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TRANSCRIPT

The Negotiator Files: A Conversation with Dr. Lewis A. Dunn

FEATURING

Dr. Lewis A. Dunn

INTERVIEWED BY

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Amy Nelson:

> We're delighted to have with us today Dr. Lewis A. Dunn. He was the former US Ambassador and Senior Expert in Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. He served as assistant director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, ACDA during the Reagan administration. He contributed to major US-Soviet arms control efforts during a period of heightened Cold War tension. And, of course, he played key roles in both the 1985 and '95 NPT Review Conferences and subsequent extension. Dr. Dunn, welcome. Thank you for being with us today.

Lewis Dunn:

Thank you. It's my pleasure.

Amy Nelson:

I want to start off with your background, how you got into this field. Can you tell us a bit about your background, your education, your early career, and how you came into arms control as your professional field?

Lewis Dunn:

I originally had a PhD from the University of Chicago where I studied, among others, with Albert Wohlstetter, sort of one of the deans of the deterrence movement. I then went to a small college, Kenyon College, decided I didn't want to be a college professor, and through a friend of mine went to a place called Hudson Institute. Hudson Institute was a major think tank on the East Coast. I arrived at Hudson Institute, I like to say, a month after the Indians tested their peaceful nuclear bomb in 1974, and about two months before Hudson Institute received a major contract to study nuclear non-proliferation because the then head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Fred Ikle decided, "Hey, this is a big problem, nuclear non-proliferation. So, I'm going to get the two people that I know best to study this, Herman Kahn at the Hudson Institute and Albert Wohlstetter out on the West Coast."

So, I was there with Herman Kahn at the Hudson Institute and there was nobody else to do the work on the new contract. So suddenly I was involved in nuclear non-proliferation because of the Indian peaceful bomb. They called it a peaceful nuclear test. It was a bomb by any other means. And I never looked back. I just kept doing nuclear non-proliferation. And it's ironic, it's the same sort of thing. I wanted to come into the Reagan administration in 1981. I believe it was again in May of 1981, the Israelis bombed the Osirak research reactor and the then Secretary of State had the same exact reaction, "Oh my God, I got to pay attention to this nuclear non-proliferation stuff because it could cause problems." So he asked his good friend, Richard Kennedy, who was the Under Secretary of State for Management, he basically said, "Hey Dick, with everything else you're doing, take a look at this." And I had just asked Dick Kennedy, "Gee, could I have a job?" And so again, it was fortuitous.

So that's how I got involved in nuclear non-proliferation, first at the Hudson Institute as an analyst, and then got involved in nuclear non-proliferation in the Reagan administration, first as a special assistant to Under Secretary and then Ambassador Kennedy, and then at the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

Amy Nelson:

Quite a story. So timing is everything.

Lewis Dunn:

Timing is everything. And good work before that.

Amy Nelson:

And good work.

Lewis Dunn:

Timing and good work before that.

Amy Nelson:

And in a way, each opportunity was born of a little nuclear crisis.

Lewis Dunn:

That turned out to be the case, that's true. That's right.

Amy Nelson:

So how did your early experiences, the people you worked for, the experiences you had, the real world events come to shape your view of nuclear deterrence and diplomacy and then the role of arms control?

Lewis Dunn:

Well, my main experience analytically was at the Hudson Institute working with Herman Kahn, working with Don Brennan, and in that context, focusing on the spread of nuclear weapons. So the first question that had to be asked was, well, what are the consequences if nuclear weapons spread and what are the dangers? And so because of that, it was a sort of natural segue into looking at ways in which you could strengthen global efforts to prevent proliferation and arms control. In this case, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was a key way to do that. And in addition, coming into the Reagan administration in 1981, there was an overall emphasis on trying to, on the one hand, strengthen American deterrence capabilities vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, but on the other hand, leave open the opportunity of some type of negotiations and arms control to try to avoid the worst possibilities of nuclear competition between us and the Soviets.

Amy Nelson:

Terrific. Thank you. That idea that nuclear deterrence is the backbone of US security and that there are opportunities for arms control is very contentious right now.

Lewis Dunn:

It is contentious, and I think that's because of, on the one hand, a misunderstanding of the extent to which arms control actually has been helpful in terms of achieving some of the same purposes of deterrence. And on the other hand, understanding how arms control can actually stabilize deterrence, can avoid the types of missteps that could be made. I think if you look today, I think with regard to us and the Chinese, where the Chinese are in the midst of this major dramatic expansion of their nuclear forces, and the Chinese have this view of arms control as, "Well, that's something from the Cold War," as opposed to, no matter how much you try to argue with the Chinese, that arms control is useful because it might help to stabilize our relationship, might help both of us to avoid the risks of strategic deterrence, might help us to avoid wasting a lot of resources on a strategic arms competition that will serve neither of our interests ultimately.

