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TRANSCRIPT

The Negotiator Files: A Conversation with Linton Brooks

FEATURING

Ambassador Linton Brooks

INTERVIEWED BY

Dr. Amy Nelson

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Amy Nelson:

Well, Linton, there are great many arms control topics we could discuss today, but we're here to talk about the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty talks, or START I. These were assigned in 1991 after over a decade, or nearly a decade, of negotiations, and are credited with both significantly reducing the size of U.S. and Soviet nuclear arsenals and playing a critical role in stabilizing U.S.-Soviet relations as the USSR was dissolving. Your leadership and diplomatic skills are said to be instrumental in navigating the complexities of the negotiation and instead setting a standard for subsequent arms control agreements like START II and New START.

So, let's begin at the beginning. If you would set the scene, what were the factors leading up to the negotiation? SALT had been signed in '72, SALT II efforts had failed, and then here we are in 1991. Could you talk about the factors leading up to the negotiation, the interim dialogues? What fundamentally first drove the U.S. and Soviet Union to the table at that time?

Linton Brooks:

Well, what drove the U.S. and Soviet Union to the table was, essentially, at first, the need to negotiate an INF treaty, a treaty banning intermediate range missiles, and the United States had started a negotiation. This is early in the Reagan administration. First thing you understand about START I is it took eight years and pretty much everybody you know was chief negotiator for a while. So, it's a very long process, and the process really was furthered by the arrival of President Gorbachev as the leader, or, I guess, General Secretary Gorbachev, at the time, as the leader of the Soviet Union.

And as my counterpart once explained it to me, they needed an arms control agreement because in their command economy, they wanted to shift resources away from military into economic developments. And so we started ... What we wanted was reductions, but particularly we wanted a certain kind of reductions. We wanted to reduce the risk of a first strike. So, we wanted to favor missiles with few warheads over missiles with many warheads, missiles at sea, over missiles ashore, and bombers over missiles at all. And so the structure of START was aimed to do that.

Now, it was a compromise, and so we didn't end up with everything we wanted. We ended up cutting heavy ICBMs most suitable for a strike in half. We did not end up with a limit on ICBMs. We did end up treating bombers more generously than all ballistic missiles.

Amy Nelson:

By permitting more bombers under the treaty?

Linton Brooks:

Well, by permitting, basically, by the way we counted them. We counted bombers based on an agreed value for the cruise missiles they could carry, and bombers that didn't carry cruise missiles, we just dropped bombs, we agreed would only count as one, even though any bomber would carry more than that. So, what that meant was we were ... First, what it means is that when we say that we agreed on 6,000 weapons, that really means 8,000 because the bombers could have counted much more, but it also means that we came to an agreement.

Amy Nelson:

Tell me more about heavy ICBMs, because the U.S. didn't really have any. The Soviets had them. This was an asymmetry in the arsenals. Could you talk more about the nature of the debate around heavy ICBMs?

Linton Brooks:

Sure. We wanted to eliminate heavy ICBMs because that was such an important part of the Soviet arsenal that was unlikely to happen. Soviet ICBMs had a curious background. In the Cold War, the earlier Cold War, the Soviets did not have very accurate missiles, and so they compensated that by having very high yield weapons.

Amy Nelson:

And did both the U.S. and the Soviets know this about their missile technology?

Linton Brooks:

Yes. And when the Soviets got more accurate, then they could use the ... instead of throwing a couple of enormous warheads, they could throw a lot of large warheads. And our concern was that we thought they could, in a preemptive strike, destroy much of the ICBM force.

Amy Nelson:

So, that the United States couldn't retaliate?

Linton Brooks:

So the ICBMs couldn't retaliate, or wouldn't retaliate because the cities would still be undamaged. The submarines of the time, early Cold War, carried relatively few missiles and did not have the accuracy. That was not true by the time I got involved in the negotiations, but ... we were all ...

Now, it's important to understand that there is, as far as I can tell, no evidence at all that the Soviets ever considered such a strategy. The Soviets believed that the nuclear war would grow out of a conventional war. The idea of a bolt out of the blue owed a lot more to Pearl Harbor than it did to any reading of Soviet doctrine. An example, the author of the Delicate Balance of Terror, one of the seminal early works, wife wrote the definitive biography on Pearl Harbor.

So, I think our concern about bolt out of the blue was probably never real, but we still worry about that. We still posture ourselves so that even if there were ... even if, as you and I are sitting here today, the Russians decide to launch an attack on the United States with no warning, we would still be able to retaliate in a way that would essentially end this Russian Federation as a functioning society. So, we still worry about that because we can, but we started worrying about it early because we misread the Soviets.

Amy Nelson:

And just unpack that more clearly. This is going to be for students. So, we misread the Soviets. We thought they might be wanting to-

Linton Brooks:

There were some early writings in the Soviet military literature by a guy named Marshal Sokolovsky. I'm probably mispronouncing the name. And he seemed to advocate this kind of attitude. But by 1980, at the latest, the Russians had concluded that a nuclear war couldn't be won, and they didn't want one either, but their approach was very much based on the kind of large mass fires that the Soviet army had been so good at.

Amy Nelson:

Terrific. And broadly speaking, broad brush strokes, the United States is seeking greater stability at lower numbers. The Soviet Union has new leadership. They are looking to retool their economy, spend less on weapons. So, both sides have motivations to come to the table. Can you talk to me about the early conversations setting the agenda for the negotiations? First of all-

Linton Brooks:

Well, not very much because one of the things you have to understand is all the really exciting decisions get made by presidents and secretaries of state. What I do is turn those really exciting decisions into 700 pages of documents to make sure that they were ... Easy to follow seems a strange term for that much ... to make sure that we had agreements. But in particular, to make sure of verification.

