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**Finding a Home for Arms Control:
The Origins of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (1945-1961)**

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Jonathan Alan Buchleiter**

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Abstract

Finding a Home for Arms Control: The Origins of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (1945-1961)

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The advent of nuclear weapons in 1945 left US policymakers simultaneously heartened and horrified. Atomic bombs epitomized the apex of American power at the end of World War II, but the destructiveness of these new weapons also posed grave dangers to the US and the world. This paper explores US policymakers' efforts to rein in atomic energy, first through proposed frameworks for international control and later through multilateral and bilateral limitations on nuclear weapons. Early efforts struggled to gain traction due to both persistent international tensions and an insufficient institutional framework to develop and promote arms control measures within the growing national security establishment. I argue that addressing the deficiencies of US arms control and disarmament policy helped enable diplomatic successes when conditions for compromise arose during the Cold War. Establishing the semi-autonomous Arms Control and Disarmament Agency with a sizable budget, sufficient staff, and empowered director served as a critical step to research and negotiation arms control and nonproliferation agreements during the 1960s and 1970s.

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PART I: EARLY DISARMAMENT EFFORTS UNDER TRUMAN AND EISENHOWER

Introduction

“All we can do is go ahead working for peace—and keep our powder dry.”

- Harry Truman in a letter to his wife Bess on September 22, 1947¹

Scarcely a month after making the decision to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki, President Harry Truman and his administration grappled with how to handle the forces unleashed by the dawn of the Atomic Age. Nuclear energy presented a conundrum for policymakers as it represented a source of both immense destruction and profound power for the United States. While the US held an atomic monopoly, government officials initially expressed a desire to internationalize control of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and vowed to eliminate their nuclear arsenal once a suitable regime had been established. Predictably, finding a clear path from the present moment to this idyllic future proved far from easy. As disagreements with the Soviet Union deepened, the US struggled to leverage its technological advantage for meaningful progress. Indeed, these mounting tensions presented the greatest hurdle to realizing international control of nuclear power. US policymakers proceeded to simultaneously seek international control of atomic energy while also continuing to develop the country's arsenal.

¹ Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess: The Letters from Harry to Bess Truman* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co Inc, 1983), 549.

Truman was not alone in wrestling with such complex questions. Following World War II, political leaders across the world sought to reshape the international system and establish institutions that improved upon the imperfect structures born out of World War I. The specter of the atomic bombings made the need to avert another major war even more acute. Theoretically, the newly chartered United Nations (UN) seemed a suitable international institution to control atomic energy and assure it was used for peaceful purposes. In practice, the Security Council veto and unresolved disagreements between the US and USSR revealed the limitations of these institutions and prevented collaborative work towards disarmament. Reaching consensus among the five permanent members of the Security Council proved difficult, especially as distrust put further distance between the positions of the US and USSR.

In addition to these international developments that impeded progress, several domestic factors further undermined progress on disarmament. Within the growing national security establishment most agencies generally advocated for the US to maintain its atomic monopoly. After the USSR detonated its first atomic bomb these agencies shifted to urge continued pursuit of nuclear superiority. This general sense of nuclear enthusiasm outweighed the calls for restraint by nuclear skeptics. The Department of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), and the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) all interpreted their mission as necessitating further nuclear development to enhance national security. Even the Department of State – whose responsibilities would seemingly encourage seeking agreement rather than strident antagonism – generally promoted a larger US nuclear arsenal. Undergirding all of these positions was general distrust of the Soviets. Without a

modicum of trust, arms limitation talks could not succeed. Furthermore, even if an opportunity for meaningful dialogue arose the US needed a repository of expertise and individuals capable of intelligently engaging in substantive negotiations. Fulfilling this need became a central challenge for three successive administrations as America adjusted to life in the atomic age.

This thesis examines how Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy sought to control nuclear weapons and the challenges that confronted arms control and disarmament initiatives between 1945-1961. Part I will examine efforts to internationalize control of nuclear technology under Truman and in the early years of the Eisenhower administration. The fervency of American and allied exploration of disarmament options — even as survivors of atomic bombings were still clearing the rubble from their cities — attests to the profoundly disquieting impact these weapons had on world politics. Ultimately, the failure to place atomic expertise under the auspices of the UN or another international body convinced US policymakers of the impracticality of achieving complete disarmament. Discounting total disarmament led them to pursue various other arms control initiatives including test ban treaties and other nonproliferation safeguards. However, unresolved interagency disagreements and opposition to such measures from key figures in the US foreign policy apparatus evinced the need to institutionalize arms control efforts within the US government.

Part II traces the growing support for a nuclear test ban treaty during the second half of the Eisenhower administration. A coalition of scientists, public intellectuals, and

politicians advocated a test ban as an attainable first step towards slowing and reversing the spiraling arms race. In the late 1950s anti-nuclear activism gained strength and began putting pressure on President Eisenhower and his successor to take more decisive action to pursue disarmament. Liberal Democrats proposed a national peace agency to help inform efforts to negotiate a test ban treaty with the Soviets. As this idea gained traction in the 1960 election it spurred an eleventh-hour reorganization of the State Department by Eisenhower to better coordinate US disarmament policy. While this bureaucratic rearrangement realized only modest improvements, it opened the door for subsequent action under the incoming president.

The final part profiles Kennedy's efforts to take further action to elevate disarmament and arms control within his foreign policy. Kennedy appointed John J. McCloy to overhaul and reinvigorate US disarmament policy. Nine months into Kennedy's presidency he signed legislation creating a new Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA). ACDA served to fill the need for ongoing research and preparation for arms control that helped enable Kennedy to conclude a limited test ban treaty in 1963. Over the course of the 1960s this agency's influence grew and helped broker the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Without the institutional framework for arms control established at the outset of the Kennedy administration, US preparation for and participation in these negotiations would have likely remained inconsistent and disorganized.

Democratic proposals for a peace and disarmament agency first emerged as an electoral gambit to challenge Eisenhower's claim about promoting "peace and prosperity" during his second term. Although Kennedy pledged a peace agency as a ploy to secure the presidency, the agency established in fall of 1961 proved integral to concluding arms control agreements from the Non-Proliferation Treaty to the START treaty. This thesis serves as the first portion of a larger project explaining how the institutionalization of US arms control policy served to enable diplomatic successes in the form of several arms control and nonproliferation treaties reached throughout the latter half of the Cold War. The establishment of ACDA which combined technical researcher with ardent advocates of arms control proved essential to achieving these milestone agreements. Policymakers' appreciation for scientific expertise grew considerably during the late 1950s and 1960s. ACDA's repository of researchers alongside an empowered staff of bureaucrats worked to overcome general skepticism towards arms control in the foreign policy and defense establishment that impeded earlier disarmament initiatives.

The institutional culture of ACDA that firmly embraced arms control as a means to enhance national security informed and shaped the executive branch's attitudes and US nuclear policy. ACDA's relatively small size filled with mission-aligned staff enabled it to exercise an outsized role within a burgeoning national security bureaucracy. Examining how key figures built this institutional culture can shed light on how similarly purpose-driven agencies can profoundly influence US policy in key areas. Given the high-stakes of nuclear policy under the pall of nuclear holocaust, ACDA worked at the heart of US security policy during the Cold War.

The defense establishment — created in the wake of World War II and dramatically expanded during the early Cold War — viewed disarmament with skepticism and instead called for the expansion and diversification of the US nuclear arsenal. Atomic-age anxieties and anti-communist sentiment empowered defense planners and strategists. However, several crises of the late 1950s and early 1960s led to a collective questioning of this confrontational approach. Particularly regarding nuclear weapons, US presidents began seriously considering reaching accommodation with the Soviet Union to reduce the risk of nuclear war. These shifting attitudes further bolstered ACDA's profile and shaped US policy over several successive administrations during the 1960s and 1970s.

In Search of International Control

The destructive power unleashed by the two atomic bombs dropped on Japan in August 1945 profoundly unsettled many of the scientists who had worked feverishly to develop this new weapon. Even though President Truman claimed to have never lost any sleep over his decision to drop the bombs, he remained unnerved by their implications for the future of warfare if — or when — America lost its atomic monopoly. Questions about nuclear weapons remained front and center as his administration sought to navigate the early years of the deepening Cold War. Truman and his advisors grappled with whether to pursue abolition of atomic weapons or to forge ahead and maximize America's advantage by expanding its nuclear arsenal. Commenting on the uncertainty of securing Soviet cooperation on the issue, Truman wrote in a letter to Bernard Baruch in July 1946, "We should not under any circumstances throw away our gun until we are sure the rest of the

world can't arm against us.”² Torn between pursuing international control and extending the US atomic advantage, Truman proceeded along both paths.

In late 1945 and early 1946, Truman, key members of his administration, and allied officials genuinely hoped to harness atomic energy towards peaceful ends rather than apocalyptic destruction. Several advisors, namely Secretary of War Henry Stimson and Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson, advocated negotiating international control among the great powers first before broaching the subject in the fledgling United Nations.³ After a few faltering steps in the direction of Stimson and Acheson's proposal, Truman decided to pursue international control through the UN itself. He solidified this position in a November 1945 meeting with British Prime Minister Clement Attlee and his Canadian counterpart Mackenzie King. Following the meeting, the three heads of state issued a joint communiqué detailing their desires to see atomic research put towards peaceful purposes under the purview of the UN. Their message described a UN commission as the “most effective means of entirely eliminating the use of atomic energy for destructive purposes and promoting its widest use for industrial and humanitarian purposes.”⁴ At this early juncture, placing atomic energy into the UN's growing portfolio seemingly offered the best chance to ensure its future use for peaceful purposes.

² Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope 1946-1952*, vol. 2 (Doubleday & Company, 1956), 11.

³ “Memorandum by the Acting Secretary of State to President Truman,” U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945*, (hereafter FRUS) vol. II, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1967), Document 17.

⁴ *Documents on Disarmament 1945-1959*, vol. I (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 1–3, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.usfed/docondis0001&i=2>.

The joint declaration issued by Truman, Attlee, and King guided further US policy in this area. In January 1946, two months after the joint declaration, Secretary of State James Byrnes tasked Acheson and a panel of consultants led by David Lilienthal with exploring how to implement international control of atomic energy.⁵ The committee chaired by Acheson and Lilienthal presented its findings in an eponymous report delivered to Byrnes and Truman in mid-March before being released to the public a few weeks later. The committee members rejected observers' suggestions that their task was hopelessly utopian and conveyed confidence that international control could be achieved.⁶ In the introduction of the report they commented on the importance of their "sense of hope and confidence," gained after researching this subject for several weeks. Such a sanguine assessment starkly contrasted with the "vast, oppressive difficulties" they envisioned at the outset. Furthermore, this committee derived considerable political and popular credibility from the reputations of its members, particularly J. Robert Oppenheimer. Oppenheimer's work on the Manhattan Project led him to hold an unparalleled stature in policy circles and the broader public consciousness. Given the standing of the committee's members, their candid commentary on the optimism of their collective thinking seemed promising. If such renowned scientists and statesmen saw a feasible route forward, then perhaps the political will could be found to secure international control of atomic energy.

⁵ Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1969), 151.

⁶ Chester Barnard et al., "A Report on the International Control of Atomic Energy (The Acheson-Lilienthal Report)" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, March 16, 1946), 5, <http://fissilematerials.org/library/ach46.pdf>.

In their report, the consultants called for an international Atomic Development Authority under the auspices of the UN that could oversee the production and use of fissile materials and ensure that further nuclear research remained focused solely on peaceful purposes. According to the committee, putting research under a supranational authority held several benefits by facilitating inspections and transparency while simultaneously reducing the mistrust that so often sparked international conflict. The Acheson-Lilienthal Report concluded that establishing oversight and reducing international rivalry in nuclear research was imperative for the overall success of the UN. It concluded that the UN was “unlikely . . . [to] fulfill its functions” — namely maintaining peace — without “attempting to solve this [nuclear] problem.”⁷ In this respect, the panel realized that the question before them relied on solving both technical and political problems.

Truman reaffirmed his commitment to pursuing international control with his appointment of Bernard Baruch as the US representative to the newly formed UN Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC) in March 1946.⁸ Baruch was a high-profile financier who had gained acclaim through his contributions to wartime production and his close relationship with Truman’s predecessor Franklin D. Roosevelt. Baruch proved politically appealing because his popularity helped earn congressional approval to represent the US at the UNAEC. Appointing a consummate establishment figure with a reputation as a man of action suggested that achieving international control of atomic energy was a top priority

⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁸ Richard G. Hewlett and Oscar E. Anderson, *The New World 1939-1946: A History of the United States Atomic Energy Commission*, vol. I (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962), 556.

for Truman. However, Baruch's existing renown and a desire to burnish his reputation led him to demand considerable autonomy in this role. Ultimately, Baruch's obstinacy at the UN severely damaged prospects for reaching agreement on thorny issues of controlling atomic energy.

Before accepting the position, Baruch stipulated that he would be able to adapt the recommendations put forth in the Acheson-Lilienthal Report as he saw fit. His self-assuredness drew on a long history of American envoys who felt entitled to freedom of action.⁹ Baruch exhibited this same attitude during his previous work with President Roosevelt to coordinate wartime production. He felt he was the president's equal, acting on behalf of private industry, rather than as an individual serving at the pleasure of the commander-in-chief.

While Baruch accepted many findings of the Acheson-Lilienthal Report, Baruch called for more stringent mechanisms for punishing violations to ensure compliance. Baruch presented a modified version of the Acheson-Lilienthal Report to the UN Atomic Energy Commission in June 1946. The plan called for several specific steps – “more than words” – towards international control before the US would be willing to surrender nuclear weapons. This demand for preconditions that curtailed on other states' atomic research without a concession from the US proved a non-starter for the Soviets. Crucially, Baruch also advocated suspending the UN Security Council veto regarding any sanctions meted

⁹ Seth Jacobs, *Rogue Diplomats: The Proud Tradition of Disobedience in American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

out in response to violations. This proposal came to be known as the Baruch Plan and stood as the administration's official outline for international control of atomic energy.¹⁰

The panel of consultants had intentionally avoided employing the punitive measures proposed by Baruch in the interest of building trust and confidence with the Soviets on this issue. According to Acheson, such antagonistic language “added nothing to a treaty and [was] almost certain to wreck any possibility of Russian acceptance of one.”¹¹ Widely shared cynicism about Soviet trustworthiness within Truman's cabinet presented a central challenge for charting a more conciliatory course as Acheson advocated. The resignation of Stimson as secretary of war in the fall of 1945 removed one of the loudest voices in favor of engagement with the Soviets. Stimson's successor Robert P. Patterson and most of the service chiefs took a darker view of the Soviet Union and advocated a more muscular stance.¹² Ultimately, Truman's decision to side with Baruch on the wording of the proposal to be delivered to the UN diminished the chances for reaching a successful agreement.

Unsurprisingly, the Soviets rejected the Baruch Plan and its calls for international control of atomic energy. In a statement delivered before the UNAEC, the Soviet representative Andrei Gromyko decried the Baruch Plan as “an attempt by the United States to secure for itself world monopoly in the field of atomic energy.” Furthermore,

¹⁰ *Documents on Disarmament 1945-1959*, I:7–16.

¹¹ Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 155.

¹² Melvyn P. Leffler, “The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-48,” *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 2 (1984): 358, doi:10.2307/1862556.

Gromyko argued that submitting atomic energy to international control would be an unacceptable forfeiture of Soviet economic sovereignty.¹³ While many scholars of Soviet politics doubt whether any proposal put forth in 1946 could have steered Stalin away from developing atomic weapons, the hardline stance taken by Baruch made stalemate a near certainty.¹⁴

Dimming Prospects for Disarmament

The failure of the Baruch Plan indicated a turning point in the level of engagement by top US policymakers on disarmament. While Truman and other figures continued to publicly pay lip service to the laudable goal of eliminating atomic weapons, the buildup of America's nuclear arsenal told a different story. Initially, US production of nuclear weapons had stalled after the end of WWII. By November 1946, the US stockpile of weapons consisted of only two bombs. However, both Truman and Baruch felt the US should continue to develop weapons until the point in time when a hypothetical international agreement on atomic energy was reached. The US arsenal began to grow as a result, ballooning from two bombs in late 1946 to two hundred by the end of 1949.¹⁵

Discussions behind closed doors further reflected how pessimism regarding international control led to fervent efforts to build the US nuclear arsenal. While figures

¹³ *Documents on Disarmament 1945-1959*, I:74–76.