So I think it is controversial today. And of course it's controversial today because the two major other nuclear weapon states, the Russians and the Chinese, they don't want to play, they don't want to engage in arms control. And in that sense, with the Russians at least, it's very much like the period in the early, in the mid '80s when we were negotiating with them, when in the mid '80s, the Soviets walked out of the INF, the Intermediate Nuclear Forces, and the Strategic Arms Negotiations in 1983. And what happens is that over the course of the next, I would say six or eight months, the Soviets decide that they made a mistake, that simply breaking off all arms negotiations with the United States was a bad idea because it was going to increase their own insecurities, that the arms control process was useful to them.

And that's part of the reason why the Soviets in 1984 proposed that the US and the Soviet Union have a major set of bilateral discussions of nuclear non-proliferation in Moscow. And this was kind of, they're tiptoeing back into a recognition that arms control served their interests as well as our interests. And ironically, the Soviet DCM from their Washington Embassy came into my office in '84 to propose this and said they hadn't heard an answer because apparently the Soviet ambassador proposed it to an assistant secretary and nothing had happened. So they sent the next lower guy down and it worked out very well because it broke the ice. We had very serious discussions of everything related to non-proliferation, us and the Soviets. And it was a step towards the type of re-engagement that we began to see with Gorbachev coming in and where Shultz, the Secretary of State and Shevardnadze, the new foreign minister could engage. And so that is a long-winded answer to your question.

Amy Nelson:

That's a great answer-

Lewis Dunn:

Which I apologize.

Amy Nelson:

No, I have so many questions I want to ask you now. What was that like having the Soviet DCM walk into your office to discuss possibilities for arms control?

Lewis Dunn:

It was striking. But what I was most struck by was the fact that the ambassador had proposed this, and in the infinite wisdom of the State Department, it got sort of shuffled away so nothing had happened. Because when this went to the then Ambassador at Large for Nuclear Non-Proliferation, Richard Kennedy, he thought this was a great idea. He thought this would be, and the Secretary of State Shultz, when he heard about it, he thought it would be a great idea. And it was really very, very productive in terms of setting a new tone, finding a way that despite the antagonism that followed after the Soviet walkout from negotiations where the two sides could re-engage. So it all fit together very nicely.

Amy Nelson:

Why do you think it wasn't engaged with at the highest level when the offer from the Soviets first came in? Was it suspicion or other priorities?

Lewis Dunn:

I think it was because it was non-proliferation.

Amy Nelson:

I see.

Lewis Dunn:

Non-proliferation was sort of, "Oh Yes, non-proliferation, that's something that somebody else does." And so I don't think it had the pizzazz of, "Okay, they want to do non-proliferation dialogue," I think the State Department just missed an opportunity.

Amy Nelson:

That landed on your desk evidently?

Lewis Dunn:

And then it came back to the State Department who took the lead, Yes.

Amy Nelson:

Perfect. So you served the Reagan administration at a pivotal moment, I would say a series of pivotal moments. What was the internal mindset around arms control writ large during those early years in the Reagan administration?

Lewis Dunn:

Well, I think the main mindset was strengthening deterrence, strengthening US strategic forces. But there was a recognition, in part because of the NATO allies, a recognition that you needed to have two tracks. You needed on the one hand, while you were making the argument for strengthening deterrence, while you were convincing your NATO allies in '81, '82, '83 to deploy the next generation of intermediate range nuclear forces, the Pershing II's and the ground-launched cruise missiles. While you were convincing the allies to do that, while you were doing all the deterrence activities, you wanted to keep open this channel. And that's why the Reagan administration actually proposed the zero option to the Soviets.

Now, was that serious? Did anybody believe they would accept it? It probably depends upon whom you ask. I mean, I think for some people it was probably a negotiating ploy. For other people, it was something, "Well, actually, if they accept it, both sides could turn out to be better off because then we wouldn't have all the burden of having to feed and water this whole new generation of ground-based nuclear forces in Europe, the missiles, and we'd avoid the competition, a competition in ground-based missiles, us and Europe on our side of Europe, the Soviets on their side of Europe." So it was kind of both.