You have to understand, in the Cold War, we believed that the Soviets would cheat. We believed ... an Assistant Secretary of Defense once told me that the Soviets would cheat even when it was not in their interest because that's just the way they were. And we believed that, and they might even have been right. I mean, the Soviets clearly cheated in a number of things on the ABM Treaty, putting radars where they were not allowed simply because it was cheaper and easier for them. So, we convinced ourselves we needed an extremely robust verification regime. And since we had some very creative Americans who could think of very odd ways the Soviets might cheat, that verification regime had some things which were really guarding against very unlikely capabilities.

Amy Nelson:

Yeah. I just want to back up a bit. Talk to me about your appointment as chief negotiator. How did that come to pass?

Linton Brooks:

It came to pass for reasons that had nothing to do with arms control. In some ways. When the Bush administration, George H. W. Bush administration came in, they were eager to prove that they were not the third Reagan administration. And so they went out of their way to replace many officials they didn't have to replace. And one of the jobs they decided to replace was the chief negotiator who at the time was a guy named Reed Hanmer, a longtime career civil servant, not widely known to the public. And they replaced him with a former assistant Secretary of State, a former ambassador to Germany, named Richard Burt. But Burt had no recent experience in arms control.

So, they wanted to give him a deputy who had, and I had been the Reagan administration in the Reagan National Security Council responsible for the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and some other things. And so one of my colleagues suggested that would be a good thing for me to do next, and introduced me to Rick and we hit it off. And so I became his deputy, and for a variety of reasons, he decided that he needed to leave government after a couple of years, and so I became

the de facto chief negotiator. And so it's sort of like a relay race. There are a whole lot of people were running, but the guy who gets his picture in the paper is the one who carries the baton over the finish line.

Amy Nelson:

And what year was it you took over the process?

Linton Brooks:

What?

Amy Nelson:

What year was it?

Linton Brooks:

Oh, you'd think I would remember that. '90, I think.

Amy Nelson:

Okay. So, we talked about asymmetric drivers coming to the table, and we talked about INF leading up to START I and START I was famously discontinuous, right? There was a lot of coming to the table, leaving the table, starting up again, which is part of why the process took so long. Could you talk about that lack of consistency? What prevents states from staying at the negotiation table, specifically in this case? And-

Linton Brooks:

Well, what the problems were were different things they wanted. The Russians wanted a negotiation on space that would strengthen the ABM treaty, that would further restrict defenses because the Russians ... Soviets in those days ... had an exaggerated belief in U.S. technology. And you may remember that President Reagan became infatuated with a program that was called the Strategic Defense Initiative, but was popularly known as Star Wars. And-

Amy Nelson:

This was mid-1980s?

Linton Brooks:

This was mid-1980s. So, the Russians wanted negotiations about that. In essence, they wanted negotiations-

Amy Nelson:

And INF fell apart over this.

Linton Brooks:

INF had fallen apart over ... the Russians walked out when we started actually deploying things. And so the solution was to have three parallel negotiations, START, INF, and defense in space. But we had quite different objectives in defense in space. In defense and space, our job was to keep the Russians talking and not have anything happen because we didn't want any restrictions. In INF, we finally came to the realization we did want something, and that was the first one that was completed. That was completed before I became a negotiator. That was completed when I was still at the NSC. And we used a lot of that verification in START. In START, both sides wanted something, although what they wanted was a little different, but they both wanted do reductions. So, the solution finally was to link the three under a single negotiator with, generally, in most cases, a separate negotiator for defense in space, Bill Courtney, and then Dave Smith, and-

Amy Nelson:

So, we have intermediate range, strategic, and space.

Linton Brooks:

And defense in space. It was really-

Amy Nelson:

And defense in space.

Linton Brooks:

It called it defense in space, but it was really about defenses.

Amy Nelson:

And how much coordination was going on across these three different fora.

Linton Brooks:

Well, that was one of the things the chief's negotiator was supposed to worry about. But it became relatively easy when INF got out of the way because then all we'd had to do was look at the verification regime for INF, which didn't tell us anything about bombers, but was pretty good verification regime for missiles. So, we used a lot of that. And in defense in space, there was limited coordination on our side because we didn't want anything to happen, and the people we had there were expert at making things not happen.

Amy Nelson:

Okay, interesting. So, the talks lasted quite a long time. You took over in the last third. Talk about, in your experience, what negotiation tools and skills are most important for overcoming obstacles to staying at the table, to reaching an agreement? Where's the finesse?

Linton Brooks:

Okay. What do you need to have on the delegation? First, you need to have, obviously, representatives, all the major agencies in Washington, and you need to work hard because for much of the time I was involved in this, major agencies in Washington were not getting along.

And so our job was to keep that fight from permeating the delegation, so that the delegation could continue to work together and if there were problems, we shipped them home and let them get adjudicated back there. So, first thing you need to do is to try and keep harmony among the-

Amy Nelson:

Among the agencies.

Linton Brooks:

Second thing you needed is to have people who were technical experts on the weapons systems. And I will tell you two stories about that. The Air Force had a number of officers assigned as part of the delegation called ... they're called technical advisors, the hierarchy and the delegations. They had a delegation, the members who typically represent the major agencies including the ICs. So, in those days, there would always be two members of the delegation from the State Department, one of whom was actually a State Department long-term vision, and the other had visited the State Department briefly on their way back to their home in the intelligence community. And now we acknowledge that, but in those days, we did not, even though everybody knew it. So, one of the Russian foreign minister things was a KGB major general, and everybody knew that, but it was just useful to present not.

