reached agreement on six technologies deemed worthy of experimental demonstration.¹³ But the discussions about experimental demonstrations revealed the

difficulty of involving the general public in decisions on highly technical issues: The public interest representatives lacked the technical knowledge possessed by the regulatory and military participants. This problem was resolved by hiring a consultant to advise the citizen representatives. A subcommittee was formed to work with the army technical team on technology issues. The four-person Citizens Advisory Technical Team reviewed the critical technical issues with the help of the consultant and communicated regularly with the other public interest representatives. The Citizens Advisory Technical Team innovation appears to have substantially increased the level of trust among members of the group.

The dialogue process allowed the NGO representatives, citizens advisory commission members, and regulators to have significant input on critical decisions about technical criteria for demonstrating selected technologies, soliciting additional information from vendors, and evaluating the work plans and set-up of the technology demonstrations. Key processes within three technology proposals were demonstrated in spring 1999, and the results were evaluated by the dialogue participants as well as the National Research Council.¹⁴

As the Assembled Chemical Weapons Assessment program moves forward, dialogue has substantial potential to influence decisions about technology implementation. Its contributions to date mark a major milestone in the U.S. Army's interactions with the public. It may provide a basis for resolving future controversial issues with significant health or environmental impacts. The Russian chemical weapons destruction program might profitably draw lessons from the dialogue process.

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Three Stages in the Evolution of Russia's Environmentalist Movement

The grassroots movement in support of environmental values over the last forty years of Soviet and Russian history can be divided into three distinct periods. The first period, covering the 1960s to the early 1980s, was a product of the communist totalitarian regime. The Communist Party orchestrated the environmental movement, involving well-trained professionals. The movement was generously funded from official resources in exchange for compliance with the rules of the game, which specified that reasonable and moderate dissent was permitted but that party authorities should determine ultimate solutions. With the media tightly controlled by the Communist Party, there was no reporting about environmental disasters or related news issues. Some scant indication could be found in the so-called *samizdat* publications, which were typed by dissidents and circulated from person to person despite an official ban, but any public discussion of the chemical weapons program or chemical demilitarization was punishable under law.

The second period, ending in the late 1980s–early 1990s, reflects the rapid dismantling of the communist system, the evolution of democratic institutions, and the emergence of freedom of speech. The reformed environmental organizations emulated their counterparts in Western Europe and the United States, where the green movement acquired political clout and started to shape domestic agendas. During the last years of the Soviet Union, the environmental movement was evolving into a diversified campaign focusing on a wide range of issues and cooperating closely with fledging political parties. It scored several important environmental victories, including one in the chemical demilitarization program: In 1985, the government began building a large chemical weapons destruction facility in the city of Chapayevsk, Samara oblast. When construction of this expensive project was in its final stages, the local communities in Chapayevsk, which had been kept completely in the dark, learned about it and violently protested, demanding that the project be halted. The standoff ended in September 1989 when the government announced that the facility would become a training center for chemical weapons destruction personnel; it was to be operated without actual use of any chemical agent.

People in Chapayevsk aggressively campaigned against the chemical weapons destruction project for at least three major reasons. First, the facility was near the site where mustard gas had been produced as early as the 1930s. During World War II, lewisite and phosgene production facilities were added without adequate air and water purification systems, which led to serious disabilities among the personnel and the local population. Second, Chapayevsk was saturated with other pollution-generating industries. The local population viewed the introduction of a new chemical weapons destruction facility as the final straw that could tip the region's highly precarious environmental balance. Third, the April 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident in the Ukraine prompted people to treat any government-sponsored information with considerable skepticism. In the absence of timely and comprehensive information, wild rumors multiplied, leading to general antigovernment hostility. For the local population, the Chernobyl disaster imparted one

important lesson: they could not expect the authorities to act quickly and effectively to handle possible chemical weapons destruction-related accidents.¹⁵