Then of course, what happens, the big change really is Gorbachev comes to power. And I don't think you can underestimate the importance. In November of 1985, Reagan and Gorbachev meet in Geneva. They meet in the first summit between the US and the Soviets in quite a while. And they meet one-on-one with interpreters on the lake in a little boathouse, which was probably about the size of this room. And Reagan decides that, "Hey, this Gorbachev guy, maybe he really does want to change things. Yes, it's an evil empire, but maybe he wants to change it." So Reagan and Gorbachev, they kind of fit together just beautifully. Michael Krepon the author makes the same point, that they just fit well. They were the odd couple.

So you have a concatenation of, one, the circumstances where the Soviets recognized, well, the US is able to convince its allies to make a major move on deterrence, the US is making a major move on its strategic forces. The Soviets try to pull the rug out from under everything by walking out of the negotiations, it doesn't work. And then you get Reagan and Gorbachev coming together and these two leaders in the right moment manage, I think, to turn the situation around. And I would add that the 1985 NPT Review Conference takes place like two months before the Reagan-Gorbachev summit. And the 1985 NPT Review Conference probably benefits by the fact that this summit is coming. So it's now, one would say, one of the rare opportunities or rare occurrences where we actually managed to agree on a final document. And I think some of it was because no one wanted to shake the boat because Reagan and Gorbachev were going to meet in two months. And I bet the Soviets didn't want to shake the boat. Anyway.

Amy Nelson:

We can take a break for water anytime you like.

Lewis Dunn:

No, I'm okay now.

Amy Nelson:

Okay. So Reagan and Gorbachev, they cultivated a lot of respect for each other over time?

Lewis Dunn:

Yes, I think it was not only respect, but I have a sense that Reagan liked people, and I think he actually... There was a sense of he could work with this Gorbachev guy. And so it worked out very well, and it starts the process. And of course, you had at the secretary, foreign ministry level, you had Shultz and you Shevardnadze and you had people under them who are also very capable on both sides.

Amy Nelson:

So 1985, you're preparing for this NPT Review Conference, the summit meeting is on the horizon. Tell me about preparing for the review conference and what you were hoping to achieve.

Lewis Dunn:

The most important thing we wanted to achieve was a reaffirmation of the importance of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. But we also wanted to ensure that because this is still the period where the US and the Soviets are blaming each other for, "Okay, why did arms control break down? Who did what to whom? Who shot John?" We wanted to avoid a situation in which the US and the Soviets spent most of the review conference attacking each other, putting on a display, if you will, for all the onlookers so they could see this great show of the Americans and the Soviets attacking each other.

So part of what my mandate was was to try to arrange an informal agreement with the Soviets that we would both say what great things we were doing on arms control, but we wouldn't attack each other. And it took about a year, at least a year or so of in and out of Geneva talking to the then Soviet ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament to get this idea sort of understood. And I still remember at one lunch, the ambassador, someone named Victor Israelyan, the ambassador said to me, "No, no, explain this to me. Explain this to me. How is it the case that we're going to go to this review conference and we're not going to attack each other? Explain to me how this works." So I looked at him and I said to him, "You know, Victor, this is how the porcupines make love, very carefully. And you have to take this." So Victor, he sort of understood it.

Okay, and then about a month later, in our last pre review conference lunch, he asked me about this, and he says to me, "Well, how do I know that your director, Kenneth Adelman," who did not like the Soviet Union, for good reason, "But Kenneth Adelman, how do I know that your director will stick to this deal?" So I said, "Look, this is something that we've agreed to at the high levels in the US government, and I'll write Adelman's speech," and so on and so forth.

So first day of the review conference, traditionally the Americans speak first and the Soviets speak like second or third. Adelman comes in, he gives this high morale speech, "The Americans have been doing all these positive things for arms control. Here's our vision," says nothing about the Soviet Union at all, nothing. And five years later, I am talking to a... Well, it might have been six years later because after the breakup of the Soviet Union, I'm talking to a former Soviet diplomat, and he says to me, "Well, you know, Lewis, there were two speeches. I wrote two

speeches. I had one speech which if Adelman sticks to the deal, we use this speech. If Adelman does not stick to the deal, we use this speech."

Amy Nelson:

Ah, the benefits of going second.

Lewis Dunn:

Great Soviet tradition, they covered all the bases. So the main thing, first is, one, reaffirmation of the treaty, second, work a deal with the Soviets so that we try to cooperate at the review conference. And it actually works out nicely because at one point in the review conference, the most difficult issue was the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. The Reagan administration opposed a ban on the testing of nuclear weapons. Everybody else, virtually, supported it. And the Mexicans in particular wanted some language endorsing CTBT. So in the 11th hour, one of the people on my delegation comes up with language which says, "The conference except for certain states endorses negotiation of a CTBT." So we thought we could live with that and everybody else could live with it. But it's being discussed and the East Germans start to make a fuss, at which point the Soviet ambassador tells him just to be quiet, leave it alone.