And then below that, you have advisors. So, Washington would send you guidance and typically you had to rephrase that to fit with the way you were doing the drafting. And we were about to lay down something when, as I recall, it was a major, but I not sure came and said, "You understand that the way this is worded, it will cause the Strategic Air Command to completely change the way they do training." I said, "No, I don't understand that, and I bet you that's not what Washington wanted." And so we found a way to reword it to avoid that unintended consequence, but it was because we had somebody ... Now, the Navy, at the time, was very short of people and tended not to send submarine experts because this was a time when those people were quite short. So, we had a number of Navy officers, but they didn't have expertise. So, we agreed to a provision for how we would handle first stages of the Trident II missile, which turned out to be impossible to implement and the-

Amy Nelson:

Because of ops tempo?

Linton Brooks:

No, because it's physically impossible. We did not understand. We did not have people who had recent experience with the design and handling of the missile and the way it was moved around once it was broken into stages.

Amy Nelson:

And this was the first treaty SLBMs had been included in?

Linton Brooks:

Well, the first treaty that ... yes, in any kind of detail that we'd had ... So, basically we signed a treaty that was impossible to comply with. Now, it turns out there's a body to deal with those things. And so the Joint Compliance and Inspection Commission, one of their first jobs was to

clean up that particular error. My point here is not that it was a serious problem, my point is to distinguish between the situation in which we had technical knowledge of the Air Force system, which we then were able to use to make the treaty workable and other systems, the Navy system, where we did not have technical knowledge. And as it turns out, our friends in the Soviet Union were sticklers for great detail.

Another example. Right now when everybody has a thousand photographs on their cell phone, it's hard to remember that in 1990 photographs were not easily obtained in the Russian Federation or the Soviet Union then. So, we had a provision that when new equipment was put into effect, there'd be an opportunity to look at it and inspect it, and that would obviously apply to all the things that were in existence. And one piece of equipment, which was a Russian transporter for a missile, because they had mobile missiles and we did not, which was another thing that we had to both deal with, another asymmetry we had to deal with. So, we wanted pictures left, right, front, back, and overhead, and they said, it's just impossible. There's not enough film in the Soviet Union. We'll give you one picture and you can take the others later. So, they gave us one picture, and when we went to take the others-

Amy Nelson:

During a verification?

Linton Brooks:

During the initial verification period, turned out that we had been sloppy in drafting what we were going to be able to do-

Amy Nelson:

To inspect. Yeah.

Linton Brooks:

And so a very narrow reading of what we said was, yes, we had one picture from the right side and we could take six more pictures from the right side, but we couldn't take any of the other pictures. We thought we had it ... right. My point is that you need to understand in great detail what you're trying to do because there is no such thing as the spirit of the treaty. There's what the words say. And you can be reasonably confident that even if there's great euphoria when you sign a treaty ... because you don't sign treaties with people ... We don't have an arms control treaty with Britain because we're not worried about going to war with Britain. We have arms control treaties with the Soviets and then the Russians because we are worried about going to war with them. And what that means is there will come a time when they will insist on implying the letter of the law.

Once again, that means you need to make sure that the letter of the law is very carefully written and that the letter of the law can be expressed in all the languages and-

Amy Nelson:

Have the same meaning.

Linton Brooks:

... when we originally, we were going to have the treaty in Russian and English, but when the Soviet Union fell apart and we had to take the treaty that we'd already completed and transform it into something that would work for the new states, the new Secretary of State at the time said, "Well, we'll do it in all their languages." And that was to try and placate the Ukrainians who were very uncertain about giving up weapons because they thought, correctly, that the Russians didn't actually regard them as a real country.

And so we wanted to do that, but that meant that since the other state was Kazakhstan and Kazakh is a Turkic language, we had to find somebody who would certify that the copies were equally efficient. And we finally found a professor of Turkic language, gave him some appointment. I met him at the airport to give him an arms control thing, and he went off to certify that the languages were official. My point is not ... and these are just fun stories. I mean, they didn't seem fun at the time, but that sweeping statements by senior people have to be backed up by people who understand the details and who understand the details of-

Amy Nelson:

Both sides' systems, right?

Linton Brooks:

... and both sides. So, there are all sorts of ... There's a whole annex of agreed statements, which are basically clarifying what we mean by things. In some cases, simply acknowledging something that everybody knew, like Guam is part of the United States, and so therefore restrictions about permanently basing bombers overseas don't apply to Guam because Guam is part of the United States. But it was useful to write that down. It was useful to write down a whole bunch of things. We used the term metric mile for a thousand kilometers that doesn't translate to Russian. So, we had to write an agreed statement about what we meant.

Amy Nelson:

Was there a glossary to go with?

Linton Brooks:

Oh, yeah, there's a glossary. I mean, START has the treaty, several protocols, two annexes, agreed statements and data, and then it is accompanied by four agreements signed by the Secretary of State, I think seven agreements signed by me, and a whole bunch of unilateral statements that were made to satisfy the domestic concerns of other countries. It's enormously complicated. And at one time, at one time, I thought I was the only person who actually in the United States who understands the complexity of it.

Amy Nelson:

It's a lot of information to hold, I bet.

Linton Brooks:

Now, I'm pretty sure I don't because it's a long time ago.

Amy Nelson:

I want to come back to the negotiation of the Lisbon Protocol on the heels of everything that had been negotiated. But before we get to that, can you summarize the outcome of the negotiations? We all know that ICBMs, SLBMs and bombers that were limited, but how did the negotiated agreement compare to the United States original bargaining position from your perspective?