¹⁴ Larry G. Gerber, "The Baruch Plan and the Origins of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 6, no. 1 (1982): 91.

¹⁵ Lawrence S. Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb: Volume One, One World or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement Through 1953*, 1st edition (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1993), 254–55.

such as Lilienthal and Acheson remained optimistic about reaching an arrangement to abolish nuclear weapons, their sentiments represented a distinct minority within the Truman administration.¹⁶ Due to Baruch's stalled negotiations, Truman increasingly doubted the feasibility of the recommendations outlined in the Acheson-Lilienthal Report.

A conversation between Truman, Lilienthal, and Kenneth Nichols encapsulates the president's shifting position. Truman commanded the two to work together upon Nichols' appointment as the chief of the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project (AFSWP) in March 1948. Truman not only stated that the purpose of the AEC was to "develop and produce atomic weapons," but he even chided Lilienthal to "forgo [his] desire to place a bottle of milk on every doorstep and get down to the business of producing atomic weapons."¹⁷ Even as Truman continued to call for international control in public addresses, he sang a strikingly different tune in private discussions with advisors and allies. The president opened a meeting at Blair House by confiding that he was "of the opinion we'll never obtain international control" and, accordingly, the US and its allies ought to forge ahead to "be the strongest in atomic weapons."¹⁸

This apparent hypocrisy between stated and actual policy rankled Acheson and Lilienthal, whose viewpoints continued to be marginalized within the administration. By the end of 1949, Acheson exasperatedly remarked to Lilienthal, "If we keep saying we

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 256.

¹⁷ Kenneth D. Nichols, *The Road to Trinity* (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, 1987), 259, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015014207768>.

¹⁸ "Statement by President Truman at a Meeting at Blair House," *FRUS 1949* Vol. 1, Document 173.

want the control policy when we don't, we are perhaps fooling others, but we shouldn't commit a fraud upon ourselves."¹⁹ In a January 1950 meeting of an NSC committee regarding the hydrogen bomb, Lilienthal urged for a critical reassessment of existing assumptions that the "Super" would enhance American security. He argued that continuing to simultaneously call for the elimination of atomic weapons while crafting a military strategy "almost entirely" dependent on them was "not merely a defect of reasoning" but a "positive danger."²⁰ Lilienthal felt that continuing development on the hydrogen bomb likely marked a point of no return. Oppenheimer, whose opinion carried considerable weight with policymakers, joined Lilienthal in opposing the H-bomb. Acheson agreed with this assessment and seconded the call for a fundamental re-evaluation of the prevailing assumptions. Rather than pause development on the H-bomb, Truman decided to stay the course of publicly extolling disarmament while deepening strategic dependence on nuclear weapons.

The general stagnation of disarmament efforts under Truman reflected the imposing barriers to progress on this issue. Chief among these was the difficulty in reaching agreement with the USSR on how to approach disarmament and translate ideals into reality through discrete steps towards international control. Stalin, according to insiders (including Gromyko), appeared unlikely to surrender the progress towards the Soviet Union's own

¹⁹ David E. Lilienthal, *The Journals of David E. Lilienthal: The Atomic Energy Years, 1945-1950* (Harper & Row, 1964), 615.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 626–30.

nuclear weapons and to agree to a rigorous international inspection regime.²¹ Indeed, following the Soviets' rejection of key stipulations in the Baruch Plan, the common ground between the two countries inexorably eroded over the next several years. Although both sides continued to profess commitment to nuclear disarmament, their calls resembled propaganda efforts courting public approval rather than genuine starting points for negotiations. Similar challenges continued to stymie further disarmament and arms control initiatives during the early part of the Eisenhower administration.

In fact, this widening gulf between the two countries revealed another daunting hurdle for disarmament: deepening skepticism on the part of Truman and key advisors. US engagement on the issue lapsed from passionate to perfunctory as optimism for international control of atomic energy faded during Truman's second term. The accelerated growth of the US nuclear arsenal reflected the administration's pessimism about reaching an agreement. Furthermore, policymakers from State, to Defense, and officers within the services grew increasingly hostile towards the scientists — many of whom had worked on the Manhattan Project — who were advocating for abolishing the Bomb. As early as 1946, Secretary of State Byrnes, General Leslie Groves, and others publicly questioned whether scientists should speak on “philosophical” political and moral issues. There was a push to discredit these scientists by forcing many out of government employment and launching loyalty investigations into particularly vocal critics. Partially because of these denunciations, scientists became one of the central targets of McCarthy's charges of

²¹ David J. Holloway, “The Soviet Union and the Baruch Plan,” *Sources and Methods*, June 11, 2020, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/soviet-union-and-baruch-plan>.

communist infiltration. These inquisitions took a heavy toll as hundreds of scientists were pursued and sometimes “end[ed] in exile or suicide.”²² The ostracization of many of his colleagues led Oppenheimer to avoid lending the movement “wholehearted support” and maintain distance from it as he remained the government’s leading adviser on atomic energy.²³

Institutional opposition within the US foreign policy establishment impeded progress towards disarmament. The Atomic Energy Commission, Department of Defense, and Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) almost unanimously opposed disarmament proposals. Unsurprisingly, the armed forces voiced the most vehement disagreement with the viability of disarmament, or any arms control measures for that matter. The transition from Lilienthal to Gordon Dean as commissioner of the AEC reflected the commission’s more hawkish stance after 1950. Even at Foggy Bottom, where Acheson had taken the helm for Truman’s second term, a more confrontational stance vis-à-vis the Soviets diminished hopes for an agreement. In the nascent NSC, the weight of these agencies’ official positions carried the day and set the tone for Truman’s decision to stop worrying about disarmament and “love the bomb.”²⁴

The final action on disarmament taken by the Truman administration was the completion of a report on the subject undertaken by a panel of consultants chaired by

²² Spencer Weart, *Nuclear Fear: A History of Images* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 121.

²³ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 265.

²⁴ Stanley Kubrick, *Dr. Strangelove: Or How I Learned To Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (Columbia Pictures and Hawk Films, 1964).

Oppenheimer. This report recounted disarmament efforts up to that time and pointed to perceived Soviet intransigence as the primary reason that no agreement had been reached. The panel conducted a postmortem analysis of the shortcomings of earlier arms control efforts, notably the naval treaties of 1922. They emphasized that “efforts to achieve any limitation of armaments can do no good unless they are closely integrated with the adjustment of the real problems of international affairs.” The panel’s analysis suggested that “no real progress is at present likely in the field of arms regulation.”²⁵

At the same time, the report argued that the dangers posed by nuclear weapons — amplified by the arms race — demanded continued work on this seemingly intractable problem. Their five key recommendations included: candor with the American people about the risks of nuclear war; greater coordination with allies on how to address the arms race; expanded continental defense against a nuclear attack; a disengagement from disarmament discussions at the UN; and opening further negotiations directly with the Soviet Union on the questions posed by the arms race. This report was delivered to the Secretary of State in January 1953, during the closing days of Truman’s presidency.²⁶ Its recommendations, however, were earnestly discussed and considered by the incoming Eisenhower administration.

²⁵ “Report by the Panel of Consultants of the Department of State to the Secretary of State,” *FRUS 1952-1954*, II Pt. 2: Document 67.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

A “New Look” at Arms Control

Dwight D. Eisenhower entered office alarmed at the accelerating arms race and burgeoning defense budgets that coincided with ossified relations between the US and USSR. His defense policy was characterized as the “New Look” that sought to sustain US national security while also bringing deficit spending under control. The president saw tactical nuclear weapons as a cost-effective way to counter superior Soviet conventional capabilities in Europe. Given the centrality of nuclear weapons in this national security strategy, the Eisenhower administration did not seem particularly likely to make progress on disarmament or arms control generally. However, Eisenhower took seriously the recommendations laid out in the report by Oppenheimer’s panel that urged for action to slow the spiraling arms race and expand communication with the Soviets. Furthermore, the administration embraced the calls for greater honesty with the American people and the world about the danger of nuclear armageddon.

Eisenhower’s concern about promoting popular understanding about atomic issues stemmed in part from his greater concern, relative to his predecessor, about his image in the public’s mind. Public criticism particularly stung Eisenhower and pushed him to carefully cultivate popular approval of himself and his policies.²⁷ As grassroots activism against the bomb grew, concerns about public opinion led Eisenhower to more seriously consider disarmament proposals, even though he shared Truman’s deep distrust of the Soviets.²⁸ Initially, the administration saw disarmament as an intractable “abstract issue”

²⁷ Robert A. Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 8–9.

²⁸ Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*.

without many practical options to move forward.²⁹ When framed as an all-or-nothing proposition — where disarmament must be brought about through one fell swoop in a comprehensive treaty — it proved difficult to see much reason for optimism.

Nevertheless, the Eisenhower administration brought new faces to the top posts in America's growing national security apparatus. These new figures shifted the tone of the debate about disarmament. With significantly greater previous experience in defense and foreign affairs than his predecessor, Eisenhower brought his own outlook to the presidential office. Critics of Eisenhower derided his supposedly hands-off managerial style, which seemingly distanced him from important policy issues. A more nuanced assessment of Eisenhower's approach suggests his "hidden hand" actually played an important role in setting objectives and supervising subordinates.³⁰ After appointing Lewis Strauss as the new chair of the AEC, Eisenhower explained to him in no uncertain terms, "my chief concern and your first assignment is to find some new approach to the disarming of atomic energy."³¹ Eisenhower's directive stands in stark contrast to Truman's remark to Lilienthal that the primary function of the AEC ought to be testing and building nuclear weapons.

²⁹ David Tal, *The American Nuclear Disarmament Dilemma, 1945-1963* (Syracuse University Press, 2008), 54.

³⁰ For more on the scholarly debate over Eisenhower's management style see: Martha Smith-Norris, "The Eisenhower Administration and the Nuclear Test Ban Talks, 1958–1960: Another Challenge to 'Revisionism,'" *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 4 (September 1, 2003): 503–41, doi:10.1111/1467-7709.00366; Robert A. Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Jeremi Suri, "America's Search for a Technological Solution to the Arms Race: The Surprise Attack Conference of 1958 and a Challenge for 'Eisenhower Revisionists,'" *Diplomatic History* 21, no. 3 (July 1, 1997): 417–51, doi:10.1111/1467-7709.00079.

³¹ Lewis L. Strauss, *Men and Decisions*. (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1962), 326, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000466641>.

While Eisenhower sincerely hoped for progress on arms control, many of his key advisors were more cynical about the prospects for negotiation. Just as in Truman's administration, the armed forces, led by Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson, opposed arms control. Even the State Department, under the direction of John Foster Dulles, was less enthusiastic about pursuing an arms control agenda. Although Eisenhower directed Strauss to think creatively to pursue disarmament, the AEC chairman largely dismissed such efforts and focused on developing and expanding the US nuclear arsenal. Taken together, such shared opposition to arms control caused severe drag on any disarmament efforts originating in the White House.

Although an abiding distrust of the Soviets pervaded the Eisenhower administration's thinking, the death of Stalin in March 1953 seemed to many observers to open a window of opportunity to improve relations. A speech delivered by Georgy Malenkov, Stalin's short-lived successor, argued that "coexistence and peaceful relations" between communist and capitalist systems was "possible and desirable."³² Subsequent developments, such as a prisoner exchange in Korea and calls to renew peace negotiations, suggested that the new Soviet leaders sincerely hoped to ease tensions with America.³³ While Eisenhower remained skeptical that Soviet policy would become significantly more conciliatory, he nonetheless responded with what has come to be known as the "Chance for Peace" or "Cross of Iron" address, delivered before the American Society of Newspaper Editors in April 1953. Eisenhower remarked that any "hope of lasting peace cannot be

³² Tal, *The American Nuclear Disarmament Dilemma, 1945-1963*, 56.

³³ *Ibid.*

firmly based upon any race in armaments but rather upon just relations and honest understanding with all other nations.” To this end, his proposals called for international control of atomic energy for “peaceful purposes only” and a “prohibition of atomic weapons.”³⁴

Eisenhower did not deliver his initial “Chance for Peace” address to an audience of news editors by accident. This speech signaled a broader effort to heed the Oppenheimer Panel’s call for greater transparency with the American people about nuclear weapons and the dangers of the arms race. Although the president himself was initially cool towards this call for candidness, subsequent NSC discussions of the Oppenheimer Panel’s recommendations led him to endorse this policy and launch Operation Candor.³⁵ NSC 151, a report compiled by the Ad Hoc Committee on Armaments and American Policy, detailed how greater transparency could be beneficial and expounded the need to telegraph this policy to both Congress and allied governments to help assuage concerns over how reducing secrecy might compromise security. The Ad Hoc committee believed that this policy could help to “secure an informed and careful public consideration of the problems arising” from nuclear weapons while simultaneously ensuring public “support [of] the necessary actions” by the US government.³⁶ Rather than solidifying popular support for

³⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors - ‘Chance for Peace’ Speech” (Washington, D.C., April 16, 1953), <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/april-16-1953-chance-peace>.

³⁵ “Memorandum of Discussion at the 134th Meeting of the National Security Council,” and “Report to the National Security Council by the NSC Planning Board,” *FRUS 1952-1954*, II: Documents 74, 88.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Document 88.

government policy, this increase in transparency about nuclear weapons eventually amplified public calls for disarmament and arms control.

Eisenhower's Action on Disarmament

Eisenhower's first significant disarmament proposal was the Atoms For Peace program that he announced in a speech delivered before the UN General Assembly on December 8, 1953. This ambitious initiative sought to help move the world out of the "dark chamber of horrors" under the shadow of nuclear annihilation and "into the light."³⁷ Eisenhower called for states with existing nuclear programs to contribute fissile materials to an international stockpile overseen by a new agency known as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under the aegis of the UN.³⁸ The IAEA then would be tasked with allocating atomic energy to countries around the world for peaceful ends. While this plan did not seek to immediately eliminate atomic weapons, the gradual turnover of fissile materials would theoretically reduce the available stockpile for any country to use in weapons. The Atoms For Peace program as outlined by Eisenhower held grand aspirations. Yet the proposal also offered a gradual path towards disarmament while simultaneously building trust between the US, the USSR, and the rest of the world.

By sidestepping the onsite inspections issue, which remained a sticking point for Soviet leadership, Eisenhower believed the proposal for a bank of fissile materials could serve as a starting point for further negotiations with the Soviet Union. The president hoped

³⁷ *Documents on Disarmament 1945-1959*, vol. I (Department of State, 1960), 396, Document 92: Atoms for Peace Proposal, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.usfed/docondis0001&i=2>.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 400.

that this shift in strategy — representing what he called the “tiniest of starts” — could be used to gradually build trust and make measurable progress to halt and reverse the arms race between the two countries.³⁹ The Atoms for Peace proposal marked an early sign of Eisenhower’s openness to incrementalism that departed from the Truman administration’s all-or-nothing approach on arms control and opened the door for several future initiatives.⁴⁰

The vision outlined in Atoms for Peace did not immediately take hold either in the US atomic energy establishment, particularly within the AEC, or in the broader international community. In fact, the pace of nuclear weapons testing accelerated in the year following Eisenhower’s speech.⁴¹ Despite these reasons for pessimism, Eisenhower remained convinced of the need for continued work towards disarmament. Questions about the ramifications of the arms race continued to require in-depth analysis within the NSC and in cabinet discussions. In response to Eisenhower’s unflagging support for this policy and the considerable attention the issue required, Robert Bowie, director of the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff, suggested creating a special assistant to the president for disarmament as a new cabinet-level position.

Bowie contended that the demands on the time of the secretaries of defense and state and the chairman of the AEC precluded them from “devot[ing] an adequate amount of attention” to disarmament.⁴² Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Allen

³⁹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The Eisenhower Diaries*, ed. Robert H. Ferrell, First Edition (W. W. Norton & Company, 1981), 261–62.

⁴⁰ Tal, *The American Nuclear Disarmament Dilemma, 1945-1963*, 55.