So actually, the little deal worked. But they had two speeches in case we stuck to our deal or didn't stick to our deal. But it made a difference because I think what the review conference and the ability of the Soviets and the Americans to work together in the review conference, it showed, I think, the people higher up, I don't think so much on the American side as much as the Soviet skeptics, it showed them that, "Well, maybe we actually can with the Reagan administration begin to move forward in a new direction."

So in those days, I would stress, and this is so different today, in those days, nuclear non-proliferation was one of the areas, even in the worst of times, as this example suggests, even in the worst of times, where the Moscow and Washington could cooperate. We cooperated on strengthening the NPT. We cooperated on trying to work proliferation problems. We cooperated on strengthening the IAEA, International Atomic Energy Agency. And so it's different then. Now, it's no longer that and it's sad that the two sides cannot cooperate. I mean, now it's the case that you hear speculation, you read about, "Well, are the Russians helping the North Koreans produce more effective nuclear weapons?" And that's a change.

Amy Nelson:

It's a far cry from where we were.

Lewis Dunn:

Yes, Yes.

Amy Nelson:

So the NPT Review Conference opened successfully. There's this moment of alignment between the US and the Soviet Union. Tell me how that conference concluded.

Lewis Dunn:

The conference, we managed to sort out all the substantive issues by the end of September. At which point, suddenly, I can't remember exactly anymore, some issue arises on the last evening with the Iranians who were then participating. And ultimately, at about 11:00 at night, the Australian ambassador convinces the Iranians on the floor to agree to a consensus final document, and it all gets resolved and it's resolved successfully. But I think what I took away though from

the agreement on the consensus final document, was that there was a strong sense amongst all the parties to the treaty that, one, the treaty was important. Two, we wanted to reach agreement to show ourselves that we could reach agreement and to show our support for this treaty. And that also has changed in a way that was different, I think.

Amy Nelson:

Yeah, different times, very much so today. I want to move on to the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. Of course, this was a critical moment in making the NPT permanent. Can you talk about your role in the lead-up to and during that conference?

Lewis Dunn:

In the lead-up, basically I served as a advisor. At the conference, I was on the delegation, partially I would say as an advisor and partially as someone that the head of the delegation, Ralph Earle could come to and ask, "Lewis, why in the world did you agree to this in 1985?" Because there's a kind of continuity of this process.

Amy Nelson:

Accountability?

Lewis Dunn:

I don't know what. So I was there. And so I watched it unfold. I think it's probably fair to say that the most important player on the American side was Tom Graham, who was the ambassador who believed from the start that you could gain support for indefinite extension and worked hard. And so by the time we reached the Review and Extension Conference, the Canadians, who were doing a resolution, had actually produced enough signatures so you could have indefinite extension by a vote if necessary. And the key challenge was to try to have indefinite extension by consensus rather than by a vote.

Amy Nelson:

Okay.

Lewis Dunn:

And there's still a kind of difference of opinion amongst some of us who were there as to what mattered the most. I think we all agree that the agreement on principles and objectives of document, which sort of looks to the future, was important in creating consensus. I think where we differ is whether the US agrees to what's known as the Middle East Nuclear Free Zone resolution. And the question is whether you could have still had consensus endorsement of indefinite extension of the NPT without the United States having accepted the Middle East Nuclear Free Zone Resolution. We could have had it by a vote. I think there was an overwhelming majority of countries that would've voted for indefinite extension.

So indefinite extension was never at issue. What was at issue was whether it would be done in a messy way or an elegant way. And ultimately, it was done in an elegant way by consensus. I think that the agreement to the Middle East Nuclear Free Zone tipped the Arabs to supporting the consensus. Other people believed that no, the Arabs in the final analysis would've come on board anyway because they wouldn't have wanted to be left as odd states out.

Though, I think the other thing that was really important for indefinite extension of the NPT was the language in the document, which basically committed the United States and the other nuclear weapon states, the UK, the Russians then, France, and China to negotiate a comprehensive ban on

nuclear testing by the end of 1996. And the United States, I think playing a lead role, achieves that, works with the other nuclear weapon states. We managed to get that done. I won a dinner bet because I bet a friend of mine who was in the nuclear weapons business out at Lawrence Livermore, I bet him that we'll achieve a CTBT by the end of '96 as asked and as agreed to, as obligated to. And he said, "No, we'll never do it."