Linton Brooks:

We got a reduction of heavy ICBMs by half. That was a big deal for us. We did not get additional restrictions on general ICBMs, but we did get bombers being treated much more leniently than ballistic missiles. So, ballistic missiles were counted with the number of warheads that they could carry, even if some of them didn't. Bombers were counted with an agreed number of cruise missiles that they could carry and were counted as one if they didn't carry cruise missiles but simply carried bombs. So, for example, the B-2 counted as one.

Amy Nelson:

One gravity bomb.

Linton Brooks:

Because what that meant was, first, that the 6,000 number ... treaty limits both sides to 6,000 accountable warheads. What that really means is that the counting rules limit ... you have 6,000 things you can have, but they aren't all real. And when you look at what's real, the treaty probably allows you to have about 8,000.

Amy Nelson:

Was that a disappointment or a perceived shortcoming?

Linton Brooks:

No, it was just fact. It was just fact.

Amy Nelson:

Okay.

Linton Brooks:

I mean, we got most of the verification we wanted, which was a big deal since it allowed a lot of inspections.

Amy Nelson:

On-site inspections.

Linton Brooks:

On-site inspections in Russia or in the Soviet Union. And so I think generally we got what we wanted. There were some things that we didn't want included, and those were basically tactical weapons ashore in Europe. Remember in the Cold War, we had thousands of essentially war

fighting weapons. We had all kinds of weapons which were designed to keep the Soviet armor from reaching the Channel. We believed during the Cold War that the Russians could be at the Channel in 14 days, and that the only thing that kept them from doing that was the nuclear weapons that we had deployed there. We didn't want to get into how those were counted because they didn't threaten each other's homeland. The idea was we were worried about weapons that threatened each other's homeland.

The Russians were worried about our nuclear sea launch cruise missiles, and we came to a solution in which we said we would agree to exchange information on how many were deployed, and we would agree that no more than a certain number ... I can't remember the number right now ... would be deployed. That number was set higher than the United States' actual inventory. So, it was in some ways a fig leaf that would make the Russians happy and it didn't. What we were trying to avoid was anything that would involve inspections of general purpose ships and submarines, because that's a hugely disruptive-

Amy Nelson:

Yeah. All right, let's take a quick break, but I want to ask you whether the inspection provisions for INF helped pave the way for inspections for New START?

Linton Brooks:

It certainly did, but only with regard to ballistic missiles. They didn't help at all with bombers because INF didn't cover bombers.

Amy Nelson:

So, START I introduced rigorous verification protocols that in part built on a tradition that was begun under INF of more intrusive verification provisions where SALT I had relied exclusively on national technical means. INF allowed on-site inspections for verification of the destruction of intermediate range missiles and START I included on-site inspections, data exchanges, and continuous monitoring. Can you talk about the negotiation of these verification provisions?

Linton Brooks:

Sure. The data exchange, it turns out that's actually a fairly important provision because it's hard to tell a consistent large-scale lie. So, yes, data exchange, they told us things and we accepted them, but that allowed a system for updating. There was a huge notification so that we could update what was going on. So, we knew what we had when we started. And then we had a notification that updated missiles coming out of service, missiles coming into service, bombers going in for maintenance, bombers coming out of maintenance. All kinds of data on mobile ICBMs. Here is another general principle. Reciprocity. The Soviets had to provide all kinds of information on mobile missiles. As a result, we didn't have any mobile missiles. The Soviets insisted on all kinds of information on bombers. Now, if you look at what we were providing on bombers, and you say what strategic purpose is this information? It's not.

Amy Nelson:

Just tit-for-tat.

Linton Brooks:

It is basically the notion that if the Soviets are going to have a certain burden, there should be comparable burden on the United States. And it's as simple as that.

Amy Nelson:

Very much typifies the relationship.

Linton Brooks:

Well, it does, but it also, I think, is arms control agreements have to be equitable and verifiable. Equitable means not just that ... doesn't mean you have to be equal in every character, because we didn't have any heavy ICBMs. It meant that we had to, in general, be able to look people in the eye and say the forces that the Soviets are allowed and the forces the American are roughly equal. They're strategically equal, even though they have mobile missiles, and we don't. We could have if we wanted, but we didn't. And we have more types of bombers than they. We have better bombers. The argument for treating bombers more leniently is twofold. Actually, we've talked about one, which is that they're not suitable for a first strike.

But the other is since we weren't going to restrict air defenses because we didn't know how to do that, and since there was a much more elaborate air defense in the Soviet Union than there was in the United States at the time, treating bombers more leniently recognized that they were facing defenses that the missiles weren't because at the time we had the ABM Treaty, which basically limited each side to a hundred ABMs, and we didn't have any. The Congress had quite wisely decided that the 100 interceptors we were going to deploy, Spartan and Sprint, would not actually add that much to our security. And so we didn't have any. The Russians deployed a hundred around Moscow. They still have them, although they are, I think, only 60-some-odd that are actually there. They're modernizing them, but I don't think the modernization is going to increase-

Amy Nelson:

I was just going to say they modernized them. Yeah.

Linton Brooks:

... the numbers.

Amy Nelson:

So, if I understand what you're saying is that you can do apples to oranges to a certain extent-

Linton Brooks:

Yeah, you have to because-

Amy Nelson:

... with rigorous verification provisions.