⁴¹ Lawrence S. Kaplan, *Harold Stassen: Eisenhower, the Cold War, and the Pursuit of Nuclear Disarmament* (The University Press of Kentucky, 2018), 109.

⁴² “Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State,” *FRUS 1955-1957*, XX: Document 6.

Dulles agreed on the need for this position and added that whoever was appointed should also be able to “draw on the existing staffs of the concerned agencies.”⁴³ Concurring with his brother, Secretary Dulles suggested raising the creation of this position at an NSC meeting the following day. Dulles’ argued that experienced personnel from State, Defense, and the AEC should all be detailed to the special assistant’s staff. This conversation reflected an early recognition of the need to devote time and energy to the subject of disarmament beyond what could be managed by the existing principals in the relevant agencies. Recruiting staff from existing agencies to work on the issue seemed sensible, but also raised questions about the chain of command and what authority would be designated to this special assistant. Nevertheless, Eisenhower agreed to establish this position during an NSC meeting on February 10, the Departments of State, Defense, and the AEC each forwarded their own list of names to the president.⁴⁴ Dulles, Wilson, and Strauss likely advanced candidates who held views consistent with their respective agencies’ positions. Such jockeying reflected a desire to have a say in what new voice joined cabinet discussions regarding disarmament and broader questions of atomic energy.

While Eisenhower shared a desire to find an “individual of outstanding qualifications,” he settled on a candidate absent from all of the lists forwarded to him. Indeed, his choice of Harold Stassen was particularly unpopular with several members of his cabinet. However, Eisenhower believed Stassen’s “dogged perseverance” could help generate momentum on the stalled issue of disarmament. At the end of February,

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Document 16.

Eisenhower extended an offer to Stassen, who was serving as the Director of the Foreign Operations Administration at that time. Upon Stassen's return to Washington, Eisenhower formally appointed him to the new position. In his statement announcing Stassen's role, Eisenhower lamented the lack of progress made by the Disarmament Commission of the United Nations.⁴⁵ When asked by a reporter about Stassen's position, Eisenhower responded that "There was nobody in the government, up until I appointed Governor Stassen to this post, that was responsible for getting together all of the different ideas affecting disarmament and putting them together." Eisenhower remarked that different departments had to that point approached disarmament in different ways and expressed hope that Stassen with a "small staff" could synthesize these views and devise a "short, easily expressed program" that satisfied all stakeholders.⁴⁶ With the president's confidence, expectations ran high as Stassen embarked on his work on disarmament.

In a conversation three days after announcing the appointment, the president mused on an editorial that had stylized Stassen the "Secretary of Peace." Eisenhower directed Stassen to ask Secretary Dulles if he had any objection to the title, because the president believed such an honorific could "have great effect" even if it was not Stassen's official title. In this conversation, Eisenhower expressed his aspirations for leveraging the "great imagination" of Stassen and his staff to take steps towards promoting peace through

⁴⁵ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Dwight D. Eisenhower: 1955: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to December 31, 1955.*, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1959), 344, <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/4728407.1955.001>.

⁴⁶ Sherman Adams, *Firsthand Report; the Story of the Eisenhower Administration.*, [1st ed.] (New York, 1961), 177, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b4445498>.

disarmament.⁴⁷ Two years into his first term, Eisenhower had found his man for disarmament.

Secretary Dulles did not share the president's sentiments about Stassen. In response to Stassen being dubbed the "Secretary of Peace," Dulles remarked "what am I — secretary for war?"⁴⁸ Such frustration belies Dulles' claim that he had no "personal feelings" about the moniker, as he told Stassen in May 1955. Instead, Dulles pointed to the potentially harmful effects of such rhetoric on the morale of the State Department and Foreign Service who felt that they ought to "have [the] primary responsibility for peace."⁴⁹ Despite professed concerns about the optics of Stassen's appointment, it seems Dulles anticipated these efforts would encounter considerable opposition from the rank and file of State, Defense, the JCS, and the AEC.⁵⁰ Summarizing his thinking, Dulles remarked that the special assistant role would be a "highly technical, dead-end job, just the place for Harold Stassen." Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Robert Murphy was similarly scornful and believed nobody expected Stassen to accept the appointment or make much progress in the role.⁵¹ Strong pushback from these powerful players in Eisenhower's cabinet made meaningful progress on disarmament unlikely.

⁴⁷ "Report of a Conference Between the President and His Special Assistant (Stassen)," *FRUS 1955-1957*, XX: Document 17.

⁴⁸ David Tal, "The Secretary of State versus the Secretary of Peace: The Dulles-Stassen Controversy and US Disarmament Policy, 1955-58," *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, no. 4 (2006): 723.

⁴⁹ John Foster Dulles, Memorandum of Conversation with Stassen, May 20, 1955, in Harold E. Stassen and Marshall Houts, *Eisenhower: Turning the World Toward Peace* (St. Paul, MN: Merrill/Magnus Publishing Corporation, 1990), 304, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015018483761>.

⁵⁰ Kaplan, *Harold Stassen*, 112.

⁵¹ H. W. Brands, *Cold Warriors: Eisenhower's Generation and American Foreign Policy*, Contemporary American History Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 141.

Pervasive pessimism about disarmament was predicated on the presumption that a comprehensive deal was needed to eliminate nuclear weapons. Stassen instead felt that “step-by-step” progress could be made by “nudging here” and “prodding there” to move towards compromise.⁵² Less than two months after Stassen began his work on disarmament, a Soviet proposal to control atomic energy put forward at the UN Disarmament Commission indicated the opening of a window for negotiation.⁵³ Critically, this Soviet proposal eschewed their longstanding call for the immediate abolition of nuclear weapons and indicated openness to some measures of inspection.⁵⁴ Eisenhower felt that if this proposal reflected a genuine tactical change on the part of the Soviets then the upcoming Geneva summit could mark the “solid beginning of a move toward world disarmament.”⁵⁵ Soviet receptiveness to a phased approach buoyed optimism within the Eisenhower administration about arms control and moving toward disarmament.

Proposing Open Skies

The shift in Soviet tone in spring 1955 laid bare the fissures within Eisenhower’s cabinet concerning relations with Moscow. Stassen sought to seize the opportunity afforded by the Soviet proposal to put forth a fresh plan for phased reductions of weapons — both conventional and nuclear. By contrast, Dulles, Defense, and the JCS viewed the Soviet proposal as mere propaganda. Dulles, in particular, argued that the Soviets’

⁵² Tal, “The Secretary of State versus the Secretary of Peace,” 726.

⁵³ *Documents on Disarmament 1945-1959*, I:456–67.

⁵⁴ Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War*, 117.

⁵⁵ Adams, *Firsthand Report; the Story of the Eisenhower Administration.*, 177.

willingness to negotiate should be interrogated before putting forward any substantive counterproposals. As the administration prepared for the conference, the divergence between Eisenhower's innate optimism and Dulles' deep-seated pessimism was on full display. The final days before the conference were a heady time for Eisenhower, who spoke loftily of "chang[ing] the spirit" of US-USSR relations at Geneva.⁵⁶

The first days of the summit seemed to confirm Dulles' fears that the Soviets were not prepared to engage in substantive negotiations. Eisenhower characterized the five members of the Soviet delegation as "enigma[s]" who conducted their "planned and rehearsed efforts to ingratiate" with "precision and mechanical perfection." He rued the Soviets' opacity as he struggled to even surmise which one of the delegates was "really in charge."⁵⁷ The Soviet's pedaling of platitudes and vague suggestions about inspections finally pushed Eisenhower to side with Stassen and go big in calling for aerial inspections.⁵⁸ After consulting with Prime Minister Anthony Eden on the subject, Eisenhower decided to channel his energy into the so-called "Open Skies" proposal. The Open Skies plan called for aerial reconnaissance flights over signatory states' territory, particularly military infrastructure. By promoting transparency, these flights were intended to assuage fears of a surprise attack that loomed particularly large in the minds of Soviet and US military leadership.

⁵⁶ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Mandate For Change 1953-1956*, vol. 1 (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1963), 515, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39076005632489>.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:517–18.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:519.

The Open Skies proposal distilled several presidential advisors' thinking on disarmament. In the wake of the Soviet inspection proposal in May, Eisenhower had tasked Nelson Rockefeller, then a special assistant on Cold War strategy, with developing a new arms control initiative. Rockefeller's consultation with a panel of experts to craft a memorandum that called for overflights of key military infrastructure. Rockefeller's proposal passed through Stassen, who also claimed to have been thinking about a similar measure since a conversation with General James Doolittle during his flight from Tokyo to Washington before assuming the position of special assistant for disarmament. Eisenhower conceptualized this Open Skies initiative as a confidence-building measure – an act of goodwill to promote trust – that was similar to his Atoms for Peace proposal. Open Skies exchanges could begin bridging between the American and Soviet positions and open the door for future agreements.

When Eisenhower laid out the proposal during discussion, it was warmly received by the French and British and caught the Soviets by surprise. The two primary Soviet negotiators, Nikolai Bulganin and Nikita Khrushchev, had strikingly different reactions to Eisenhower's proposal and his assertion that the US sought peace. Bulganin seemingly took the president's claims at face value and seemed receptive to further discussion. However, Khrushchev — the real power in the Politburo — dismissed the initiative as “a very transparent espionage device.”⁵⁹ The divergent reactions of Bulganin and Khrushchev suggested that both Eisenhower's enthusiasm and Dulles' doubts were warranted. The

⁵⁹ Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War*, 121.

NATO powers stood to gain more from this proposal as the closed-off Soviet system left the West largely in the dark, while the relative transparency of the US, UK, and France already enabled the Soviets to gather extensive intelligence on the size and location of military installations. However, as happened so often, political leaders on both sides of the Cold War failed to translate the aspirational rhetoric of Atoms for Peace, Open Skies, and various Soviet disarmament proposals into reality.

PART II: BUILDING MOMENTUM FOR A TEST-BAN

Key Voices of Anti-Nuclear Activism

Ostensibly, the Soviet rejection of Open Skies dimmed the prospects for future arms control either bilaterally or multilaterally. US policymakers dismissed Soviet statements of support for disarmament as empty rhetoric in light of the Kremlin's persistent resistance to having their nuclear sites inspected to verify compliance with any agreement. After these initial efforts to control the arms race stalled, the pace of testing and weapon development markedly accelerated as the US, UK, and USSR all ramped up detonations between 1955 and 1958. However, this dramatic rise in nuclear testing and development also led to a growing awareness of the dangers of the radiation released by these explosions, which in turn led to calls for a ban on nuclear testing. Throughout the late 1950s several key voices began calling for an end to nuclear testing as a first step towards further disarmament. This mounting support for a test ban came from a coalition of activists including eminent nuclear physicists, leading public intellectuals, and high-profile politicians. Cumulatively, their efforts engendered a broad shift in American public opinion towards support for a test ban.

SCIENTISTS SPEAK OUT

Some of the earliest proponents of a test ban emerged from the ranks of scientists who had begun warning of the severe dangers of nuclear weapons shortly after the dawn of the nuclear age. Scientists' integral role in the monumental efforts to harness atomic energy established their credibility on two critical issues. First, they were invaluable experts on the technical results of previous tests which, in turn, positioned them well to

evaluate the need for further testing. Additionally, their growing understanding of the harmful effects of radiation made their activism against atomic testing even more compelling.

During the latter half of the 1940s, many of those who had worked on the Manhattan Project voiced concerns about the threat that nuclear weapons posed to humanity's survival. Oppenheimer and several colleagues initially hoped for international control of atomic power, although as this vision faded, they channeled their energy into other efforts to promote peaceful uses of atomic research and slow or reverse the incipient arms race between the US and USSR. Such efforts to check America's atomic ambition brought these physicists into conflict with the growing national security state. The high-profile hearings that resulted in the revocation of Oppenheimer's security clearance in 1954 epitomized this struggle. While this episode pierced scientists' "aura of invincibility," it did not spell the end of scientific activism on nuclear issues.⁶⁰

Key figures from within a broader movement of scientists engaged in anti-nuclear activism began supporting a test ban in the mid-1950s. Such scientists delivered warnings about the dangers of nuclear weapons by both appealing to public audiences and directly lobbying policymakers. The renowned chemist Linus Pauling distinguished himself early on as one of the most outspoken anti-nuclear activists in the United States. During World War II, Pauling declined an invitation from Oppenheimer to head the Chemistry Division

⁶⁰ Paul Rubinson, "Crucified on a Cross of Atoms': Scientists, Politics, and the Test Ban Treaty," *Diplomatic History* 35, no. 2 (April 1, 2011): 287–88, doi:10.1111/j.1467-7709.2010.00950. x.

on the Manhattan Project, stating that his pacifist beliefs prevented him from contributing to the effort to weaponize atomic energy. Following the war, he grew increasingly vocal in his criticisms of US nuclear policy. One of Pauling's central concerns was the harm to the public posed by radioactive fallout from nuclear testing. Pauling framed his activism in terms of a moral imperative for scientists to educate people about the dangers of nuclear fallout and mobilize grassroots anti-nuclear movements. His alarm at the harms of nuclear radiation led him to support a test ban as a first step in realizing his broader ambitions of nuclear abolition. The moral weight of Pauling's arguments made them compelling to some members of the general public, particularly those who had directly experienced health effects tied to radiation released by US testing. However, Pauling's combative comportment and his marriage of science and morality engendered an adversarial relationship with those government officials who felt that scientists should limit themselves to technical advice. By speaking out in such stark terms, Pauling's radical proposals made mainstream disarmament efforts seem credible by comparison.⁶¹

Pauling's agitation for nuclear abolition brought him into collaboration with a group of eminent scientists and public intellectuals mounting a transnational campaign to call attention to the danger of thermonuclear war. During the spring of 1955, an interdisciplinary group of high-profile intellectuals were at work on a manifesto imploring scientists the world over to unite in opposition to nuclear weapons. On July 9, 1955, noted philosopher Bertrand Russell issued this coterie's clarion call for the renunciation of

⁶¹ Ibid., 289–91.

nuclear weapons at a packed press conference in London's Caxton Hall. This statement became known as the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, named for two of its most famous signatories. Russell shared a draft of the manifesto with Albert Einstein on April 13, 1955 and asked for the world-renowned physicist's support. Einstein, enfeebled by mounting ailments of age, eagerly affixed his signature in support of an effort he considered essential.⁶² In his final years, Einstein had watched with sorrow as his friend Oppenheimer was stripped of his security clearance and the nuclear arms race between Cold War rivals accelerated.⁶³ Einstein's endorsement of this disarmament manifesto days before his death was a fitting coda for a man whose letter to President Roosevelt detailing the work of Leo Szilard on chain reactions had helped catalyze the Manhattan Project sixteen years earlier.

Widespread reporting on the Russell-Einstein Manifesto made waves as the world witnessed mounting Cold War tensions being directed into an arms race that raised the specter of nuclear holocaust.⁶⁴ The ripples set in motion by the manifesto resulted in a meeting of scientists two years later in Pugwash, Nova Scotia. Twenty-two scientists from the Soviet Union, United States, Japan, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Austria, China, France, and Poland met and dedicated themselves to discuss measures to implement and monitor a nuclear test ban treaty. This meeting became the first of an ongoing series

⁶² *Ibid.*, 291.

⁶³ Dennis Overbye, "From Companion's Lost Diary, A Portrait of Einstein in Old Age," *The New York Times*, April 24, 2004, sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/24/nyregion/from-companion-s-lost-diary-a-portrait-of-einstein-in-old-age.html>.

⁶⁴ "The Russell-Einstein Peace Manifesto – Archive, 11 July 1955," *The Guardian*, July 11, 2016, sec. World news, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/11/russell-einstein-peace-manifesto-archive-1955>.

of discussions known as the Pugwash Conferences. These unofficial summits came to serve as one of the most influential spaces for disarmament dialogue over the six decades since the inaugural session.