So I bet him that, and I won my dinner. Because I think it was an example of how the United States, and I would say the other nuclear weapon states, took the NPT obligations very seriously. Whether that's still the case or whether it's now sort of an afterthought is another question. It's definitely not taken as seriously, I think, as it once was taken seriously for reasons that are a mystery to me. Because it still is an extremely important treaty for strengthening both norms and institutions and legal obligations to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, which will not be good for anyone.

Amy Nelson:

Terrific. Thank you. Were there any surprises, positive or negative, in how other NPT members approach the extension debate?

Lewis Dunn:

I think the Russians probably were supportive in principle, less actively involved than they would've been a decade earlier in 1985, but in the final analysis when they had to throw their support into the process, did so. I think South Africa's emergence as a major player was probably something of surprise. So the South Africans were very important in terms of the negotiating of principles and objectives and their support for finding a way in which you could bring the parties together on indefinite extension. For some people, the fact that there was a ultimate majority was probably a surprise, and by consensus was probably a surprise. For other people like Tom Graham, it wasn't a surprise. He thought that this was always going to happen. And I don't know, you've interviewed or will interview Bob Einhorn who was there as well, I don't know whether there any surprises. Bob might say the one thing that was a surprise was that the US agreed to the Middle East nuclear resolution, but we'll see.

Amy Nelson:

Great, thank you. How relevant is the NPT today and what do you think its prospects for enduring are?

Lewis Dunn:

I think it remains relevant because it continues to express the view of the great majority of nations, that nuclear weapons are dangerous, that preventing the spread of nuclear weapons is important. It provides at a time when we may be moving finally into that long predicted nuclear energy renaissance when we may finally be seeing ourselves move into the use of nuclear energy in a major way once again, it's important because the structure of the treaty in terms of safeguards, in terms of the International Atomic Energy Agency, it's important for ensuring that the peaceful uses of nuclear energy do not lead to the spread of nuclear weapons, which was one of the major drivers for the creation of the treaty. In the mid '60s on the one hand, there was the Kennedy administration fear of a world of dozens of nuclear weapon states, but there also was the expectation that nuclear energy was going to be everywhere, so we needed to regulate it.

So the treaty remains important I think for that reason. I think the treaty remains important also because it does set out a vision of a world in which nuclear weapons, if they're not abolished completely, they're at least, I like to argue, moved into the back room, where we're no longer as

dependent on nuclear deterrence, where we don't have to be in a situation where we have one of the major nuclear weapon states threatening to use nuclear weapons in a major conflict. So that's the vision of the NPT, and I think that's an important vision.

Also I think that if we were to look at least some of the countries that show up on the list of possible proliferation risk countries, at least in a few cases, I'm naive enough to believe that their having accepted the obligations of the NPT makes a difference. I cannot but believe that in the case of Japan, any debate about whether Japan should acquire nuclear weapons will revolve partly around its NPT obligation. In the case of Poland, which is occasionally referenced, in the case of Germany, again, these are countries that have signed on to a legal obligation. So for those reasons, I think the NPT remains both important as a vision, but important practically as a set of obligations and institutions that depend upon it.

Amy Nelson:

Thank you. Are we living in a period of the erosion of several nuclear norms right now?

Lewis Dunn:

I think we're living in a period of an erosion of the norm against the use of nuclear weapons, and I think we're living in that period because of an ultimately fallacious belief that the use of nuclear weapons can be controlled. Perhaps the most important belief that contributed to the stability of the deterrence relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union was a belief on the part of both Soviet and American leaders that the use of nuclear weapons would get out of control. I think, that belief is no longer present. It's no longer present on the part of all three of the major nuclear weapons states. All three of them believe that nuclear weapons use can be limited. And I for one believe that that will turn out to be a big mistake if it's ever tried. And I'd rather not test the proposition.

So yes, I think we're living in a period in which the norm of non-use of nuclear weapons is eroding. I think we're living in a period in which the, whether you call it a norm or whether you call it a realization, that efforts to cooperatively regulate the strategic competition between the nuclear weapons states is important. You can call it arms control. I would call it arms control. Let's just call it cooperative regulation is an important complement to keep deterrence getting out of control in any one of multiple ways. That recognition, a recognition that came out of the Cuban Missile Crisis, that recognition has eroded.