The third period of the Russian environmental movement started in the early 1990s with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Several newly established political parties ran for Russia's parliament on an environmental ticket, but none of them surmounted the 5 percent threshold required to gain seats in the Duma. Financial and economic hardship continuously pushed environmental issues to the bottom of Russia's political agenda. The main features of this period included a dramatic reduction in the number of grassroots activists; a shortage of funds; the growing involvement and influence of Western sponsors; the narrowing of the scope of issues under review; and more infighting within the movement. Most of the same features also characterize Russian NGO involvement in chemical demilitarization. Serious long-term underfunding of the demilitarization program also made productive dialogue between the government and NGOs difficult to achieve. From 1996 to 1999, the budgetary allocations actually released and spent were less than 4 percent of actual annual program requirements. This underfunding has continued despite chemical demilitarization's being given the prestigious status of a presidential program, which by law is funded by a separate line item in the federal budget.

Russia's Legal Basis for NGO Participation

A growing body of Russian law requires recognition of the roles of public organizations and local self-government bodies in government decision making. In reality, however, Russia's legal processes in the 1990s were characterized by delays in drafting and adopting relevant laws and by slow implementation of existing laws, as well as controversial legal interpretations and inconsistent enforcement efforts.

There were some positive legislative accomplishments for NGOs:

- Article 17 of the 1995 Law on Public Associations stresses that issues affecting the interests of public associations be dealt with by state and local governmental bodies, together with the relevant public associations or in coordination with them.
- The 1995 Law on the General Principles of Organizing Self-Government specifies how local communities can express their wishes by legal acts, local referenda, and citizen law-making initiatives.
- The 1998 Federal Law on Noncommercial Organizations and Presidential Decree No. 1370, "Main Guidelines of the State Policy for Developing Local Self-Government," dated 15 October 1999, provide further support for citizen involvement. Noncommercial organizations can be set up for social, charitable, cultural, educational, scientific, and managerial purposes, to protect citizens' health, or to meet spiritual and other nonmaterial needs.

While these legislative generalities were admirable, public participation in the chemical demilitarization process has been treated in an ambiguous and inconsistent way. For example, a major landmark in Russia's demilitarization effort is

the 1997 federal law on Chemical Weapons Convention ratification. It contains numerous terms and conditions for Chemical Weapons Convention implementation and for the chemical demilitarization process in general. However, there is not a single specific reference to the role of the public, the NGOs, or local authorities. At the same time, a resolution of the State Duma dated 11 June 1999 provides several specific recommendations, among them the inclusion of public representatives and independent scientists in the interagency group that would oversee implementation of Russia's chemical demilitarization legislation. According to the resolution, relevant public views must be considered in any decision on the location of chemical weapons destruction facilities and their environmental assessment.¹⁶

Evolving Patterns of Engagement between NGOs and Government Authorities

In addition to the Chapayevsk fiasco, the communist approach of imposing the will of the Moscow-based federal government on local communities misfired again in the early 1990s. The Presidential Committee for Convention-Related Chemical and Biological Weapons Matters, established in 1992, developed a chemical demilitarization program calling for the transportation of organophosphorus chemical munitions from two storage sites to a former chemical weapons production facility in the Republic of Chuvashia for destruction. The facility, located in the city of Novocheboksarsk, manufactured chemical agents from 1972 to 1987 but was converted to produce fertilizers and household chemicals. Even before the people of Chuvashia could reach consensus on a response, however, the neighboring republic of Tatarstan, in October 1992, declared itself a zone free of production, storage, and transportation of weapons of mass destruction. This action effectively blocked the transportation routes that could bring chemical weapons materials to the Novocheboksarsk destruction facility. The Chuvash legislature later issued its own decree banning chemical weapons disposal or destruction facilities on its territory.

In 1992, the Yeltsin government's chemical demilitarization initiative failed because, as in 1989, the human dimensions of the issue were ignored. Federal authorities grossly underestimated the role that the public could play in supporting or undercutting an important demilitarization project. The federal government mistook the positive commitment by the Chuvash facility's management to imply similar support from local communities.