Although the manifesto that led to the Pugwash Conferences bore Pauling's signature, this transnational group of scientists took a different approach to disarmament activism. Rather than wrapping recommendations in terms of moral indignation, the participants sought to concentrate on exploring technical questions and barriers to agreement. Furthermore, they viewed their meetings as a way to jumpstart official diplomatic negotiations on disarmament issues, which had repeatedly stalled. Given this focus, the group quickly turned to evaluating inspection measures for a test ban which stood as the most promising opportunity for a disarmament agreement currently under consideration by both sides in the Cold War context.⁶⁵

Pugwash participants' political views were as varied as the countries they represented. This proved to be both an asset and liability for the forum. Bringing together representatives from so many countries was uncommon and served an invaluable function to help share ideas and find potential spaces for common ground that had gone unexplored in official channels of nuclear diplomacy to that point. However, the inclusion of Soviet negotiators paired with the leftist leanings of key conference organizers led the meetings

⁶⁵ Paul Rubinson, "American Scientists in 'Communist Conclaves': Pugwash and Anti-Communism in the United States, 1957–1968," in *Science, (Anti-)Communism and Diplomacy: The Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs in the Early Cold War*, ed. Alison Kraft and Carola Sachse (Leiden ; Boston: BRILL, 2019), 156–58.

to be labeled as “communist conclaves” that served to “subvert and corrupt the minds of international scientists.”⁶⁶

However, the ideological diversity of conference participants made the narrow focus on technical matters particularly apropos. Furthermore, by orienting themselves towards technical issues and embracing the issue of a test ban, the Pugwash group tacitly acknowledged political constraints on any hypothetical agreement. Taking their cue from the Russell-Einstein Manifesto that “any agreement between East and West is to the good in so far as it tends to diminish tension,” these scientists worked toward phased steps to reverse the arms race rather than fantasizing about an infeasible comprehensive disarmament agreement. Such an approach marked a commitment to arms control as having value even if it fell short of the ambitious vision of disarmament held by many at the time.⁶⁷

Questions surrounding inspection rested at the heart of these experts’ discussion of a test ban. The inspection issue had proven a major sticking point between the US and USSR during negotiations of earlier proposals dating to the Truman administration. Even the Open Skies proposal, which would have greatly reduced the need for on-the-ground inspections, proved objectionable to the Soviets. The opinion of the scientific community varied widely regarding what observation infrastructure was needed to monitor compliance with a test ban. For some, such as Pugwash participant David Inglis, a physicist at Argonne

⁶⁶ Thomas J. Dodd, “The Pugwash Conferences: A Staff Analysis” (Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 1961), 52, 54, Congressional Record, <https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/congressional/docview/t21.d22.cmp-1961-sjs-0015?accountid=7118>.

⁶⁷ Rubinson, ““Crucified on a Cross of Atoms,”” 293–94.

National Laboratory (part of a project funded by the AEC), enforcing a test ban treaty could be accomplished with considerably less intrusive inspection measures. Inglis contended that a test ban could be monitored using a network of instruments that need not be located within Russian territory. Inglis penned several magazine articles to this effect and advocated for a test ban as early as 1954 and early 1955. Others argued that any effective monitoring system would need an extensive array of collection posts, including many on the ground in the Soviet Union. Soviet resistance to such an arrangement gave the lighter footprint described by Inglis considerable appeal. Leading public figures gravitated towards such assessments of the feasibility of ensuring compliance with a test ban.

PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS RING THE ALARM

An essential element of this nuclear-skeptic scientific activism was its close connection to an interdisciplinary array of public intellectuals. The extraordinary life and social networks of Norman Cousins exemplifies the extensive connections between the scientific community and other leading intellectuals. Furthermore, over the course of his decades of anti-nuclear activism, Cousins demonstrates the potential for a public intellectual to leave an indelible imprint on world affairs. Cousins was only twenty-seven years old when he became the editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature*. Under his leadership the weekly publication expanded beyond literary criticism to grapple with key topics of science, politics, and current events. The *Review's* circulation ballooned from 20,000 in 1940 when Cousins joined its staff to more than 600,000 regular readers at the end of his tenure as editor-in-chief. At its peak, the *Saturday Review* was the country's

third largest weekly, with a circulation smaller than only *Time* and *Life*.⁶⁸ During World War II, Cousins also served in the Office of War Information (OWI) to convey the events of the war abroad to audiences at home in the United States. In his work in OWI and at the *Saturday Review* he encouraged his staff to “restore to writing its powerful tradition of leadership in crisis.”⁶⁹

On August 6, 1945, after reading of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Cousins had the opportunity to do just this. In an oral history recorded near the end of his life he recalled that he had “never known such sadness” as when he learned of the decision to drop the atomic bomb on human beings. Cousins stayed up much of the night of August 6 and began writing an editorial “The Modern Man is Obsolete” in which he articulated his fears about the threat that atomic weapons posed to human existence. This article was widely reprinted in several languages and marked the outset of decades of disarmament advocacy for Cousins.

Cousins frequently published about the dangers of nuclear weapons in the *Saturday Review*, and he wrote to a sweeping assortment of figures on the same subject. Records of Cousins’ correspondence included exchanges with scientists such as Russell, Einstein, Oppenheimer, and Pauling, as well as statesmen such as W. Averell Harriman, John

⁶⁸ Allen Pietrobon, “Peacemaker in the Cold War: Norman Cousins and the Making of a Citizen Diplomat in the Atomic Age” (Ph.D., American University), 5, accessed August 24, 2021, <http://www.proquest.com/docview/1822189173/abstract/1965D4A264AF41C5PQ/5>.

⁶⁹ Eric Pace, “Norman Cousins, 75, Dies; Edited The Saturday Review,” *The New York Times*, December 1, 1990, sec. Obituaries, <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/01/obituaries/norman-cousins-75-dies-edited-the-saturday-review.html>.

McCloy, Adlai Stevenson, Hubert Humphrey, and Eisenhower. The breadth and depth of his correspondence attests to his connections with people across the ideological spectrum.

Over the course of the 1950s, Cousins watched the burgeoning arms race with alarm as he felt the Eisenhower administration's "New Look" policy raised the risk of nuclear war more than the president's repeatedly stymied arms control initiatives reduced it. Historian Allen Pietrobon, biographer of Cousins, identifies the mid-1950s as a formative period during which Cousins "evolved from a nuclear control advocate into an anti-nuclear activist."⁷⁰ Coinciding with the eleventh anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima Cousins published an editorial "Think of a Man" in which he implored his readers to wrestle with difficult questions raised by nuclear weapons and the risks associated with radiation caused by nuclear tests. Similar to Pauling's prose, Cousins' writing frames nuclear policy in moral terms and interrogates the imperatives that ought to guide government policy. Such moralizing is where the similarities ended between Cousins' writing and that of his scientist correspondents. Cousins' eloquence, the result of decades as a journalist and editor, resonated with readers in a way that the jargon-laden reports of the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* rarely did.

This editorial was well-received by the *Saturday Reviews* subscribers and other publications, but the response of one reader in particular reflects the considerable clout that Cousins had amassed through his writings. On August 6th, President Eisenhower wrote a letter to Cousins lauding the editorial's "powerful and persuasive terms" and vowing to

⁷⁰ Pietrobon, "Peacemaker in the Cold War," 146.

“circulate it among some of my close associates.” In his letter, Eisenhower remains torn by his moral repulsion at nuclear weapons and desire to “eliminate” them while worrying that reaching a disarmament agreement that the Soviets would “easily evade, would be worse than none at all.”⁷¹ Eisenhower’s reflective response to this editorial conveys the weight that Cousins’ writing carried in the public discourse about disarmament.

GROWING LIBERAL SUPPORT FOR DISARMAMENT

Cousins’ ideas were even more compelling to those who shared his progressive views. Although the current occupant of the White House read Cousins’ words with care, Adlai Stevenson, his Democratic challenger in the 1956 election had a much closer bond with the influential editor. To this end, Cousins was instrumental in encouraging the Illinois Democrat to make a test-ban a central fixture of his 1956 presidential campaign. As the incumbent who had ended the war in Korea and overseen considerable economic growth and development, Eisenhower campaigned on a platform promising continued “peace, prosperity, and progress.”⁷² As Stevenson sought to “seize the peace initiative” he tapped Cousins to write several speeches about disarmament and later described him as a “constant counsellor and conscience.”⁷³

⁷¹ Letter from Dwight Eisenhower to Norman Cousins, 6 August 1956, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, Kansas. (Hereafter: DDEL). Eisenhower Papers as President of the United States, 1953-1961, Ann Whitman File, Name Series. Box: 7, Folder: Cousins, Norman (2)

⁷² Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, eds., “Republican Party Platform of 1956” (The American Presidency Project, August 20, 1956), <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/republican-party-platform-1956>.

⁷³ Adlai Stevenson, Address to UWF Dinner, Nov. 18, 1964, Cousins Papers, Beverly Hills; as quoted in Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 14.

Stevenson had made disarmament an element of his campaign back in 1952, although he acknowledged the need to retain and reinforce military strength until realizing “honest disarmament” at a future date.⁷⁴ This line of thinking was largely consistent with the approach adopted by Truman and Eisenhower. However, Stevenson’s support for disarmament intensified over the following four years as Eisenhower’s efforts on this front during his first term fizzled out. In 1956, during what he saw as his final viable campaign for the presidency, he doubled down on disarmament and enlisted the help of Cousins to craft his call for a test ban.

Stevenson’s proposal for a ban on thermonuclear tests gained more traction during the 1956 election cycle. Physicists from several national laboratories went on record in support of the proposal. Prospective voters put pen to paper in a wave of mail expressing support for the measure. Furthermore, the test ban garnered considerable support within the Democratic party as several congressional leaders endorsed Stevenson’s plan as an important objective of a prospective American arms control agenda.⁷⁵ Pronouncements about suspending hydrogen bomb tests popped up throughout the Democratic presidential primary and into the campaign for the general election in the fall of 1956. In stump speeches, Stevenson reiterated his belief that the US ought to lead by example and suspend testing hydrogen bombs in the hopes of encouraging the Soviet Union and Great Britain to reciprocate. Estes Kefauver, Stevenson’s primary rival for the nomination in 1956, also

⁷⁴ Charles Grutzner, “Rival Candidates See Peace In World Through U. S. Lead,” *New York Times*, 1952.

⁷⁵ Harrison E. Salisbury, “Stevenson Wins Support In Fight On H-Bomb Tests,” *The New York Times*, October 17, 1956.

indicated his support for a measure to ban thermonuclear testing. Stevenson pointed to Soviet support of a test ban agreement that they proposed as they rejected Eisenhower's Open Skies proposal in mid-1955. The Kremlin repeatedly floated a test ban over the next several months, but such overtures were received coolly by the Eisenhower administration.⁷⁶

Democratic Debates over Disarmament versus Deterrence

Stevenson's strident stances on disarmament helped drive a Democratic intra-party debate over how to advance an alternative arms control agenda to the one established by the Eisenhower administration. Within Congress, several northern and midwestern Democrats had emerged as eager proponents of arms control by the 1950s. More hawkish figures within the party opposed them and instead embraced deterrence. Deterrence doctrine considered maintaining nuclear superiority over the Soviets the best course of action to ensure US national security. To avoid appearing as Soviet sympathizers, Minnesota Senator Hubert Humphrey and other liberal arms control advocates carefully trumpeted their anti-communist bona fides as McCarthyist hysteria swept the nation. However, they viewed disarmament as mutually beneficial for both the US and USSR. This division among congressional Democrats over arms control mirrored the broader ideological struggle underway within the Democratic Party.

⁷⁶ "Soviet Proposes New Plan for Disarmament: Suggestion to Cut Forces and Ban All Atomic Tests Greeted Coolly by U.S.," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*, April 1, 1956.

Humphrey had long been an outspoken proponent of disarmament both general and nuclear in the Senate. As a senator, he sponsored several disarmament resolutions, beginning with a call for general disarmament in 1951 during his first term.⁷⁷ In April 1955, shortly after President Eisenhower appointed Stassen as his “Secretary of Peace,” Humphrey authored a resolution calling for the Foreign Relations Committee to establish a disarmament subcommittee to devote ongoing attention to arms control issues. This proposal received support from several executive agencies including the State Department. Its membership was revised to include representatives from both the Senate Armed Services Committee and Joint Committee for Atomic Energy and it passed the Senate in June 1955.⁷⁸ In August, Humphrey became the first chair of this subcommittee and leveraged this position to warn against the dangers of the ongoing arms race and champion efforts to bring it under control.⁷⁹ This committee developed into the central forum for discussions of disarmament in the Senate, and frequently welcomed Stassen and other administration officials to testify on initiatives in this arena.

In 1956 several congressional Democrats, including Humphrey, expressed support for Stevenson’s proposed ban on the testing of thermonuclear weapons. During the closing weeks of the presidential campaign, Humphrey stood in solidarity with Stevenson even as

⁷⁷ Associated Press, “Ten Senators Submit Resolution Calling for World Disarmament,” *The New York Times*, August 16, 1951.

⁷⁸ Hubert H. Humphrey, “Appointing a Subcommittee to Work Toward the Goal of World Disarmament” (Washington D.C.: Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, June 14, 1955), ProQuest Congressional, https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/congressional/docview/t47.d48.11816_s.rp.547?accountid=7118.

⁷⁹ “Arms Study Unit Named,” *The New York Times*, August 13, 1955.

Eisenhower painted the Democratic position as advancing Soviet interests at the expense of US national security. To alleviate the concerns about enforcement that dogged the test-ban proposal, Humphrey published a report asserting the feasibility of monitoring detonations without any additional observation stations or inspection arrangements with the Soviet Union. Even after Stevenson's defeat in November, Humphrey continued to advocate for a test-ban in hearings held by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on Disarmament.

Humphrey's chairmanship of the disarmament committee provided an important platform for him to persistently push for a test ban and additional arms control measures. Committee hearings offered a forum for debates on disarmament and a place to criticize the Eisenhower administrations' apparent inability to make progress in this area. Humphrey put forward several arguments for arms control including highlighting the growing harms of radiation from nuclear testing, the threat to US national security by advances in Soviet satellite and missile technology, and the growing risk of nuclear holocaust caused by the accelerating arms race.

On February 4, 1958 – as disarmament discussions seemed dead in the water – Sen. Humphrey took to the Senate floor and delivered a comprehensive account of his thinking on disarmament based on his work as chair of the subcommittee on disarmament. In his address, he outlined five principles to guide US policy in this area: strength, understanding, limitation, inspection, and control. Humphrey emphasized the need for the US to negotiate from a position of strength, which represented the “prerequisite for effective bargaining.”

Furthermore, Humphrey urged a greater public understanding of the “difficulties and complexities of disarmament in a nuclear age.” Finally, limitation, inspection, and control served as integral features of any disarmament framework. Humphrey proceeded to reflect on the extent to which previous disarmament proposals had reflected these guiding principles.⁸⁰

Humphrey’s central criticism of the Eisenhower administration’s strategy was that the all-or-nothing approach in search of a comprehensive disarmament agreement effectively made any progress impossible. Although the administration presented its recent proposals as signifying a singular first step toward disarmament, Humphrey split these proposals into nine discrete parts. Humphrey argued that any of these measures on their own could be considered a first step, and that only through incremental agreement could negotiators gather momentum on what was sure to be a long road toward disarmament. To this end, Humphrey’s speech responded to a recurrent criticism of disarmament as an unattainable objective. Humphrey acknowledged the significant hurdles to achieving total disarmament but nonetheless affirmed his commitment to limited arms control, which he believed held value in its own right.⁸¹

Early in 1957, Humphrey invited Truman’s former Secretary of the Air Force Thomas Finletter to testify before the disarmament subcommittee regarding Eisenhower’s shift to prioritize partial disarmament in the absence of progress on a comprehensive

⁸⁰ Hubert H. Humphrey, “United States Foreign Policy and Disarmament - Speech by Senator Hubert H. Humphrey,” February 4, 1958, Minnesota Historical Society, <http://www2.mnhs.org/library/findaids/00442/pdf/00442-00684.pdf>.

⁸¹ Ibid.

agreement. Finletter had served as one of Stevenson's foreign policy advisers during the 1956 campaign and was acutely aware of how Eisenhower had turned the test-ban idea into a political liability just before voters went to the polls. In his testimony, he emphasized that before reaching any agreements on partial disarmament, "we would have to be certain (A) that the agreement if carried out will not work to our disadvantage, and (B) that the inspection system is absolutely sure to catch any violation by the Russians."⁸² Finletter continued to urge action on disarmament and he was instrumental in forming the Democratic Advisory Council (DAC) to champion many of the liberal positions that Stevenson had campaigned on.