So we are in a period of eroding norms. And it's not the situation where one would like the equivalent of a new Cuban Missile Crisis, I hope that it works out the same way. But you could argue that the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 worked out the way it did as much because of luck as anything else. I mean, you're in a situation in which there's three officers in a Soviet submarine, the Soviet submarine off of Cuba is being depth charged by the US, and they decide, they get together in a little group to say, "Are we going to fire a nuclear armed torpedo in response?" Two officers say yes, the political officer, for reason unknown, says no. If he had said yes and they had fired a nuclear torpedo, something bad would've happened.

Amy Nelson:

The world would look different today.

Lewis Dunn:

Yes. And so luck makes a big difference.

Amy Nelson:

This idea of escalation control, that this is manageable. Of course, this comes out of Herman Kahn's thinking, the escalatory ladder and the metaphor that it was, why are we so uniquely writ large committed to this idea that this is possible today? What happened to usher in this wave of thinking that you can have a limited nuclear war, that you can control escalation after first use?

Lewis Dunn:

That's a good question. I think it starts with the Russian military. So the Russian military finds themselves in a situation in which they believe they are at a disadvantage facing the United States and NATO, and they come up with this theory of using nuclear weapons in a limited way to shut down a conflict. It's almost as if the aspiration to get out of a box creates a view of how you might get out of the box. In the United States, there's always been a stream of thinking about the limited use of nuclear weapons. If you go back to the NATO doctrine of the early '60s, flexible response, flexible response included the possible limited use of nuclear weapons.

But I think always in the background was a sense that, "While this is our doctrine and if need be, we might try it, but we don't think it's going to work out well," let's put it that way. I think that today for the US, we're responding to the Russians thinking that they have to have a capability to use nuclear weapons in a limited way, and so we need to be able to deter that by being able to respond in kind and hoping it'll work out. Well. what's changed. I think that once there was a sense that this is a last resort and it's probably not going to work out well to this is a sort of early on resort, which we think will just work fine. And I guess I'm a skeptic.

I know people who believe, who disagree with me. Yes, I know people who have spent their whole career in the nuclear weapons business who agree with me. But nobody knows who is right... But the challenge is to try to restore some type of engagement with the Russians and have some sort of engagement with the Chinese so that we could actually sit down and discuss these questions and discuss ways in which we could try to stabilize the relationship and avoid situations in which either of us might find ourselves thinking about the first use of nuclear weapons.

Amy Nelson:

This idea that smaller yield nuclear weapons makes them more usable, is this the culprit here?

Lewis Dunn:

I don't know whether I would say that's the culprit. I mean, it's because it was, what, a 10 kiloton nuclear weapon that went off over Hiroshima, so it did a lot of damage. So I think it's a psychological change from the belief that the weapons will go out of control to the belief that use can be controlled. It's all based on assumptions anyway, and this is the assumption. Sometimes I thought, I proposed this at various meetings, and it's been seen as a crazy idea, sometimes I thought that we should get the Americans and the Russians together to look at what would have happened if the crisis had led to implementation of the American Single Integrated Operational Plan, the SIOP, at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis and to implementation of the Russian Single Integrated Operational Plan at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis. You could do it in this day and age of computer simulations.

And the capabilities are, in order of magnitude, probably greater today than they were in '62. And just as a way to get the attention of, "Well, what if it goes wrong? And what if it all doesn't play out the way you think?" And every time I've suggested this people think, "This is somebody from the Hudson Institute who's forgotten what reality is." But it would be an eye-opener. But do it with the real plans of those days, do it with military to military, not some sort of academic simulation. But it's-

Amy Nelson:

Interesting idea.

Lewis Dunn:

It's a problem that we confront. It probably starts at the top. And how do you work it on both sides at the top? In this case, I think on the American side, I think we're much less inclined to go down that path, whereas Putin seems to think of nuclear weapons as something he can keep threatening us with.

Amy Nelson:

That's his job, right, to make us believe that, right?

Lewis Dunn:

I guess it is. Well, it is, that's true.

Amy Nelson:

The deterrence is working?

Lewis Dunn:

Well, no, no, it's not deterrence, it's coercion. It's coercing us to act in ways that help him out in Ukraine. And that's working, and that's more or less worked.,.

Amy Nelson:

So the psychological change, not related to usability per se, but controllability, of nuclear weapons perhaps because we've been studying the problem so long.

Lewis Dunn:

Or yes, well, it could be that we've just... One of my good friends used to argue that one of the strongest contributors to the stability of the deterrence between us and the Soviet Union was the fact that the Soviet leadership remembered the vast destruction of World War II. And for a long time you had American leadership who came out of World War II, and so it's a kind of forgetting. But it's not encouraging.