Linton Brooks:

Yes. But it also ... and that's not quite what I'm saying. What I'm saying is that you have to have rigorous verification because you don't trust each other. I mean, if you trusted each other

completely, why would you bother to go through all this? So, you have to have verification, but you have to be able to say that the two treaties are roughly comparable. They allow you to have roughly comparable forces because otherwise nobody will ratify it. The Soviet would not accept a treaty that condemned them to inferiority, and the United States would never ratify a treaty that condemned us to inferiority. And so you have to be able to say that, even though they're not equal in ... if you go weapon system by weapon system, if you look overall you can make a military judgment that these are equitable forces. They do not put either side at a disadvantage.

Amy Nelson:

I want to ask about something slightly different. Legal advisors seem to play a very significant role now in the architecting of arms control and related treaties.

Linton Brooks:

They did then too.

Amy Nelson:

Did they? Okay.

Linton Brooks:

Yes. The legal advisor who usually comes from the State Department is very important because, first, there are legal advisors back in Washington in the backstopping process that provides instructions and they're looking at legal, but there's also a legal advisor in the delegation, and the legal advisor is making sure that it's unambiguous ... what we have agreed to. That what we've agreed to is consistent with our law and consistent with the broad instructions that the president had given us. Legal advisors are very important. And that's in part, because as I said earlier, that you don't want to have a treaty that can be read two different ways because if you do, sure as the earth grows little apples, you'll face a situation in which the two sides are reading it. And some of that is just inevitable because you ... strange interpretations that neither side thought of can come up later. But that's why legal advisors are very important.

Amy Nelson:

Great, thank you. So, negotiations finished in '91 and then there was the Lisbon Protocol, but, in between, was there a domestic response to the negotiated treaty? Was it well received domestically?

Linton Brooks:

I think it was generally well received. It was certainly well received on the Hill. I mean, there have been, I can't remember the vote, but it was like 93 to 6 in the Senate. There are a handful of very deep conservatives-

Amy Nelson:

Always.

Linton Brooks:

... in those days who just didn't believe in arms control. And I think now you see, if you look at New START, the margins are much less. Now, some of that you have to understand is a partisan issue. For a long time, it looked like Republicans would negotiate arms control treaties and Democrats would vote for them because they believed in arms control and Republicans would vote for him because it was their guy. And that's why, for example, when Democrats started negotiating arms control treaties, they didn't have that advantage. And that's why Rose Gottemoeller's New START, a very well-crafted treaty, got fewer affirmative votes than START I.

Amy Nelson:

Yep. And she waged a huge campaign to get it ratified too, didn't she?

Linton Brooks:

Well, yeah, we waged a huge campaign. The Congress has a great ability to ask questions, and some of those questions are serious and thoughtful. Some of those questions are to show that I am performing my oversight, but you have to take them seriously. So, I have no idea how many questions we answered. It was within the thousands. You also provide the Congress with a ... we spoke about legal advisors. Treaties are accompanied by what's called an article-by-article analysis. And the article-by-article analysis tells you what each article means in the view of the United States, and they are therefore usually written entirely by the legal team. In my particular case, in START I, that was true. I mean, I was part of the process to review for facts, but the lawyers were in charge.

For START II, President Bush wanted to submit it before he went out of office, and I basically therefore hijacked the article-by-article process and we wrote it and convinced the lawyers that, yes, that was okay. But that's not particularly good government. It was a good thing to do then and there was a good reason for it. But generally, you want the Congress ... and the point is the Congress and the Executive Branch have to have a very common understanding, and the Congress is not going to ratify something that appears to give a blank check to interpretation. So, it's back to this whole point, both because of the relations between the two negotiating teams and countries, but also the relationship within the United States between the executive and legislative branch. You have to be precise, and if you want to be really precise, you have to invite the lawyers.

Amy Nelson:

Noted. Thank you. All right. So, many, many years ago into the crafting of this treaty, the Cold War is raging at the beginning, and by the time the treaty is signed, we're a few months out from the fall of the Berlin Wall. In May of 1992, the Lisbon Protocol was signed. Could you talk about the treaty, the end of the Cold War, and the process of getting the Lisbon Protocol?

Linton Brooks:

Sure. The treaty was signed very shortly before the Soviets collapsed. I sometimes give speeches and I pontificate about the future, and I point out that I spent years negotiating a treaty with a country that went away 157 days after we signed it and I never saw it coming. So, my track record is not perfect. But what happened was the Cold War ended and it ended in a way that we had not expected. We had not expected it would end peacefully.

President Bush gave a speech in Kiev know discouraging states from leaving the union because he thought that the central government would try to coerce them into staying and Gorbachev did not. And when the various states started withdrawing from the union ... Remember the fiction of the Soviet Union was that it was 15 individually sovereign states which had been bound together. And that's why, for example, some of the Soviet states had representation of the United Nations, including Ukraine.

So, we had the breakup, and the breakup happened very suddenly, and I believe nobody saw it coming. Nobody saw it coming in the way it came. I mean, there were reams of people during the Cold War who said, this system cannot endure, but the idea that it would fall apart in months and without significant violence was a surprise. So, we woke up. The system woke up and realized that there were several republics that had facilities that contributed to weapons on them, but there were four that had actual weapons. So, we had ICBMs, and these were almost entirely ICBMs. I mean, there were bombers, but the bombers all went back to Russia quickly. Half of the heavy ICBMs were largely in Kazakhstan. Ukraine had a number of the more modern ICBMs. Belarus had a regiment of mobile ICBMs. I mean, like nine missiles or something. So, not particularly significant.

The question was how do we treat that? And we concluded after some false starts that we had to take the treaty and make it from a treaty between the United States, the Soviet Union, into a treaty with five countries. The United States, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. And that's what the Lisbon Protocol did. I was not involved in the Lisbon Protocol.