Creating the Democratic Advisory Council

During the 1950s, ideological divisions between the liberal and conservative wings of the Democratic party impaired party cohesion by making it difficult to unite the party behind a coherent and consistent platform. The disagreements laid bare by Dixiecrat schism during the Truman years remained just beneath the surface. Leaders of the splinter party had nominally returned to the Democratic fold without a true ideological reckoning within the party. As Stevenson emerged as the party's standard bearer in the 1952 and 1956 elections, his supporters sought to establish liberal positions as party doctrine. These efforts had mixed results, and the party continued to suffer from intense internecine squabbles over both domestic and foreign policy issues.

⁸² Charles P. Trussell, "Finletter Scores Arms Cut Policy," *The New York Times*, January 17, 1957.

In the aftermath of Stevenson's loss in the 1952 election, many of his supporters implored him to leverage his national stature to remain a vocal advocate for liberal principles within the party. None other than Norman Cousins urged Stevenson to outline a liberal alternative agenda during Eisenhower's second term. To this end, Cousins suggested that Stevenson create a "High Council for the Democratic Party" to articulate policy proposals aligned to liberal values.⁸³ Senator Humphrey echoed this sentiment and encouraged him to energetically advance liberal principles to counter the party's right wing. Although chastened by his landslide electoral defeat, Stevenson agreed to countenance an ad hoc council to deliberate key issues and produce guidance and talking points for party officials.⁸⁴

Finletter became the unofficial head of an eponymous group of intellectuals and current and former officials who began meeting regularly and crafting responses and alternatives to the Eisenhower agenda. Several members of the Finletter Group, such as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and John Kenneth Galbraith, also served as leading figures within the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) organization that had been seeking to pull the Democratic party leftward since the 1948 election cycle. In the struggle over the direction of the Democratic party, Finletter and his associates became powerful voices and champions of disarmament both within the party itself and in messages directly to the

⁸³ Sam Rosenfeld, *The Polarizers: Postwar Architects of Our Partisan Era* (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 31.

⁸⁴ Sam Rosenfeld, "A Choice, Not an Echo: Polarization and the Transformation of the American Party System" (Harvard University, 2014), 64–65, Digital Access to Scholarship at Harvard (FAS Theses and Dissertations), https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/12274614/Rosenfeld_gsas.harvard_0084L_11666.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y.

American people. Finletter believed that “enforceable disarmament” ought to be the “basic objective of [US] foreign policy.”⁸⁵ Such staunch support for disarmament ensured the issue would be integral to Stevenson’s 1956 campaign.

Stevenson’s defeat in the 1956 election by even larger margins than 1952 prompted a wave of postmortems assessing the Democrats failure to recapture the White House even as they retained control of both chambers of Congress. The Democratic National Committee (DNC) consensus held that Eisenhower’s centrist policies, which had enjoyed bipartisan congressional and popular support, had erased the liberal identity of the party forged during the New Deal. Rather than repudiate these principles, party leadership felt that Democrats needed to establish greater distance between themselves and the incumbent Republican president. To institutionalize the efforts of the Finletter group, they proposed creating a Democratic Advisory Council (DAC) composed of both public intellectuals and congressional and state politicians. Party leaders envisioned the DAC as an incubator for policy ideas that would help build a constructive alternative agenda to challenge Eisenhower.⁸⁶

Opposition from conservative congressional leaders, namely Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson and House Speaker Sam Rayburn, precluded congressional participation in the effort. Although many had hoped the DAC would represent both wings of the party, conservative boycotting of the group lent it more ideologically uniformity and

⁸⁵ “Finletter Urges Full Disarmament,” *New York Times*, 1955.

⁸⁶ Arlene Lazarowitz, *Years in Exile: The Liberal Democrats, 1950-1959* (Garland Pub., 1988), 119–21.

positioned it left of the party's center. While this polarization severely diminished the DAC's influence in Congress to lobby for a liberal legislative agenda, it generally enabled the group to more easily reach consensus and realize Finletter's vision of articulating bold policy initiatives.⁸⁷

Among the policy subcommittees that comprised the DAC, the greatest ideological diversity existed on the foreign policy committee. Led by chair Dean Acheson and vice-chair Paul Nitze, the group issued a series of stridently hawkish pronouncements on the need for an "all-out effort" to reverse America's "decline in military power" and regain superiority over the Soviets in strategic nuclear weapons.⁸⁸ Other members of the foreign policy committee, notably Stevenson, Galbraith, and Harriman sought to temper Acheson's confrontational tone, with limited success. As a result, many of the more dovish DAC foreign policy statements most consistent with the council's predominantly liberal membership emerged from adjacent subcommittees. One of the most influential of these proposals originated in the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology, led by Yale bio-physicist Dr. Ernest C. Pollard. Pollard's committee published several pamphlets advocating arms control measures and the establishment of a National Peace Agency.⁸⁹ This proposal figured prominently in the 1960 presidential election.

⁸⁷ Philip A. Klinkner, *The Losing Parties: Out-Party National Committees, 1956-1993* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 25.

⁸⁸ "Statement on President Eisenhower's Security Speeches," DAC Statement, November 16, 1957, p. 1, DAC Policy Statements, October 11, 1957 – February 16, 1958 folder, Kennedy Papers, Senate Files, Pre-Presidential Papers, box 924, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library (hereafter JFKL). As cited in Klinkner, *The Losing Parties*. 28.

⁸⁹ The Committee on Science and Technology of the Democratic Advisory Council, *Science and Technology*, pamphlet 1, "A National Peace Agency," 7-8, December 1959, DAC Policy Statements,

Although not necessarily by design, the mix of hawkish and dovish statements issued by the DAC helped bolster Democratic credibility on foreign policy. The conciliatory measures promoted by Pollard served as a good-cop counterweight to Acheson's bad-cop aggression. Galbraith, while reflecting on the DAC's role entering the 1960 election, felt that the belligerence of the foreign policy committee helped inoculate Democrats against lingering McCarthyist claims that the Democrats were soft on communism. Conversely, the arms control advocacy and emphasis on diplomacy suggested the party was capable of moderation rather than engaging in unbridled saber rattling.⁹⁰

Eisenhower's Early Consideration of a Test Ban

Electoral considerations shaped Eisenhower's rhetoric on a potential test ban during the summer and fall of 1956. Publicly, Eisenhower attributed the moratorium idea to Stevenson and derided it as "foolish" to take any such unilateral action.⁹¹ Two weeks before the election, Eisenhower turned the proposal into political kryptonite by releasing a letter from the Soviets supporting Stevenson's test moratorium. Implying Stevenson's plan served Soviet interests put the Democratic challenger on the defensive about the disarmament issue during the critical closing weeks of the campaign. The administration responded to the Soviet letter by reiterating the need for a comprehensive agreement to cut off the production of fissile material and implement an inspection regime. Indeed,

August 19, 1959 – March 15, 1960 folder, Kennedy Papers, Senate Files, Pre-Presidential Papers, box 924, JFKL. As cited in Klinkner, *The Losing Parties*, 29.

⁹⁰ Klinkner, *The Losing Parties*, 29.

⁹¹ Barry H. Steiner, "Looking Back: The Test Ban and the 1956 Election," *Arms Control Today* 41, no. 10 (2011): 51.

Eisenhower changed course less than two years later in 1958 when Washington agreed to an unofficial testing moratorium in conjunction with the USSR. This reversal occurred without any apparent progress towards agreement on a broader disarmament framework, suggesting Eisenhower may not have been as firmly opposed to suspending testing without a comprehensive inspection arrangement as he implied during the 1956 campaign.⁹²

The Eisenhower administration itself had already cursorily considered a test moratorium articulated by Stassen as a part of an array of disarmament proposals put forward in 1955. However, at the time Eisenhower saw “nothing to be gained” by it, and instead gravitated towards the aerial inspection idea that developed into the Open Skies proposal.⁹³ When this overture was rebuffed by the Soviets, the idea of a testing moratorium returned to the table as the administration continued to seek a way to slow the arms race.⁹⁴ In September 1956, in the midst of the presidential campaign, Undersecretary of State Robert Murphy reintroduced the idea of a moratorium as a unilateral measure to score a propaganda victory over the Soviets, who had scuttled the most recent negotiations. However, the administration refrained from announcing a unilateral moratorium and both Eisenhower and Dulles proposed further study on the test ban idea before making a decision. Eisenhower remained reticent about suspending testing before an “effective

⁹² *Ibid.*, 52.

⁹³ Chalmers M. Roberts, “Ike Turns Down Proposal To Ban H-Bomb Tests: Ike Rejects Idea of H-Test Ban,” *The Washington Post and Times Herald (1954-1959)*, February 24, 1955.

⁹⁴ Robert A. Divine, *Blowing on the Wind: The Nuclear Test Ban Debate, 1954-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 60–63, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000087488>.

inspection system [was] installed.”⁹⁵ Nonetheless, the idea for a suspension of testing held a cachet with some in the administration.

Several international events early in Eisenhower’s second term dramatically shifted international perceptions of the two superpowers and impacted the administration’s calculus concerning disarmament. First, the successful launch of Sputnik 1 in October 1957 profoundly impacted international public opinion about the relative scientific and technological prowess of the US vis-à-vis the USSR. A preliminary White House evaluation of international reaction to Sputnik’s launch raised concerns about Moscow leveraging its newfound “psychological advantage. . .in seeking a detente or attempting an expansionist venture.”⁹⁶ The success of Sputnik also suggested the Soviets possessed—or at the very least were close to possessing—the capability to strike the United States with a ballistic missile. This disconcerting development incited greater impetus for arms control measures to reduce the risk of war and enhance national security.

One of Eisenhower’s responses to the launch of Sputnik was the expansion of the Special Advisory Council that Truman had established to consult with the president on issues at the intersection of science and defense. Eisenhower renamed this office the President’s Scientific Advisory Council (PSAC) and moved it into the White House under the direction of James R. Killian, whom he named the Special Assistant to the President

⁹⁵ “Memorandum of a Conversation, White House,” *FRUS 1955-1957*, XX: Document 154.

⁹⁶ White House Office of the Staff Research Group, “Reaction To The Soviet Satellite: A Preliminary Evaluation,” October 16, 1957, 3, Box 35 Special Projects: Sputnik, Missiles and Related Matters, <https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/research/online-documents/sputnik/reaction.pdf>.

for Science and Technology.⁹⁷ Killian's appointment and the elevation of the PSAC proved emblematic of Eisenhower's increasing reliance on counsel from a range of scientists, many of whom staunchly supported a test ban. Furthermore, PSAC's growing influence indicated the erosion of AEC control over scientific advice on nuclear issues. Indeed, Eisenhower himself viewed the PSAC as a counterbalance to the "nuclear enthusiasts" of the AEC.⁹⁸

Since its founding in 1946 during the Truman administration, the AEC had become one of the most powerful institutional repositories of nuclear expertise; its directors tended to strongly oppose disarmament measures. While some early members went on to challenge the AEC's position on key issues, these dissenting voices were increasingly marginalized. Over the course of the 1950s, the institutional attitudes of the AEC and many of the national labs hardened against arms control measures and embraced nuclear deterrence as a cornerstone of US defense policy. Embracing deterrence as dogma became a litmus test for those working in this space and nonconformists, such as Oppenheimer, were sidelined — or removed — from the US nuclear enterprise.

Eisenhower's decision to bolster the PSAC and his receptiveness to Killian's advice suggested a shift in this balance of power between nuclear enthusiasts and skeptics within the administration. Pugwash scientists in the US developed strong relationships with key

⁹⁷ Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Text of Address by the President Delivered from the Oval Office in the White House on "Science in National Security," November 7, 1957, 6, DDE's Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 23, Science in National Security 11/7/57, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, <https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/research/online-documents/sputnik/11-7-57.pdf>.

⁹⁸ Rubinson, "American Scientists in 'Communist Conclaves:' Pugwash and Anti-Communism in the United States, 1957–1968," 157.

PSAC officials and this connection served to build momentum for a test ban treaty. Figures such as Paul Doty and Jerome Wiesner (who later chaired the PSAC under Kennedy), became Pugwash conference regulars, and were able to voice their views on the value and feasibility of a test ban in spaces opened for dialogue by the PSAC. This does not mean that their views received strong support from within the administration but having space to advance an arms control agenda at all marked an erosion of the AEC's previously unparalleled position concerning advice on technical matters of nuclear policy. However, PSAC's openness to a test ban treaty must not obscure the fact that considering disarmament measures was only part of this committee's broader portfolio.

Killian and the PSAC's ascent coincided with Stassen's being somewhat sidelined in the disarmament decisionmaking. Stassen's transparent political ambitions and tendency to ruffle feathers did not earn him many close allies within the administration. President Eisenhower valued Stassen's advice and appreciated his optimism, but the special advisor frequently antagonized other cabinet members. During the summer of 1956, Stassen took a leave of absence to lend his support to a scheme to have Vice President Richard Nixon replaced on the Republican ticket. Stassen saw Nixon as a liability for the Republican party in the upcoming election with the potential to impact congressional races. Instead, Stassen supported nominating Massachusetts Governor Christian Herter, a liberal Republican, as Eisenhower's running mate. Stassen cited Herter's relative favorability in polling compared to Nixon, a divisive figure who could potentially hurt the party in down-ballot

aces.⁹⁹ Ultimately, the effort failed to garner widespread support as the Republican establishment remained firmly behind Nixon. However, such machinations were emblematic of Stassen's impudence that so irked many of his colleagues.

Stassen's proclivity for political infighting and his own apparent ambitions eroded his influence in the administration. Recurring rifts between Stassen and Dulles moved the special advisor on disarmament onto shaky ground. Stassen's unfailing optimism and high profile grated Dulles, who felt that the "Secretary of Peace's" portfolio infringed on the State Department's function as the seat of foreign policy. The two men frequently sparred in NSC and cabinet meetings.

In the end, these tensions triggered a turf war that saw Stassen's independence circumscribed when he was unceremoniously moved out of the White House and into the State Department under Dulles. In early 1957, an exasperated Dulles urged Eisenhower to assign Stassen to an embassy position in Scandinavia or the Netherlands, which would move him out of his role as disarmament adviser. Eisenhower refused to dismiss Stassen altogether, but he did agree to place Stassen and his staff under Dulles at State. The reaction of both Stassen and Dulles to this move reflected their dispositions as an enduring optimist and incorrigible cynic, respectively.¹⁰⁰

The apparent demotion of Stassen, which placed him under the supervision of one of his most vocal critics in the cabinet, must have been a tough pill to swallow.

⁹⁹ James Reston, "Stassen Suggests Eisenhower State If He Is For Nixon," *The New York Times*, July 26, 1956.

¹⁰⁰ Kaplan, *Harold Stassen*, 154–56.

Furthermore, the way that Stassen and his staff were “tossed out of the White House executive office building,” leading him to be relocated to a temporary office a mile away from his staff, amplified the embarrassment.¹⁰¹ However, Stassen took the reassignment in stride and continued to seek opportunities for negotiation with the Soviets on arms control. By contrast, the surly Secretary of State remained skeptical of the arrangement and insisted on a pledge of loyalty and assurance that Stassen would toe the department’s line on disarmament issues. Additionally, he barred Stassen from contacting the press outside of official department channels. Optics aside, Stassen remained the president’s point person on disarmament and served as the primary US representative at talks of the UN Subcommittee on Disarmament in London later that year.