Amy Nelson:

There are a lot of stories from the heyday of ACDA, which of course no longer exists. Do you have any you want to share?

Lewis Dunn:

Heydays from... Well, I personally think it was a shame that the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency was traded away for a vote on the Chemical Weapons Convention and two future draft choices. Because an institution like ACDA was exactly the type of institution that you need today. In other words, today, let's say, a mind experiment, ACDA exists. Okay, what would ACDA be doing today? ACDA would be sitting there, smart people in ACDA would be sitting there saying to themselves, "What if the politics changed?" And suddenly the Chinese decided that, "Well, we don't want to engage in a big strategic arms race with the United States because it's not in our interest," what would some type of a negotiation, which wouldn't be arms control anymore, but something new, what would that look like?

Well, we also have the Russians. What if the Russians decide that engaging in a major offense, defense, space, cyber, arms race with the United States with all our economic potential and all our capabilities is not in their interest or they'll come out worse? ACDA would be sitting there and thinking through what the contours of a negotiation might look like from soup to nuts, from sort of how do you do negotiations when there are three players? Okay, the Trump administration the first time around tried tripartite negotiations, and it didn't work. So what are the alternatives to tripartite? Well, what are you trying to do if you're not going to have treaties, what would that look like?

So ACDA was a residue of smart people thinking about what arms control would look like, aside from carrying the infamous arms control torch. Well, Henry Kissinger always used to say he loved ACDA because there were always three positions on any issue. There was the far right position of the Department of Defense, then there was the left wing position of ACDA, and then right in the middle it could be him, the most reasonable option. So ACDA stories, I guess I don't have any really good ACDA stories. I just have a sense-

Amy Nelson:

That was pretty good.

Lewis Dunn:

I just have a sense that it was very sad to trade it away because it was a... And now it's all gone anyway from the State Department in the big reduction in force, a lot of this talent, such as it may be, is gone. But it's not the same thing. So that's where ACDA I think made a big difference.

And the other thing ACDA used to do and why it was important is it used to make sure that decisions that should be made by the president were not made by a deputy assistant secretary of state. ACDA had the ability to dig in its heels on some non-proliferation issue and force it up the chain until it made its way over to the White House.

Amy Nelson:

Making it highly unpopular at times.

Lewis Dunn:

Well, what can I say?

Amy Nelson:

So we're missing a kind of whole scale arms control imagination within the federal government?

Lewis Dunn:

That's a nice way to put it. It was a sort of arms control imagination. It was not just... It was the arms control torchbearer, obviously, but it is an imagination at a time when imagination is so necessary to think about how you get out of the box we're in, where arms control is seen as something that's the old days. Because I honestly do believe that at some point with the Russians and the Chinese, they will decide that they want to engage. Now conceivably, the driver to that could be Golden Dome. Golden Dome, just like the fact that the Americans deploy Pershing II missiles and ground-launched missiles in 1983 forces the Soviets to suddenly say, "Oh gee whiz, we made a big mistake walking out of all these negotiations," the Trump administration pursues Golden Dome National Missile Defense, which in my view entails vast competition in all domains, in the air, on the ground, in space. And the Chinese suddenly say, “Hey, wait a second.

This is a great way to waste a lot of resources." And the Russians say, "Well, we're backward anyway, so we'll never be able to keep up."

And suddenly, now the real question then becomes what's the likelihood that at some point the Trump administration would say that, "Well, we're willing to limit missile defense," we're back to where we were in the '60s when the Nixon administration to start arms control basically says, "All right, we will limit our ambition for missile defense because we don't think it will work. It will be too costly. It'll create an arms race." All the same reasons of way back when, I think. But anyway, so I like the idea, so imagination. That's what's lacking. And ACDA, sometimes it was crazy, sometimes it was a hare-brained idea, but it was people with imagination. And that's what's lacking, I think. That's why it's sad that it's gone.

Amy Nelson:

Yeah. So if you were to engage in some arms control imagination, you talked about the impact of a dual track decision opening opportunities for arms control, you've alluded to perhaps a window potentially opening for arms control in the future, whether a function of Golden Dome or in response to Golden Dome or something else, do you think there will be opportunities for arms control in the future? And what should arms control look like?