Amy Nelson:

That was Steve Pifer.

Linton Brooks:

What?

Amy Nelson:

Steve Pifer.

Linton Brooks:

Steve ... well, Jim Timby is ... Jim Timby's been involved in everything, but Jim is the one person I think of as most involved. I was hospitalized at the time.

Amy Nelson:

Oh, dear.

Linton Brooks:

Turns out all that stuff they tell you about you should get up on planes otherwise you get blood clots, turns out that's true.

Amy Nelson:

That's true. I'm so sorry. And so many flights, I'm sure, throughout this process.

Linton Brooks:

Yeah, the Lisbon Protocol is fairly short and very simple. It was accompanied by agreements from the three non-Russian states that they would ... I think there may have been a time limit within a few years. But the idea was that they would give up all their weapons, send them back to Russia, and that they would then join the-

Amy Nelson:

NPT.

Linton Brooks:

... Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as non-nuclear states. And that went very smoothly in Belarus because there was very little there. It went smoothly in Kazakhstan. The Kazakhs had some problems in that ... most of the ... The Soviet Union, as I'm sure you know, was a very ethnically diverse society, but it was also a very racist society. So, the great Russians were the ones who had the jobs and strategic weapons, and the other smaller republics had jobs and like the railroad through ... So, the Kazakhstans had very few people who understood their new obligations and we had to help them through that. But there was always, they were very firm about getting quickly out of the nuclear business. Nazarbayev, who had been the Soviet leader and turned into the Kazakh president, was an authoritarian, but he worked very hard to create the image of someone who was very serious about nonproliferation.

Ukraine was the most difficult country because they were then, correctly, fearful. But it turns out that Ukraine had already sent the tactical weapons back to Russia. And the strategic weapons they had, quite apart from the question of whether they could have maintained them, were not particularly useful as a defense against Russia because they had a minimum range, which meant they couldn't threaten Moscow. They couldn't do things ... the Ukrainians with some very good diplomacy, largely by then Undersecretary of State Rose Gottemoeller, were persuaded finally to give up their weapons.

So, that all turned us into ... and it turns out, and I was frankly surprised by this, I thought it would be a massive job to take this huge treaty and turn it into a five-party treaty, but it really isn't. Turns out that a few broad principles worked out. And so when we ratified that protocol, then that allowed us to bring the treaty into effect.

Amy Nelson:

Wonderful. In light of the current situation in Ukraine, in light of Ukraine's hesitance in 1991, to give up the strategic nuclear warheads that were based on Ukrainian soil and the debate that played out in the background of the course of this war, should Ukraine have given up its nuclear weapons? And would it be in the situation it's in today vis-à-vis Russia had it given up its nuclear weapons? Do you have thoughts on that?

Linton Brooks:

Well, you only get to have history once. I believe Ken Waltz, the late Ken Waltz, John Mearsheimer, both very smart people, believe Ukraine should have kept weapons. But Ken Waltz believed lots of people should have weapons. They believe that nobody wants nuclear war, so if everybody has nuclear weapons, there won't be a nuclear war. I think that's probably not right, but I'm not sure that I can make an articulate defense of it.

I don't think if Ukraine had kept nuclear weapons, that would have been in its interest. I think, first of all, that it's not clear how long they could have kept them because the Soviet system was to spread out the manufacture of things so that the central government had control. I mean, for example, Kazakhstan is, I think, the world's largest landlocked treaty. It was also where all the naval torpedoes were made in the Soviet era. No sense to that strategically, but a lot of sense to it ... so, I don't think that ... There is an excellent book called Not One Inch, which describes some of the lost opportunities. Mary-

Amy Nelson:

Mariana Budjeryn?

Linton Brooks:

What?

Amy Nelson:

Mariana Budjeryn?

Linton Brooks:

No, no, no, her book is on Ukraine and Ukraine's giving up of the weapons. It's very technically detailed. No, this is a historian. I think it's like Sarotte and the book is Not One Inch. And she argues that there were mistakes made by the United States along the way in which we could have come to a better outcome. But once again, you only get to play history once. So, I don't know. I think that, in hindsight, the administration I served in, the George W. Bush administration, made firm statements that Ukraine and Georgia would both become NATO members. That has not turned out to be helpful-

Amy Nelson:

Let's-

Linton Brooks:

But once again, hindsight is always much better than foresight.

Amy Nelson:

Absolutely. Let's talk about the implementation of the treaty. Did everything go as planned?

Linton Brooks:

Yeah, I think basically, yes. I mean, it is a complex treaty and the implementation commission, which met twice a year, has a whole lot of clarifications that it did, but they're mostly minor. The treaty was quite clear on inspections. Inspectors recorded things. This is what I measured, this is what I saw, and here's my site diagram. I went only in the places I was allowed to look. And so they were not making judgments. So, you didn't have competing individual judgments.

I think the treaty worked very well. There were parts of it that we came to recognize were much more cumbersome than we needed. If you look at the treaty, you'll see limits on all sorts of things

and you say, "Well, why in the world would anybody put a limit on the number of missiles you can have as museums?" Because suppose they declare a thousand missiles in museums and they were all real, and how would we know? So, there were all sorts of things in the treaty which were guarding against unlikely events. That's why the New START Treaty was able to jettison all that. And what we realized was that the Russian Federation couldn't really afford to keep the ... whether it was legally allowed to, they didn't need to cheat because they weren't trying to build up.

So, I think that the treaty worked well. It was more of a burden than it needed to be because it was guarding against a lot of things that were fanciful, and eventually we got rid of some of the things. I mean, the New START Treaty is a much simpler treaty in many ways.