However, several significant missteps at the subcommittee’s meetings in London left Stassen hanging by a thread to his position as special adviser on disarmament. He overstepped his authority in sharing details of the US position before it was fully cleared through the interagency process. Several NATO allies were indignant at Stassen’s indiscretion and expressed their sense of betrayal directly to Eisenhower. Although Eisenhower responded to these concerns by reprimanding Stassen, he stopped short of recalling him or meting out more severe sanctions. Several months later, the negotiations in London broke off after US insistence on a comprehensive disarmament agreement. This marked a triumph of Dulles’ all-or-nothing approach over Stassen’s willingness to embrace

¹⁰¹ Robert Eliot Matteson, *Harold Stassen: His Career, the Man, and the 1957 London Arms Control Negotiations* (Inver Grove Hts., Minn.: Desk Top Ink, 1993).

incrementalism. Although he may not have been willing to acknowledge it at the time, Stassen's days as special adviser were numbered.¹⁰²

During the following months the united front presented by the State Department, the Defense Department, Joint Chiefs, and AEC convinced Eisenhower that a meaningful arms control agreement was not possible at present. Eisenhower still shared Stassen's desire for an accord that could arrest the arms race, but he recognized that political realities made this unfeasible and that his special adviser's rashness continued to rankle key members of his administration.¹⁰³ Stassen finally resigned his position on February 15, 1958, and shortly thereafter announced his candidacy for the Pennsylvania gubernatorial race that fall.¹⁰⁴

Following Stassen's ouster, no true champion of disarmament held any significant measure of influence within the administration. UN Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge had been one of Stassen's final remaining friends within the administration, but he was largely peripheral to further discussions of disarmament given the stagnant state of affairs in the UN Subcommittee on Disarmament. Following the end of negotiations in London, the USSR boycotted the UN Disarmament Commission, effectively knocking this forum out of action. In the closing months of 1957, Dulles and distrust of the Soviet's sincerity to negotiate carried the day in the administration's disarmament efforts.

¹⁰² Kaplan, *Harold Stassen*, 182–85.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁰⁴ Felix Belair, "Stassen Resigns to Run for Office in Pennsylvania," *The New York Times*, February 16, 1958.

A New Impetus for Action

On March 31, 1958, Moscow turned up the heat on the Eisenhower administration by announcing a unilateral halt on nuclear testing and calling on the US and UK to do the same. In announcing the suspension of tests, the Soviet Foreign Minister warned that if the other nuclear powers did not follow suit, the USSR would resume their own testing.¹⁰⁵ The Soviet announcement came on the heels of an NSC report outlining requirements for monitoring compliance with a ban on nuclear testing. This study was commissioned to address the Eisenhower administration's long-standing concern about inspection and verification of any form of arms control agreement. The committee assessed existing detection capabilities and concluded that three additional conditions would need to be met to establish a system to adequately safeguard a test limitation agreement. The report advocated a network of seventy observation stations within the Soviet Union and China as well as rights to overfly both countries and immediately access areas suspected to be the site of a test.¹⁰⁶

However, the Soviet Union's unilateral suspension of tests placed pressure on the United States to soften this stance and negotiate on a test moratorium involving all three nuclear powers. With the ball on arms control now abruptly back in their court, Eisenhower's administration moved to evaluate not only the feasibility of monitoring a moratorium, but also its significance for America's own nuclear arsenal. The working

¹⁰⁵ William J. Jordens, "Soviet Announces Atom-Test Halt With Condition; U.S. Wants Check; West Requests Pre-Summit Parley," *New York Times*, 1958.

¹⁰⁶ "Report of the NSC Ad Hoc Working Group on the Technical Feasibility of a Cessation of Nuclear Testing," March 27, 1958, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB94/tb02.pdf>.

group responsible for the NSC report released days before the Soviet announcement stated that they were unable to “come to an agreement as to whether a suspension or cessation of tests would be a net military advantage or disadvantage to the U.S.”¹⁰⁷ Over the course of 1958, the Eisenhower administration wrestled with this question of whether a test ban would be in the best interest of the United States. Beyond strictly considering its effect on nuclear capabilities, they also considered how a refusal to reciprocate the Soviet’s gesture might harm American global standing.

Yet again, interagency disagreements over the relative advantages or disadvantages of suspending tests encumbered Eisenhower’s decision making on the subject. The Department of Defense plainly outlined their opposition to suspending tests in a memo to Hans Bethe, the chair of the ad hoc committee on nuclear cessation. Both the Joint Chiefs and Defense argued that additional testing was needed to further develop the US arsenal, particularly lower-yield warheads and anti-ICBM capabilities. The closing paragraph of the memo succinctly captured the position of Defense and the JCS “in its overall long-range effects a test cessation will operate to the distinct disadvantage of the United States.”¹⁰⁸

At a meeting on March 24, 1958, the NSC discussed intelligence reports that anticipated the Soviets’ announcement suspending testing the following week. Dulles opened the meeting warning of how the administration would “be under heavy attack” in

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, iii.

¹⁰⁸ “Memorandum From the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Quarles) to the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Panel on Nuclear Test Cessation (Bethe),” *FRUS 1958-1960*, III: Document 144.

the realm of global public opinion if the US forged ahead with testing after a Soviet cessation. He urged the US to pre-empt the anticipated Soviet announcement by stating that the US would be suspending its testing following the forthcoming series of tests scheduled to run from April to September. He felt that such an announcement might “afford a basis to push ahead on the whole disarmament effort.”¹⁰⁹ Although Eisenhower assented to several of Dulles’ assertions, the Secretary of State’s views were clearly in the minority.

During the discussion, Strauss and the AEC closed ranks with Defense and the JCS and opposed suspending testing. Strauss warned that such a step would severely harm morale at the national laboratories and decried the end to development of tactical nuclear weapons that would result. Furthermore, Strauss and General Twining, the JCS Chairman, both questioned whether suspending tests would “really reduce world tension.”¹¹⁰ Such staunch opposition to a suspension and skepticism about its value carried considerable weight in the discussion.

Eisenhower repeatedly expressed his agreement with Dulles’ concern that continued testing would significantly harm American standing and undermine its claims to stand for a free and peaceful world. The President remarked that it is “simply intolerable to remain in a position wherein the United States, seeking peace... is unable to achieve an advantageous impact on world opinion.” However, Eisenhower remained unwilling to agree to a suspension of tests without arranging an inspection system in conjunction with

¹⁰⁹ “Memorandum of Discussion at the 350th Meeting of the National Security Council,” *FRUS 1958-1960*, III: Document 136.

¹¹⁰ “Memorandum of Conference With President Eisenhower,” *FRUS 1958-1960*, III: Document 145.

the Soviets. The president closed the meeting by asserting that if such an arrangement could be secured, the US “must accept a suspension of testing,” but he also acknowledged that at present they found themselves in a “terrible impasse” regarding disarmament.¹¹¹

In the following weeks, the US, UK, and USSR agreed to convene a conference of experts in Geneva to discuss technical concerns about monitoring compliance with a prospective test ban. Given the considerable distance between the positions of all three governments on the question of a test suspension, the conference aims were limited exclusively to addressing “practical problems of supervision and control which are indispensable to dependable disarmament agreements.”¹¹² After seven weeks of negotiations, the conference concluded with the issuance of a report that outlined agreed conclusions for a “workable and effective control system” to be placed under an international organization to ensure its effectiveness according to its necessary technical requirements. While this jointly issued report marked a small step towards a test ban by agreeing that monitoring was technically feasible, translating such an observation network into reality would require an additional three years of political negotiations, which began in October of 1958.

Over the course of spring and summer, as experts outlined the contours of a monitoring system in Geneva, the JCS, the AEC, Defense, and State remained divided over whether to suspend tests. Both the JCS and the AEC remained firmly in opposition to any

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² *Documents on Disarmament 1945-1959*, I:1084.

suspension. Defense generally opposed a complete suspension and advocated for continuing underground tests but acknowledged there would be a considerable political cost to continuing testing if the Geneva conference produced a mutually agreed framework for inspection. State favored a suspension of tests for one year, with the conditional option to extend the moratorium if progress were made on both an effective monitoring system and additional arms control measures. Killian refrained from taking a firm stance but did assert that any cessation decision would need to include all tests to “be meaningful” and indicated that the PSAC collectively thought a suspension would “be in the overall US interest.”¹¹³ As the conference in Geneva neared its close, Eisenhower decided to adopt State’s position.

The day after the conclusion of the Geneva conference, Eisenhower issued a statement heralding the agreement reached by scientists and detailing a US desire to suspend testing that fall and enter into negotiations in Geneva to implement an inspection system and take up other more “substantial arms control measures.”¹¹⁴ Eisenhower’s statement marked an important departure from the previous policy by separating a suspension of tests and dropping the demand for broader agreement on limits to fissile materials or other US objectives as a precondition for pausing testing.

At this juncture, the State Department had distinguished itself as the agency willing to lend the most vocal support to arms control measures. Secretary of State Dulles’ stance

¹¹³ “Record of Meeting Chaired by Acting Secretary Herter,” *FRUS 1958-1960*, III: Document 171.

¹¹⁴ *Documents on Disarmament 1945-1959*, I:1112.

had shifted considerably from his adversarial relationship with Stassen and broader pessimism about prospects for arms control. State's support of suspending tests signaled another swing in Dulles's "nuclear schizophrenia" that contributed to abrupt changes in his position on questions of nuclear policy.¹¹⁵ State's increasingly pro-arms control position was bolstered by Dulles' second-in-command Christian Herter, who was optimistic about prospects for further progress on arms control. In fact, Herter was generally less cynical about the same Soviet expressions of interest in arms control that Dulles generally dismissed as propaganda.¹¹⁶ Herter's earnest support proved critical during late 1958 and 1959 as the Secretary's health rapidly declined, resulting in Dulles' resignation on April 15. Herter officially replaced Dulles as Secretary of State a week later, and the new secretary's ambition for arms control helped elevate this issue within the department.

Shortly after his swearing in, Secretary Herter's attention was drawn to the unfolding Berlin crisis as the Soviets threatened to expel the three Western powers from the city. With test ban negotiations in Geneva stalled, and an acute confrontation between Washington and Moscow in Germany, it was difficult to see a route forward on arms control. Nonetheless, less than a week after shedding his "acting" title, Herter sent a memorandum to Eisenhower calling for a disarmament policy review, with an eye towards identifying either "comprehensive or partial measures of arms control" that could help

¹¹⁵ John Lewis Gaddis et al., eds., *Cold War Statesmen Confront the Bomb: Nuclear Diplomacy since 1945*, 1st edition (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 69.

¹¹⁶ C. Knowlton Nash, "Christian Herter: New Face at the Summit," *Macleans* (Toronto, Canada, Canada: Maclean Pub. Co., May 21, 1960), 17.

achieve US national security objectives.¹¹⁷ Over the final two years of Eisenhower's presidency, Herter remained a persistent advocate for arms control within the administration.

Comparing Truman and Eisenhower's Efforts

Despite differences in the dispositions of Truman and Eisenhower, there was considerable continuity between the two administrations on disarmament and arms control issues. Both presidents pursued a dual-track approach to disarmament through which they sought international agreements, but also proceeded apace with developing America's own nuclear arsenal. Such efforts were sensible from a national security standpoint, but they also sent mixed signals that encumbered efforts to reach an international agreement to eliminate atomic weapons. While both presidents sought to leverage international organizations or negotiations to control atomic energy and to defuse the dangers of nuclear war, their efforts were consistently frustrated by both internal and external opposition. Structural and individual forces combined to impede progress on disarmament.

Within both presidential administrations, powerful personalities reinforced institutional opposition that hamstrung disarmament efforts. Such impediments ranged from Baruch's prioritization of a punitive rather than placative approach, to Dulles' deep-seated distrust of the Soviets. Bureaucratic infighting on questions of disarmament showcased how this issue overlapped with the central missions of State, Defense, the JCS,

¹¹⁷ "Memorandum From Secretary of State Herter to President Eisenhower," *FRUS 1958-1960*, III: Document 215.

the service branches, and the AEC. Accordingly, these agencies sought to exert influence in this space and defend their institutional interests, which often entailed the preservation and further development of nuclear weapons. Even within the State Department — ostensibly the organization most committed to diplomacy to avoid war — the shared institutional suspicion of the Soviets hindered efforts to find common ground. Predictably, Stassen's efforts to coordinate a shared interagency position suffered due to his reliance on staff borrowed from these existing stakeholders.

Over the final year of Eisenhower's second term, several new voices did challenge the hegemony of nuclear enthusiasts within the administration. Even as Stassen's influence waned after his office was folded back into State, the PSAC's growing role served as something of a counterweight to the AEC's insistence on an inexorable expansion of the US nuclear arsenal. Furthermore, calls for disarmament — namely a nuclear test ban — outside of the executive branch grew progressively louder. Pressure at home and abroad, concerns about running counter to the zeitgeist, and Eisenhower's own desire to slow the arms race repeatedly brought the administration back to the table for both internal deliberations and international negotiations. However, without a stable home for arms control within the burgeoning national security apparatus, disarmament perennially appeared more like a dream than an attainable reality.

Articulating a cohesive policy on disarmament required greater institutional clout, with a larger dedicated staff and greater sense of permanence than could be mustered by a presidential special assistant, no matter how fastidious and ambitious. Empowering an

agency devoted to disarmament would help ensure that each administration had vocal, well-informed advocates for arms control even if the leadership and bureaucracies of other agencies were not necessarily invested. Without an organization principally devoted to disarmament and arms control, coordinating a comprehensive policy on the issue would remain a fleeting proposition based on the personal inclinations of cabinet members. Between 1945 and 1960, arms control initiatives gained traction only when the chief executive was earnestly invested and willing to overrule advice from most of the principal organs of the US foreign policy apparatus. Conversely, thinking on arms control atrophied considerably when international developments intervened and reduced the likelihood of reaching an accord with the USSR.

For their part, the Soviets also shared responsibility for the failure to achieve international control of atomic energy, or, for that matter, any significant arms control measure. Their rejection of proposals ranging from the Baruch Plan to Open Skies served to reinforce the views of those US administration officials who considered further negotiation futile. A fundamental first step towards any more ambitious agreement was increasing transparency to help build trust. The Soviets thwarted all US efforts to promote transparency and instead depended on the relative imbalance of openness to gather intelligence on the West while restricting access to details of their own defense infrastructure. Regardless of how much effort any presidential administration devoted to arms control, no progress would be possible without some concessions on the part of the USSR, especially concerning transparency.

PART III: INSTITUTIONALIZING ARMS CONTROL

Election of 1960

Even as negotiations for a nuclear test ban in Geneva stalled, discourse on disarmament assumed a high profile during the 1960 Democratic primaries. Stevenson retained considerable support within the party as it sought to regain the presidency in 1960. Polling in late 1959 and the start of 1960 showed Stevenson as an early front-runner alongside the young, charismatic Democratic senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy. Stevenson had earnestly promoted a nuclear test-ban during his 1956 campaign and continued to support the measure as a way to rein in the arms race as he coyly courted the nomination four years later. However, over the course of the 1960 election, Stevenson's arms control advocacy was eclipsed by the disarmament proposals put forth by his long-time ally Humphrey.

Through his work as chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Disarmament Humphrey had frequently castigated the Eisenhower administration's passivity on the issue and established himself as a leading proponent of arms control. Although a northerner of the liberal wing of the Democratic party, Humphrey established a strong rapport with Lyndon Johnson, for whom he served as a liaison with other Northern liberals. In addition, Humphrey sought to raise his profile by introducing innovative legislation and acting as a "liberal spokesman" on the "front page[s] of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*."¹¹⁸ After the 1958 midterm elections, *Time* ran a cover story profiling six Democratic hopefuls

¹¹⁸ Hubert Humphrey, *The Education of a Public Man*, First edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 142.

for the 1960 election. The article characterized Humphrey as the “leading liberal” in the field whose performance in the 1958 elections in which he helped campaign for other Democrats had helped him “gain the most ground.” Humphrey’s relative moderation and working relationship with Southern Democrats strengthened his candidacy but was unlikely to translate into Southern electoral support.¹¹⁹ In his memoirs, Humphrey reflected on that cover story as throwing him into the ring for 1960 “ready or not.” Despite his record as a senator and recent electoral success, Humphrey’s level of name recognition still lagged considerably behind other 1960 contenders.¹²⁰

Humphrey continued to harbor doubts about the viability of his presidential candidacy, but he soon committed to campaigning for the nomination in 1960. One week after the *Time* cover story, Humphrey went on an international trip to promote international cooperation on science and medical research with stops across Western Europe and concluding in the Soviet Union. During his visit to Moscow, he was surprised to be summoned to the Kremlin to meet with Khrushchev. Even more unexpected was Khrushchev’s desire to visit for well over eight hours, when most visiting senators or similar officials enjoyed only perfunctory audiences with the Soviet premier. Their agreeable conversation covered a wide range of topics, expanding well beyond Humphrey’s primary concern with international scientific cooperation. Khrushchev particularly reveled in Humphrey’s retelling of a joke about Churchill and Attlee and their ability to engage in friendly discussion despite their partisan disagreements. Humphrey

¹¹⁹ “The Men Who,” *TIME Magazine* 72, no. 21 (November 24, 1958): 15–19.