Lewis Dunn:

What I argued is that the first thing is really at the highest level to get the five major nuclear weapon states to sit down and ask whether they want to go into this world that we're going into of major offense, defense, space, everywhere, competition? And I think that I don't believe that you're going to have three-party negotiations. I think more likely you would've some negotiation us and the Chinese, some negotiation us and the Russians. And I think initially it would probably try to find some areas for unilateral restraint, agreed unilateral restraint. Okay, so I for one, have never been a supporter of missile defense because I actually think it will turn out to be tremendously competitive, and it will ultimately not work. So I'd be willing to trade limits on what the United States does on missile defense for limits on what the Chinese do in terms of the numbers of their nuclear warheads and their missiles. Because it's a very traditional trade.

I think that part of arms control though it's going to be more qualitative. So I would like to find a way in which I could get, if it's going to be two little baskets, us, our allies in Asia and the Chinese, us, our allies in Europe and the Russians talking to each other, I'd like to have us talking about what are the types of ways we think that a confrontation or crisis could get out of control, as a step to getting into a discussion of what are the risks of using nuclear weapons? So I'd like to find on the one hand some examples of trade-offs of limited restraint where we could restrain something if they restrain something.

And then on the other hand, I'd like to have a discussion amongst military and defense experts of, "How does our current confrontation spiral out of control? And what are the steps that we think of as showing robust deterrence and resolve and you think of as preparing to use nuclear weapons against you and conversely? So what are the things that you think of as a great way to show the Americans you mean business, but we think of as is too damn dangerous?" Now we have to do something even more extreme. So to have that kind of qualitative discussion-

Amy Nelson:

Solid pitch for track twos.

Lewis Dunn:

It would be a track two. But I think it has to take place officially though. It's not just expert... I think experts is important and that helps. But beyond that, there's serving military talking to each other as to how events get out of control, and what can we do to avoid that? I'd be able to sit down and ask the Russian military the question that you asked me is, "Well, why do you believe you can control the use of nuclear weapons?" And then the Russian military could ask the American military, "Why do you believe you can control the use of nuclear weapons?'

Amy Nelson:

"Well, we do because you do."

Lewis Dunn:

Well, that's right. But that doesn't work in the real world. But what are the assumptions that we have? So anyway...

Amy Nelson:

Thank you. You've had such a long and storied career. What are you proudest of?

Lewis Dunn:

I think ultimately I'm proudest of achieving a consensus agreement in the 1985 NPT Review Conference because I think it was important for us and the Russians to work together. And I think it was important to rally support for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In terms of my official life, I think that's probably what I'm proudest of. What I'm proudest of in my non-official life, which has been most of my analytic life, has been always asking the questions of an odd man out, pressing on the question of, "Well, why do you believe that nuclear weapons use would be controllable?" And I guess I'm proud of having some reputation of having at least some arms control imagination at a time when imagination... Now, some imagination turns out to be hare-brained, but some of it turns out to be useful.

And it prods people. I think I'm proud of prodding people to think about questions in a different way. And I think that anybody who works in this business, given the dangers of nuclear weapons, should always be prodding herself or himself and prodding the institutions to look at those assumptions. So you're not in the situation which we began with of the famous man who jumped out of the 12th story window and when he got to the sixth story, he was asked, "Well, how's it going?" He said, "Oh, just fine." You're not in that situation because you're smart enough to look closely at your assumptions. So I've enjoyed doing that. So anyway, but...

Amy Nelson:

What is your advice to the next generation?

Lewis Dunn:

My advice to the next generation is, well, first to do good work wherever you are, second to believe in Fortuna, or as Micawber said, "Something will turn up." But only if you've done good work where you were, you never know when the Indians are going to set off a peaceful nuclear weapon. You never know when the Israelis... Nowadays, it's probably not true. You never know when the Israelis are going to bomb some place with a nuclear facility. So you could be in the right place at the right time and something will turn up if you've done good work.

The third thing is I would advise to continue always to tilt at windmills, because windmills sometimes move. So you have to tilt at those windmills because... Or, as once told me by someone at Science Applications International Corporation, and it applies I think generally, you

have to throw those rocks out on the water because you never know which one will float. So you have to have good ideas and interesting thoughts and proposals related to tilting at windmills, because you never know which one will float. So that's what I would advise younger people. And I also would advise them that arms control, even if it's not called arms control, has a future. It's like the famous statement, "The king is dead, long live the king." And so arms control, I think, will come back to life in some fashion because there's a need for countries to work together to avoid destroying themselves.

Amy Nelson:

Are you optimistic generally?

Lewis Dunn:

I'm always optimistic generally, actually. Yes, that's true.

Amy Nelson:

Well, Dr. Dunn, it's been an absolute pleasure speaking with you today. Thank you.

Lewis Dunn:

Oh, you're welcome. It was fun.