Amy Nelson:

Wonderful. Well, before New START, we had START II and then SALT. You weren't the chief negotiator for START II, but you continued to contribute to arms control efforts as a senior-

Linton Brooks:

Well, START II, I was ... there was no ... I mean, I guess the chief negotiator was James Baker, but I was the person in Geneva writing all the text with the people. I consider myself ... I have a very weasel-worded formulation, but doesn't really claim to be chief negotiator but, I mean, half a chief negotiator. It was almost like we didn't have two delegations. I mean, the euphoria, we could not have negotiated START II six months earlier and we couldn't have negotiated six months later.

It was just this euphoria of the Russian people and the American people had thrown off communism and we were going to mark in the future. And all the little negotiating tricks I would use were unnecessary. I mean, we went through that very, very quickly. So, START II was a very good treaty, and, in particular, it was based on a very simple deal. We, the Russians can't afford to maintain the forces that were allowed under START I, so we want to go down lower and the Americans are more than happy to join you going lower, but we want you to go lower in a way that gets rid of MIRV ICBMs. So, we wanted stability, they wanted a good treaty, and it fell apart because of conflicting views of missile defense.

Amy Nelson:

You just referred to all your little tricks that you used during the negotiations of START I.

Linton Brooks:

Oh, well, for example, I was fortunate to have a counterpart who was a very decent person, and I would go through this logic about why we needed a certain number of inspections, and he said, "Well, I understand that, but I've got some hard-line members of the delegation. They're in a position to cause me problems and much ..." "How about this? You say you need six negotiations, you ask for eight and I'll offer four, and then we'll compromise on six." Okay, now that sounds silly, but that is not a made-up example, and you didn't need any of that.

So, I went in and we wanted two inspections. So, I said, "Well, I'll offer four." I said, "Four inspections." He says, "Fine. Next issue." I have no idea what we would've done with those four inspections. I mean, we didn't need them. But the point is that it was a ... The Treaty of Moscow, the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty came about because when the United States withdrew

from the ABM Treaty, the Russians were obviously upset. But this was still in the era where we thought we could work with Putin. And President Bush agreed, President George W. Bush agreed to Putin's request. They wanted a new offensive arms treaty if they were going to ... and the treaty is ... I mean, it was in effect for a little while, but it didn't really do very much. So, it was much more of a symbolic thing. Looks much more like a declaration than a detailed treaty. But you were asking have I kept in touch on strategic issues? And the answer is yes.

Amy Nelson:

Yes. And are credited with shaping a lot of the field. You mentioned your Russian counterpart and the kind of deal you did on the side. Are there other personal dynamics that were at play there? Do you have any stories about having say dinner with your interlocutors or fun anecdotes?

Linton Brooks:

Oh, well, very certainly. The opportunity for misunderstanding each other is very great. And we had very different cultures. There's a story from before my time that the Russian military members of delegation came to the American military and said, "You have to get your chief negotiator to stop mentioning specific missiles in plenary meetings because our foreign ministry is not cleared for the names of our missiles." And-

Amy Nelson:

Which had been enumerated in INF to incredible detail.

Linton Brooks:

Yes. Yes, when I first joined the delegation and my predecessor Ambassador Burt, we took a week, we took the members of the delegation, we went to visit ICBM base, went into a missile silo. We went to visit ballistic missile submarine. We went to visit where cruise missiles were made so we could see that it's just not possible to identify that because it looked like any other building. We went to where the then super secret B-2 was designed. And my counterpart had been an arms control negotiator, my first counterpart, before I became chief of the delegation, had been an arms control negotiator for 25 years. He had never seen a weapon. He had never seen a ballistic missile. He had never seen any strategic weapon of any kind because he was in the foreign ministry and they didn't do that. So, there's one example of cultural differences.

Another example, the Soviet, and now Russian, Navy has captain 1st rank, captain 2nd rank, captain 3rd rank, roughly comparable to commodore, captain, commander in the American Navy. But I had grown up where colonels and lieutenant colonels were both called Colonel, and so I persistently referred to Captain First Rank Paketov as captain, and he brought me in pictures of different ranks. I finally got it that he wanted to be called captain 1st rank. Now, that was stupid on my part. And so the lesson for future is get somebody to explain those kinds of cultural things because, in my era, it was a major step to call someone by their first name in the Soviet Union.

As you recall, we're in a culture where people get introduced by their first name. Once they really get to know each other well, they'll get around to mentioning what their last name is. Well, those kind of cultural mismatches can really hurt. So, those are minor stories, but the lesson for the future is make sure you understand those kind of attitudes. What is their attitude toward weekends? What is their attitude toward meetings? And then there are just simple things that you learn. For example, never ask what they think of a new proposal. You put down a new proposal and you say ... you may do it in a large meeting to emphasize that it's a formal new proposal, but

you never ask them, "What do you think?" You say, "I'll hope you'll carefully study this and we'll look forward to your reactions."

Amy Nelson:

Okay.

Linton Brooks:

Because what's the easiest thing to say if you say-

Amy Nelson:

[foreign language 01:17:19]

Linton Brooks:

Oh, no, I can't see how we could ever accept that. And then they're boxed in. So, you never do that. Those are things that they're not particularly unique to arms control negotiations. They're just things that you learn.

Amy Nelson:

Russians also have a reputation in this context of patiently waiting for the United States to table the first proposal. Was that your experience?

Linton Brooks:

That was. That's not always been the case. My understanding ... I was not involved in the Iranian negotiations, but I have been told by people who were that the Russians were helpful there.