¹²⁰ Humphrey, *The Education of a Public Man*, 142.

considered the conversation “enlightening” in that it convinced him he could “deal effectively with heads of state.” Reassured by this revelation, Humphrey resolved to run for the presidency in 1960.¹²¹

Throughout 1959 – especially during Senate recesses – Humphrey traveled widely across the US as he worked to develop name recognition and cultivate a bloc of voters across western states. His stump speeches “plugged hard for disarmament” as he sought to spin the Republicans’ campaign promise of “peace and prosperity” against them by calling into question the efficacy of the Eisenhower administration on both of these issues. Humphrey envisioned a liberal future for the Democratic Party and felt he could best solidify his support among like-minded Midwesterners through his populist appeals to defend ordinary Americans against elite interests.

A year after his conversation with Khrushchev, Humphrey officially announced his presidential candidacy. In his statement, Humphrey acknowledged he faced an “uphill fight” for the nomination in large part due to his “limited” financial resources. Despite the challenges before him, Humphrey expressed confidence in his ability to craft a foreign policy “based on the real strengths” of the American people and achieve a “responsible program of disarmament with effective inspection and controls.”¹²² Cognizant of his long

¹²¹ Ibid., 142–48.

¹²² “Text of Humphrey Announcement of His Presidential Candidacy,” *The New York Times*, December 31, 1959.

odds, Humphrey entered the race committed to championing liberal causes in the hopes of having them adopted into the party's platform.¹²³

Humphrey's path to the nomination was fraught with challenges because he faced a formidable campaign machine in the form of the Kennedy clan. Senator Kennedy had begun laying the groundwork for a 1960 presidential bid before the votes were even counted in Stevenson's 1956 defeat. Because they lacked the support of party bosses, both Kennedy's and Humphrey's routes to the nomination ran through the primaries. Each felt they needed strong showings in several contests to have a chance at becoming the nominee. However, this is where the similarities between the two presidential hopefuls ended. Kennedy's campaign was flush with cash, with the sizable family fortune often used to help construct the Hollywood-esque aura that generated much enthusiasm about the charismatic young senator. Kennedy's ground game also benefited from his glamorous family and celebrity supporters who hit the campaign trail as surrogates.

In front of the cameras, the Kennedys' orchestrated a masterful charm offensive. However, equally as important were their cutthroat tactics used to undercut Humphrey at every turn. Humphrey was repulsed by the savageness of the campaign and was particularly devastated when Robert Kennedy convinced Humphrey's old friend Franklin Roosevelt Jr. to falsely allege that the Minnesota senator had dodged the draft during World War II. In fact, Humphrey had been deferred from service several times on medical grounds, despite

¹²³ W. J. Rorabaugh, *The Real Making of the President: Kennedy, Nixon, and the 1960 Election*, Illustrated edition (University Press of Kansas, 2009), 36–37.

his efforts to convince recruiters to accept him anyways. Upon learning of how the Kennedy's had pressured Roosevelt into making the baseless accusation, he swore off close political dealings with the family.¹²⁴

Humphrey's shoestring campaign faltered in the face of the Kennedy juggernaut in both the Wisconsin and West Virginia primaries, effectively eliminating him from the race. However, Humphrey did succeed in pulling the party leftward on several key issues, including arms control and disarmament. Despite Kennedy's success in Wisconsin, West Virginia, and subsequent primaries, he remained short of the requisite delegates to secure the nomination at the party convention. Moreover, his relative youth and naked ambition irked many members of the party establishment who considered other candidates to be better challengers to Vice President Nixon in the general election. The uncertainty entering the convention translated into a party platform open to revision from multiple directions led by different wings of the party. The DAC – set up in the wake of Stevenson's 1956 defeat – proved an important lever for Humphrey and other liberal Democrats to exert influence on the party's platform throughout the 1960 election cycle, even after Humphrey exited the race.

Throughout 1958 and 1959 statements from the DAC served as guideposts for the party and its candidates during the upcoming election. The policy papers and materials produced by DAC subcommittees served as valuable building blocks for the 1960 platform. Based on its liberal composition the council generally adopted positions further left than

¹²⁴ Ibid., 52–54.

congressional Democratic leaders, such as Johnson and Rayburn, would have liked, and more decisive than the political chameleon Kennedy would have likely advanced on his own. On domestic issues the DAC pushed the party to embrace progressive civil rights policies and stood as a stalwart source of liberal proposals. Although the council's foreign policy pronouncements were more mixed and included several hawkish statements – reflecting the influence of Acheson and Nitze – the council stood as a bona fide bastion of liberalism as the 1960 election cycle got underway.

Indeed, it was the DAC's liberal reputation that led an ideologically evasive Kennedy to finally join the group in November 1959, three years after he had declined his initial invitation. In October 1959, an aide to Kennedy advised him that to succeed in the election he needed to be identified as a liberal in "clear and unmistakable terms."¹²⁵ Success by non-southern liberal Democrats in the 1958 congressional elections suggested to liberal activists that they could push for a liberal platform and candidate in 1960; Kennedy tacked his sails accordingly and sought to bolster his liberal credentials in preparation. Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri, another 1960 presidential hopeful, joined the council at the same time, attesting to DAC's importance in building the party's 1960 platform.¹²⁶ One of the positions advanced by the DAC that gained traction among several primary candidates was the idea for a national peace agency dedicated to reducing tensions and slowing the arms race between the US and USSR.

¹²⁵ J. Miller, "Some Modest Realignment in the Kennedy Image," Memo, 20 October 1959, box 39, Political, Pre- Administration, JFK/RFK Papers, JFKL.

¹²⁶ United Press International, "2 Join Democratic Unit," *The New York Times*, November 12, 1959.

Over the final two years of Eisenhower's second term, the DAC repeatedly encouraged the administration to pursue disarmament opportunities. In December 1958, it called for the US to seek a multilateral agreement on the "regulation and control of the weapons of modern war" in a broader effort to promote "total disarmament."¹²⁷ In September 1959, following a speech delivered by Khrushchev at the UN General Assembly calling for "general and complete disarmament," the council put out a statement calling on the president to initiate negotiations based on the Soviet premier's remarks.¹²⁸ DAC statements were careful to avoid calling for disarmament at any cost, and qualified their calls for arms control by expressing a firm commitment to maintaining the necessary military strength to ensure US national security. As the election of 1960 grew nearer, the council and its subcommittees started to think hard about constructive policy proposals around which to position the Democratic party and its platform.

During the summer of 1959, the idea of an independent disarmament agency percolated among members of the DAC Advisory Committee on Science and Technology. A subcommittee all based in southern California and known as "the Pasadena Group" held a series of luncheon meetings in which they fleshed out a proposal for an agency aimed at "solving the technological problems involved in monitoring and inspecting disarmament agreements." Harrison Brown, a nuclear chemist and former assistant director of chemistry at the laboratory at Oak Ridge, TN, presented the idea to the full science and technology

¹²⁷ "Text of Statement on Policy Issued by the Democratic Party's Advisory Council," *New York Times*, 1958.

¹²⁸ E. W. Kenworthy, "Democratic Council Urges U. S. to Use Khrushchev Arms Plan as Basis for Talks," *The New York Times*, September 24, 1959.

committee on October 11, 1959. The proposal was unanimously endorsed by members of the committee who considered it a “novel” approach to realizing important arms limitation agreements. Crucially, the committee agreed that the agency must be independent of the Departments of State and Defense to ensure its research was not beholden to divergent interests in these large bureaucracies.¹²⁹ Pollard delivered a press conference devoted to the proposal following the committee’s meeting, where he suggested that the new agency could “act as a permanent laboratory for active study by ‘first class’ scientists of disarmament problems.” Several outlets reported favorably on the idea for a new agency and the *New York Times* ran a front-page column on it the next day.¹³⁰

Over the following weeks, Pasadena Group member and former Assistant Secretary of the Air Force Trevor Gardner revised the proposal in conjunction with the DAC Advisory Committee on Foreign Policy. He delivered the proposal as the first item of business at the full DAC meeting held in New York City on December 5, 1959. Gardner described the agency as filling an “organizational gap in our government” that would redirect scientific energy away from simply “search[ing] for bigger and better weapons.”¹³¹ President Truman opened the conversation and described the paper as a “good statement.” The proposal was enthusiastically discussed by the assembled council members and

¹²⁹ United States Congress Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Disarmament Agency: Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Eighty-Seventh Congress, First Session, on S. 2180, a Bill to Establish a United States Disarmament Agency for World Peace and Security. August 14, 15, and 16, 1961* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 180.

¹³⁰ “Scientists Ask New Board To Solve Peace Problems,” *The New York Times*, October 12, 1959.

¹³¹ Robert C. Albright, “Democrats Asks ‘Peace Agency,’” *The Washington Post, Times Herald* (1959-1973), December 6, 1959.

Stevenson, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Humphrey all expressed support and recommended revisions to the proposal. Meanwhile, Senator Kennedy literally phoned it in with a call the night before notifying the DAC he would miss the meeting but expressing his support for the proposal.

The DAC delivered the final statement to the press on December 5, 1959; it was widely reported in major morning newspapers nationwide the following day.¹³² The *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* ran an extensive excerpt of the DAC statement detailing the need for a “National Peace Agency.” The statement decried the relative inattention to arms control, characterizing the “existing government machinery” devoted to “promoting peace through international agreements on arms limitations as seriously inadequate.”¹³³ While sympathetic to the ad hoc efforts to explore possibilities for disarmament, the statement detailed how such initiatives were dwarfed by defense spending that often lost sight of promoting peace, which the DAC believed ought to serve as an overarching objective of US national security policy.

When several 1960 contenders, including Humphrey and Kennedy, officially kicked off their campaigns about a month later, the DAC peace agency proposal was one of the first foreign policy ideas they gravitated towards. On February 4, 1960, Humphrey introduced a bill to the Senate detailing a “National Peace Agency” to “deal with problems

¹³² Relations, *Disarmament Agency*; Albright, “Democrats Asks ‘Peace Agency’”; “U.S. Agency for Peace Proposed: Democrat Advisory Council Urges It Be Federal Arm,” *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*, December 6, 1959, sec. PART ONE; Leo Egan, “Democratic Plan for 1960 Includes U.S. Peace Agency,” *The New York Times*, December 6, 1959.

¹³³ “A National Peace Agency: The Democratic Advisory Council,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, February 1960.

related to achieving peace through arms limitation agreements.” The bill borrowed heavily from language in the DAC statement of two months earlier, including prescriptions for a “Laboratory of Peace” and reiterating the research responsibilities of the organization.¹³⁴ In a speech delivered at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee the week before the state’s primary, Humphrey referred to this bill as he made the case for an agency devoted solely to disarmament. The senator criticized the State Department, Pentagon, and AEC for “quarreling like feudal potentates” and promised to take planning for peace and disarmament “out of the doghouse and put it into the White House.”¹³⁵

Not to be outdone, Kennedy introduced his own legislation to establish an Arms Control Research Institute a month later on March 8, 1960. Kennedy’s proposed institute shared many functions with Humphrey’s agency, including a scientific focus and a director that would report directly to the president. In a speech delivered on the campaign trail in New Hampshire the day before he introduced this bill, Kennedy lamented how the ad hoc nature of previous disarmament efforts had left US negotiators ill-prepared to secure tangible arms control agreements. He went on to articulate the need to “alleviate glaring omissions in [the government’s] preparation for peace and disarmament.” Kennedy

¹³⁴ Hubert H. Humphrey, “To Create and Prescribe the Functions of a National Peace Agency,” Pub. L. No. S. 2989 (1960), https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/congressional/docview/t01.d02.86_s_2989_is_19600204?accountid=7118.

¹³⁵ Hubert H. Humphrey, “Address by Senator Hubert H. Humphrey Before the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee” (Milwaukee, WI, March 31, 1960), <http://www2.mnhs.org/library/findaids/00442/pdfa/00442-00972.pdf>.

envisioned the institute as a “clearing house for peace proposals,” with a mission complementary to existing agencies with equities in US nuclear policy.¹³⁶

Throughout the summer of 1960, Kennedy derided the Eisenhower administration's seemingly desultory approach to disarmament policy. He sharply criticized the demotion of Stassen in 1955 that ostensibly “downgraded disarmament efforts” within the administration. Relatedly, Kennedy admonished the administration for failing to ask for appropriations for arms control efforts until 1959, when finally, a “small sum was requested.”¹³⁷ Based on bureaucratic and budgetary maneuvers, it was fair to question the sincerity of Eisenhower’s commitment to arms control. Furthermore, Kennedy emphasized the need for arms control to be embraced even more firmly by the executive branch, even if disagreements with the USSR frustrated progress on disarmament. Both Kennedy and Humphrey’s proposals put the Eisenhower administration on the defensive and spurred the outgoing president to act in an effort to give Nixon an institutional arrangement for arms control to point to in the general election.

Both candidates issued their proposals for a disarmament agency as the Eisenhower administration launched renewed negotiations in the Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament (TNCD) under the auspices of the United Nations. On February 18, 1960, Secretary Herter delivered a speech detailing US preparations and priorities for the

¹³⁶ John F. Kennedy, “Disarmament Can Be Won - Transcript of Remarks,” March 7, 1960, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

¹³⁷ “Disarmament and Arms Control Briefing Papers,” September 2, 1960, Presidential Campaign Files, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKCAMP1960/0993/JFKCAMP1960-0993-015#>.

negotiations. Establishing safeguards against surprise attack and formalizing a nuclear test ban remained the two primary objectives of the US delegation. The administration had engaged with the Soviets on both issues in various forums over the preceding two years, including the London talks and several different conferences convened in Geneva. Tellingly, Herter's remarks suggested the fragmented nature of disarmament planning as he described a constellation of offices and studies convened by State, Defense, the PSAC, and an ad hoc committee headed by Charles Coolidge. To add a further layer of separation, Fredrick Eaton, a Wall Street lawyer, was to head the US delegation at the TNDC talks in Geneva.¹³⁸ This atomized arrangement had frustrated efforts to effectively coordinate conference preparations, a challenge that Kennedy foregrounded in his March 7 address on an arms control institute.

Institutional landscape at End of Eisenhower Administration

As Democratic hopefuls put forward legislation for an independent peace agency during the spring of 1960, Eisenhower and Secretary of State Herter initiated a study into a new organization to spearhead disarmament policy. Unfortunately, this initiative to consolidate expertise on arms control coincided with the downing of a U-2 spy plane conducting reconnaissance over the Soviet Union on May 1, 1960. Initially, Eisenhower sought to dismiss the incident as an accident involving a NASA weather-plane that strayed into Soviet airspace. However, the Soviet Union soon produced the wrecked surveillance

¹³⁸ *Documents on Disarmament 1960*, vol. 1960–1961 (Government Printing Office, 1960), 45–50, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.usfed/docondis0002&i=5>.

aircraft along with video of the pilot, Francis Gary Powers, confessing to conducting espionage. Khrushchev's indignation over the incident led to the implosion of a summit convened in Paris on May 14. The collapse of the summit seemingly spelled the end of negotiations on a test ban treaty or any other arms control measures for the remainder of Eisenhower's time in office.