The discussion and subsequent approval by the Federal Assembly of the draft Law on Chemical Weapon Destruction illustrates a painful transition toward more democratic procedures and consideration of the public interest. The draft law was submitted to the Duma in September 1995. Approval of the first reading in December 1995 made it possible to take the next step, namely, soliciting comments, suggestions, and amendments to the text from regional authorities, local communities, and independent scientists. Thirty regions submitted responses that supported approximately 170 amendments. The amendments focused on delimitation of jurisdiction, the safety of the chemical weapons destruction process, and

the rights of individuals and public organizations. Other amendments concerned the establishment of monitoring and supervising bodies, possible compensation for the staff and those living close to destruction facilities, dissemination of reliable information, and the rights of public organizations to be involved in decision making and implementation. The law was also changed to make information on chemical weapons storage, transport, and destruction more available.

Following adoption of the law and Chemical Weapons Convention ratification, the Russian government asked the ministries and agencies involved to develop and approve, *inter alia*, a concept of information sharing and procedures for visits to chemical weapons storage facilities by public representatives.¹⁷ The Ministry of Defense handles information sharing, albeit with mixed success, through information centers at all seven chemical demilitarization sites. Their mandate is to maintain relations with the regional and local media and to conduct briefings for local communities.

Overall, there has been some progress in getting the public involved in the process. Some Russian environmental NGOs and regional organizations have begun to work together with the government. In January 1999, however, seventy-nine Russian NGOs signed a letter to President Yeltsin, warning him of the dangers of the national chemical demilitarization program unless it is adequately funded and administered and urging him to heed public views. In terms of public acceptance, there is inherent risk in an underfunded demilitarization program. What may be state-of-the-art destruction technology can easily become obsolete.

On the negative side, the government still tries to intimidate some NGOs. In early 2000, the Procurator's Office instructed its regional branches to investigate whether local NGOs act in accordance with their originally declared mandate and comply with relevant Russian laws. This review included personal interviews with NGO leaders and audits of their financial status. The NGOs' main concern was that they might have inadvertently violated some provisions of the State Secrecy Law or related regulations. Another setback was the restructuring of Russia's executive branch in May 2000, with the abolition of the State Committee for Environmental Protection as an independent agency and its inclusion in the Ministry of Natural Resources. Independent observers believe that this transformation of the environmental service will weaken its financial status and ability to work with NGOs. The Russian environmental NGOs united in protest against this move and demanded a referendum.

Finally, as President Vladimir Putin continues to strengthen the federal government, the role of regional and municipal leaders is likely to erode. As a result, the federal government may apply additional pressure on NGOs active in chemical demilitarization or at least reverse the trend toward treating them as important counterparts. In summer 2000, the government transferred most chemical demilitarization functions from the defense ministry to the recently established Munition Agency, a highly controversial move. On one hand, a civilian agency is a more credible partner in dealing with the public, but on the other hand, the agency lacks experienced personnel to do the job. Moreover, the stored chemical

weapons stockpiles remain in the custody of the defense ministry, which is to retain a significant role in the chemical demilitarization program.

Conclusion

The diverse nongovernmental players involved in the U.S. and Russian chemical demilitarization programs share at least four motivational imperatives in pursuing their goals: the desire for benefits to local communities; concerns about the safety of the destruction technologies and procedures; attitudes of “not in my backyard”; and the search by ambitious politicians, scientists, or public organizations for a high-profile mission.

Despite substantial similarities in their motivations, the activities of U.S. and Russian NGOs differ significantly because of each country’s social context. The American chemical weapons disposal program appears to be on a safe path but may miss its Chemical Weapons Convention–determined completion deadline at some sites due in part to successful opposition to incineration by many NGOs. On the other hand, the Russian demilitarization program will certainly miss the Chemical Weapons Convention deadlines, but the Russian NGOs may play a significant role in steering the program toward public acceptance.