Amy Nelson:

For the JCPOA?

Linton Brooks:

But generally most new ideas came from the American side. And I think that, I don't know whether it's negotiating style or whether it's cultural or whether it's just Americans love new ideas and we keep thinking of ... but the Russians, the other thing that I learned is don't establish formal fallback positions. And the reason you don't is because they'll leak. I can't remember what the issue was, but the New York Times said, "The Americans are asking for this, but have privately agreed that they'll accept something less." Well, once that's in the public domain, you can say, "Well, my government could never accept less, but-"

Amy Nelson:

It's hard to walk it back.

Linton Brooks:

So, we just stopped. We stopped, literally stopped having ... this was while I was at the Reagan White House, before I was negotiator, we stopped having any kind of informal-

Amy Nelson:

Fallbacks. Yeah.

Linton Brooks:

... positions, even privately because it's very hard-

Amy Nelson:

Makes a lot of sense. That's really helpful information. Thank you. Speaking of the Reagan White House, there's a rumor that in the early '80s, Trump called Reagan to see if he could help jumpstart an arms control process and negotiate a deal. Do you know if there's any truth to this rumor?

Linton Brooks:

The only thing I know of my own knowledge and certainly has widely assumed that he wanted to be somehow involved. I know that he did speak to my predecessor, that guy, and gave him his view of how he should handle the negotiations, which was very much walk out and wait for them to agree. I do not believe my predecessor who I worked, as I say, for a couple of years, took that advice.

Amy Nelson:

Interesting. And then my last question or questions, what do you think the role is ... or the future role for arms control could be? What do you think it should be and what advice do you have for the next generation of arms controllers?

Linton Brooks:

Well, first of all, I think that we may have seen the end of the kind of formal ratified-

Amy Nelson:

Legally binding.

Linton Brooks:

Certainly, we've seen the end for a while because of the deep partisanship in the United States. So, I think that we may want to find new language. The language that I like is risk reduction. I think that we may want to find ways to agree ... For example, it's pretty clear that nothing is going to replace New START. There's not going to be a new negotiation. It's pretty clear that neither the United States or the Russian Federation want to get back into an arms race. It's pretty clear that neither the United States or the Russian Federation wants to appear inferior. So, you can sort of envision President Trump and President Putin speaking at the United Nations and saying, "We will not increase as long as the other side does not." Is that an arms control? I don't know. But it's a way that you can do it.

Jim Timby has written an excellent piece in Daedalus called Arms Control Without Agreements, which serious students of the process will want to be used to. So, I think that we're going to pass through that. Now, in the long term, will we get back to something that is more formal? And there we get into two kinds of problems. One is China. The United States' position is that we do not need to match the combined total of Russia and China. But since we don't know where China's going, we don't know what we do need to do. So, we have to figure out that. The other is the many things that we didn't have to worry about. Space, space and counter space, cyber, artificial intelligence, various forms of defense, various forms of high-tech weapons like hypersonic weapons, whether they're nuclear or not. Figuring out what you have to put in and what you have to leave out is a very difficult problem.

And so I think that future scholars and practitioners will want to spend a lot of time thinking about doing things completely different than I ever did, thinking about going to different forms of agreements, different forms of verification, different forms of what is covered, because I think that's what's going to be necessary. But if I were smart enough to say specifically what they should do, I'd be a lot smarter than I actually am.

Amy Nelson:

Thank you. Very much appreciated. Are you saying that strategic stability is no longer possible to calculate in a sense?

Linton Brooks:

Well, strategic stability is a ... I mean, there's an entire book written edited by Elbridge Colby, and I've forgotten who the other one was-

Amy Nelson:

James Acton?

Linton Brooks:

... on the meaning of strategic stability. So, the first thing I have to talk about strategic stability is say what you mean by it.

Amy Nelson:

Right.

Linton Brooks:

Okay? In the narrow sense that there's not going to be a broad strategic out-of-the-blue attack on the United States because anybody who did that would end up with their country devastated. Strategic stability is a useful concept. On the broader system, if you talk to your Russian colleagues right now, they use strategic stability in a way that sounds almost like national-

Amy Nelson:

Superiority?

Linton Brooks:

National ... well, no, national security. I mean it is everything. Everything is part of strategic stability. And so whether or not the term is useful, I don't know. I think that the idea that you want a system of regulation which is insensitive to minor bumps, insensitive to slightly innovative new things, I think that's true. But exactly how you describe it, I don't think we know yet. So, I think strategic stability, somewhere buried in that term, there is some useful ideas. But the term itself is right now, I think means so much and so many different things that it may not have any real meaning.

Amy Nelson:

I'm inclined to agree. Linton, you've been so forthcoming, and this has been so informative. I've learned a ton. Is there anything else I should have asked you about? Something we didn't cover just now?

Linton Brooks:

Probably, but I'm not absolutely sure what that might be.

Amy Nelson:

Fair enough.

Linton Brooks:

I do think that we need to think a lot about what the next generation of negotiators is going to need. And remember, I made the point about technical knowledge. But we're getting to the point where there is so much knowledge that no human being can encompass it all. So, what kind of skills do we need to develop? I'm not sure we know that yet. I'm not sure we understand that well enough to make a difference, but I don't know.

Amy Nelson:

Yeah.

Linton Brooks:

Anyway, no, I don't think there's anything earth-shaking that you should have asked.

Amy Nelson:

Well, that's a really profound note to end on. I really appreciate you sharing your wealth of knowledge, your wisdom with us, and I learned an incredible amount and I'm sure the project will benefit immensely. So, thank you.

Linton Brooks:

Okay.

(END)