As Russia has lost its superpower status and plunged into economic crisis, its NGOs’ commitment to global security, disarmament, and physical protection of chemical weapons stockpiles seems less important than in the United States, which has enhanced its global responsibilities. Whereas American NGOs operate in a mature, prosperous, democratic society that enjoys media transparency and has adequate funds, their Russian counterparts are just beginning to gain influence. Gaps in the Russian legal system and scarce funds tend to cause them to act unconventionally. The Russian public has had only limited input into the laws surrounding the chemical demilitarization process and is now trying to compensate by revising existing laws. Although both U.S. and Russian NGOs have limited trust in the military, the U.S. Army has developed better public relations programs. In contrast, the Russian Ministry of Defense lacks experience, patience, and even willingness to cooperate with the Russian public.

As Russia continues to implement free market reforms and nurture its fledgling democratic values, NGOs will become more significant. The public backlash against the abolition of the State Committee for Environmental Protection is further evidence that, despite Putin’s high approval rating and continued economic hardships, NGOs will continue to care for and promote their own environmental agenda. Technological disasters such as the sinking of the nuclear-powered submarine and the fire on the Moscow television tower are likely to strengthen grassroots environmental organizations. Some of the lessons from the U.S. experience may be successfully applied in Russia; for example, the U.S. Assembled Chemical Weapon Assessment program may be a useful model for public participation. Also, it would make sense to encourage in Russia quasi-official organizations similar to the American citizens advisory commissions, which could help facilitate public acceptance of demilitarization operations at Russian stockpile sites. (One citizens advisory commission was established at the Shchuchie site

in April 2000.)¹⁸ Because Russia's chemical demilitarization program is so poorly funded, a significant portion of the money for this activity should come from foreign donors.

NOTES

1. *Economist*, 11 December 1999, 20–21; 29 January 2000, 25–27.
2. By way of illustration, at the Shchuchie community, Kurgan oblast, where the U.S.-funded chemical demilitarization project was to be implemented, there were no gas pipelines or sewage systems as of mid-1999. The water supply functioned for only a few hours per day. *Delovoi Ural*, 23 July 1999.
3. *Problemy Khimicheskoi Bezopasnosti*, UCSINFO Report 271, 29 May 1998.
4. *Yadernyi Kontrol* 5 (September–October 1999): 24.
5. Lev Fyodorov, interview with author, Munster, Germany, 30 August 2000.
6. Lois Ember, *Chemical and Engineering News*, 10 January 2000, 7.
7. Chemical Weapons Working Group, "Chemical Weapons Disposal Chronology," at www.cwwg.org/chronology.html.
8. A. Picardi, P. Johnston, and R. Stringer, *Alternative Technologies for Detoxification of Chemical Weapons: An Information Document*, Greenpeace International, Washington, DC, 24 May 1991.
9. National Research Council, *Disposal of Chemical Munitions and Agents* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1984).
10. Amy E. Smithson, *The U. S. Chemical Weapons Destruction Program: Views, Analysis, and Recommendations* (Washington, DC: Henry L. Stimson Center, 1994).
11. National Research Council, *Review and Evaluation of Alternative Chemical Disposal Technologies* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1996).
12. National Research Council, *Review and Evaluation of Alternative Technologies for Demilitarization of Assembled Chemical Weapons* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1999).
13. United States Army, *Supplemental Report to Congress*, 30 September 1999.
14. ACWA Dialogue on Assembled Chemical Weapons Assessment Meeting, Washington, DC, 25–28 August 1999.
15. Igor Khripunov, "The Human Element in Russia's Chemical Weapons Disposal Efforts," *Arms Control Today* 25, no. 6 (July–August 1995): 18.
16. "On Unsatisfactory Implementation of Russia's Obligation in Complying with the Chemdemil Weapons Convention," resolution of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly, 11 June 1999.
17. "On Approval of the Plan of Main Arrangements for Implementing Federal Laws on the Chemical Weapons Convention Ratification and chemical weapons Destruction," government resolution 334, 21 March 1998.
18. Galina Vepreva, "Chief Mission Is Informing the Public," *Zvezda* 60, 8 August 2000.