Nonetheless, several months later Eisenhower and Herter acted on recommendations from the earlier study and announced the creation of the US Disarmament Administration in September 1960. The agency was to be housed within the State Department, starting with a staff of approximately fifty drawn primarily from individuals within State already working on disarmament issues.¹³⁹ Helmut Sonnenfeldt was a Soviet analyst in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) who was among the first staff transferred to the new disarmament administration. He characterized the establishment of the office as Eisenhower trying to “do Nixon a favor” as the administration faced widespread criticism that they were “not [doing] enough for peace and curbing the nuclear arms race.”¹⁴⁰ Establishing an independent agency would have required congressional legislation, which was politically impossible so close to the election. As a result, Eisenhower created the Disarmament Administration within the State Department by Executive Order. Standing up the new administration in the final before the election entailed a scramble to pull together experts on disarmament who were “diffused

¹³⁹ Special to The New York Times, “NEW ARMS GROUP TO GUIDE POLICIES: Agency Set Up Under Herter With Added Defense and Atomic Energy Aides,” *New York Times*, 1960.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Helmut Sonnenfeldt, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, July 24, 2000, 69, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <https://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Sonnenfeldt,%20Helmut.toc.pdf>.

around the government.”¹⁴¹ While the new office could try to coordinate disarmament policy under the authority of the Secretary of State, the USDA’s small size and meager funding showed it could not serve as the fully-fledged research agency for disarmament envisioned by the Democratic proposals.¹⁴²

Staffing proved a challenge throughout the ranks of the Disarmament Administration. The head was to hold a rank equivalent to an Assistant Secretary of State. However, it proved difficult to find a “prominent public figure” who would accept the role during the twilight of Eisenhower’s second term. Eventually, Edmund Gullion, a well-connected Foreign Service Officer, was tapped to serve as the deputy director while the director position went unfilled. Staffers, such as Sonnenfeldt, were also often displeased with being reassigned from their current roles into a new office whose future after the election was relatively uncertain. Sonnenfeldt and many of his colleagues held little hope for reaching a disarmament agreement with the Soviet Union, especially in the wake of the U-2 incident that had doomed the Paris summit on disarmament several months earlier. While the likelihood of an agreement remained slim, president-elect Kennedy’s apparent enthusiasm for disarmament injected some measure of energy into Gullion’s staff during the transition period.

Shortly after the election, Gullion met with Kennedy to discuss disarmament issues. Gullion characterized disarmament as one of the “paramount interests” of the incoming

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁴² “Disarmament Agency: Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations,” § Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (1961).

president which led him to pay Kennedy a visit despite a “general stop on people from [State] beating a path to the new President’s door while the [Eisenhower] Administration was still in existence.” This conversation was the first of many between Gullion and Kennedy over the following months. As Kennedy prepared to take office, US disarmament policy stood at a critical juncture. Major questions stood out concerning research for monitoring agreements, how to arrange a bureaucratic structure to formulate policy, whether to adopt an incremental or comprehensive strategy, and how to proceed concerning the test ban.

To address the question about the “bureaucratic side of things,” Gullion presented Kennedy with an organization chart for the Disarmament Administration during their initial visit. Gullion felt the organization should continue to operate within the State Department. Although he thought an autonomous agency would hold benefits for recruiting staff and improving research, he felt it was “unrealistic to think that you could cut the [agency] apart from the State Department.” Kennedy mulled Gullion’s proposal as he also thought about the several other questions lingering over disarmament. The incoming president had an array of advisors “intensely interested in disarmament” including academics from the Charles River Group (Harvard and MIT), who frequently bent his ear on the subject.¹⁴³

Scholars from the elite universities of the northeast had a profound impact on the president-elect. Throughout the 1950s academics at Harvard and MIT including Henry

¹⁴³ Edmund A Gullion, Fourth Oral History Interview with Edmund A. Gullion, interview by Samuel E. Belk III, July 31, 1964, 37–39, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/sites/default/files/archives/JFKOH/Gullion%2C%20Edmund%20A/JFKOH-EDAG-04/JFKOH-EDAG-04-TR.pdf>.

Kissinger, Thomas Schelling, and Jerome Wiesner, wrestled with questions of how to promote strategic stability through deterrence. While these thinkers did not expect to “abolish [nuclear weapons] at one stroke” they hoped to “regulate them in the interest of stability.” Wiesner saw disarmament as politically impossible in the current climate but considered deterrence the best way to begin reducing tensions with the intention of future arms reductions. Kennedy viewed the Charles River doctrine as a way to strive for eventual disarmament, without compromising national security needs.¹⁴⁴ During the 1960 campaign Wiesner advised Kennedy on space and defense issues, and he went on to serve as chairman of the PSAC beginning in January 1961. Wiesner described their shared “genuine” opposition to nuclear weapons “in all forms” as a powerful force that drove their work together.¹⁴⁵ Kennedy’s engagement with this new strategic thinking served to inform his own approach to both nuclear weapons development and disarmament efforts.

Following Gullion’s retirement from the Foreign Service in 1964, the ambassador reflected on his conversations with Kennedy during the transition. He described the president as well-versed in the developing doctrines of balanced strategic deterrence and evolving thinking surrounding a nuclear test-ban. Kennedy sought to “feel out the strengths and positions” of various government departments on disarmament issues. Gullion credited Kennedy’s abiding interest in this area with helping expand and deepen engagement with the Soviet Union on arms control issues on a more consistent – rather than intermittent –

¹⁴⁴ Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002), 470–72.

¹⁴⁵ Jerome B. Wiesner, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age; Europe Goes Nuclear*; Interview with Jerome Wiesner, 1986 [2], March 27, 1986, https://openvault.wgbh.org/catalog/V_E3CCFA5A4A1148579C7FB7FF0FA961EB.

basis.¹⁴⁶ Following his initial conversation with Kennedy, Gullion told his staff that the president-elect was “quite interested” in their efforts and that they should continue their work apace.¹⁴⁷

Laying Groundwork During the Transition

Less than a week after his narrow victory, Kennedy was already at work filling his cabinet and identifying candidates for over a thousand other presidential appointments, a list that he called the “shopping list.”¹⁴⁸ This jocular moniker belied what a balancing act was required to court conservative members of the American establishment without alienating liberal members of Kennedy’s circle. Although the Kennedy clan possessed a potent social network that tapped into many different circles, the family was largely estranged from the establishment based on ill-will towards the isolationist and pro-appeasement family patriarch, Joseph Sr. Furthermore, several of JFK’s earlier statements as a congressman had “created a myth that Kennedy was anti-NATO.” Committing this “cardinal Establishment sin” only earned him contempt from the network of bankers, industrialists, lawyers, university administrators, and others who had served as a valuable source of competent administrators for previous administrations.¹⁴⁹

However, Kennedy’s election offered opportunities to enter government and it opened the door for him to build bridges with establishment insiders. Kennedy made clear

¹⁴⁶ Gullion, Interview with Edmund Gullion, 39–40.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Helmut Sonnenfeldt.

¹⁴⁸ Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 128.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 129–32.

to his advisors that his top priority was competence – not ideological alignment. To this end, Kennedy reached out to Robert Lovett, one of the leading figures of the Establishment, who offered an outlet into a “new sector of talent.”¹⁵⁰ Kennedy initially asked advisor Clark Clifford to contact Lovett because they were familiar from their work together under Truman. Clifford called Lovett and offered the post of Secretary of the Treasury, but Lovett demurred saying his “bearings [were] burnt out” and pleading that ill-health barred him from further government service.¹⁵¹ A few days later Kennedy himself invited Lovett to lunch at his Georgetown home where he again entreated the elder statesman to head either Treasury, State or Defense. Lovett again declined but did agree to help advise the president-elect in selecting his cabinet, particularly regarding the three positions Kennedy had offered to him.¹⁵² As their luncheon conversation touched on the qualities needed for each position Lovett floated John J. “Jack” McCloy as a suitable candidate to head any of these departments.

In fact, Kennedy had mentioned McCloy several weeks earlier on November 14 as one of a very short list of “good Republicans” suitable to head his proposed disarmament agency. A week after his meeting with Lovett, Kennedy invited McCloy to his hotel suite in New York City where the president-elect offered McCloy the top posts of either

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 129; Robert A. Lovett, Robert A. Lovett Oral History Interview #1, interview by Dorothy Fosdick, July 20, 1964, 1–2, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/sites/default/files/archives/JFKOH/Lovett%2C%20Robert%20A/JFKOH-ROAL-01/JFKOH-ROAL-01-TR.pdf>.

¹⁵¹ Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made : Acheson, Bohlen, Harriman, Kennan, Lovett, McCloy* (Simon & Schuster, 1986), 594.

¹⁵² Lovett, Robert A. Lovett Oral History Interview #1, 12.

Treasury or Defense. McCloy declined both positions but offered his advice on other candidates just as Lovett had done. Near the end of their conversation, Kennedy offered McCloy a role as a disarmament adviser. The position did not have the allure of prestige associated with top cabinet posts, but it did offer flexibility which would allow McCloy return to practicing law at his old firm in New York. McCloy's own support for a test ban, developed through his work on the Gaither Committee several years earlier, further piqued his interest in the role.

The arrangement proved mutually agreeable and McCoy accepted the offer to serve in this capacity. Kennedy had secured a preeminent Republican member of the establishment to help sponsor his liberal vision for a high-profile peace and disarmament agency. The president-elect felt strongly that having an influential conservative in his corner would prove essential to passing legislation to establish an independent disarmament agency.¹⁵³ For his part, McCloy embarked on what he envisioned as a short-term assignment, not to exceed nine months. The role entailed three key priorities: 1) securing passage of legislation to establish a disarmament agency, 2) developing a framework for disarmament negotiations with the Soviets, and 3) reviving talks on a test-ban treaty. Taken together, these objectives promised a busy nine months for McCloy to work on disarmament issues across multiple fronts.

Kennedy publicly announced McCloy's appointment just after the start of the New Year. The announcement of McCloy's role nodded to his pragmatic approach and his

¹⁵³ Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 472.

“long-term interest” in disarmament as invaluable assets for American leadership in such a “critical field.”¹⁵⁴ The *New York Times* praised the appointment in a profile of McCloy printed alongside the announcement of his appointment that lauded the “inexhaustible store of energy” he would bring to his new post.¹⁵⁵ An editorial printed in the *Times* the following day described Kennedy’s selection as a “splendid appointment” and described how McCloy was an “adroit diplomat, patient negotiator, and effective administrator” who was “unusually” qualified for the formidable challenges before him.¹⁵⁶ However, not everyone approved of Kennedy’s new “arms control czar.”¹⁵⁷ Khrushchev described the move – that tapped the former assistant secretary of war as the head of US disarmament policy – as “sending a goat to guard the cabbage patch.”¹⁵⁸ Barbara Ward, one of Kennedy’s own economic advisers, remarked that McCloy’s “banker’s soul” made him ill-suited to serve as disarmament advisor.¹⁵⁹ Such assessments did little to deter McCloy who began his work with fervor as he started assembling his staff.

Several of McCloy’s trusted subordinates from his service in the Truman administration assumed key support roles in this new endeavor. Upon reading the announcement of McCloy’s appointment in the newspaper, Adrian S. “Butch” Fisher called up his former boss and offered to serve as his assistant in this new role. Fisher had worked

¹⁵⁴ W. H. Lawrence, “Kennedy Appoints McCloy As His Disarmament Chief,” *New York Times*, 1961.

¹⁵⁵ “A Taste for Diplomacy,” *The New York Times*, January 3, 1961.

¹⁵⁶ “A Splendid Appointment,” *The New York Times*, January 4, 1961.

¹⁵⁷ Kai Bird, *The Chairman: John J McCloy & The Making of the American Establishment: John J. McCloy & The Making of the American Establishment*, Reprint edition (Simon & Schuster, 2017), 491.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 499.

¹⁵⁹ John Bartlow Martin, *Adlai Stevenson and the World: The Life of Adlai E. Stevenson*, 1st edition (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1977), 556.

as an aide to McCloy when the latter was Assistant Secretary of War. Although Fisher had left government service and swore “up and down” he would never go back, his admiration of McCloy enticed him to return.¹⁶⁰ Shepard Stone, the current director of the Ford Foundation, agreed to act as a special assistant. During McCloy’s time as the High Commissioner for Occupied Germany, Stone had served as his deputy.¹⁶¹ Fisher took charge of filling out the remainder of McCloy’s staff.

In April 1961, Fisher approached a young lawyer, George Bunn, about joining the team. Bunn brought considerable enthusiasm to his new role. As a Navy ensign slated to participate in the invasion of Japan in summer 1945, Bunn felt that his “life was saved by the bomb.” After returning home, Bunn began graduate study in physics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Shortly afterwards, Bunn’s father, a legal adviser in the State Department, shared a copy of the 1946 Acheson-Lilienthal Report. Reading about this effort to place nuclear weapons under the auspices of the UN led Bunn to leave the physics lab and study law in order to “control nuclear weapons.”¹⁶² Bunn graduated from Columbia University Law School in 1951 and began working for the AEC before joining a private firm. When offered a position working under McCloy, Bunn leapt at the chance.

¹⁶⁰ “Oral History Transcript, Adrian S. Fisher, Interview 1 (I), 10/31/1968, by Paige E. Mulhollan · Discover Production,” accessed October 5, 2021, <https://www.discoverljb.org/item/oh-fishera-19681031-1-74-105-a>.

¹⁶¹ Adrian S Fisher, Adrian S. Fisher Oral History Interview, interview by Frank Sieverts, May 13, 1964, 17, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/sites/default/files/archives/JFKOH/Fisher%2C%20Adrian%20S/JFKOH-ASF-01/JFKOH-ASF-01-TR.pdf>.

¹⁶² Lisa Trei, “At 79, Arms-Control Maven Still Working for a Safer World,” *Stanford Report*, June 11, 2004, <http://news.stanford.edu/news/2004/june16/bunn-616.html>.

The next month, Fisher brought aboard Betty Goetz, a driven young woman who had worked in Humphrey's Senate office before becoming the staff director for the new Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Disarmament in 1955. Adding Goetz also had injected an ardent liberal voice into the staff. Goetz worked as the Program Director for International Studies in the League of Women Voters while on a research fellowship at the University of Minnesota. Her work in this role apparently led her to meet Senator Humphrey and eventually join his staff. Together, Goetz and Bunn brought a youthful vigor to complement the connectedness and conservative credentials of McCloy, Stone, and Fisher.

Even before McCloy officially entered office, he began consulting with Gullion and the staff of the US Disarmament Administration to get going on his efforts. Fortunately, Gullion respected McCloy immensely and welcomed his appointment as the president's adviser on disarmament and incoming head of the US Disarmament Administration. Gullion characterized McCloy as a man of "tremendous probity, integrity, and ability" and recognized how his stature as a prominent Republican would aid in generating bipartisan support for a statutory disarmament agency. Even as some of the staff from the hastily assembled Disarmament Administration prepared to transition into other positions, Gullion worked to ensure a smooth transition to McCloy, reflected in his staying on as deputy director following Kennedy's inauguration.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Interview with Helmut Sonnenfeldt.

Taking Office and Hitting the Ground Running

On January 27, 1961, Kennedy officially issued marching orders to McCloy. The president reiterated his belief that disarmament was “of the highest priority” and would always enjoy the “constant attention and full support of my Administration.”¹⁶⁴ Kennedy again called for McCloy to restart test-ban negotiations, spearhead the formulation of the administration’s overall disarmament policy, and oversee the establishment of an empowered disarmament agency. Although McCloy had been initially hesitant to re-enter government service, the prospect of being able to do something constructive rather than destructive excited him. Reminiscing on his work as the president’s disarmament adviser, McCloy expressed regret at having “destroyed so many things in the course of [his] career” after fighting in two world wars.¹⁶⁵ The indefatigable sixty-six-year-old statesman seemed poised to tackle the imposing tasks before him.

McCloy’s optimism sank after just a week of meetings with Kennedy and other principal national security officials. McCloy met with the president, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Nitze, National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy, and PSAC chairman Wiesner to discuss the administration’s approach to arms control. Although this group held fewer avowed arms control skeptics than Eisenhower’s cabinet, it nonetheless proved

¹⁶⁴ “Letter from President Kennedy to His Adviser on Disarmament (McCloy),” *FRUS 1961-1963*, VII: Document 2.

¹⁶⁵ John J. McCloy, Oral History Interview With Mr. John J. McCloy, interview by Maurice Matloff, October 24, 1983, 41–42, Office of the Secretary of Defense, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/oral_history/OH_Trans_McCloyJohn10-24-1983.pdf?ver=2014-05-28-133106-457.

exceedingly difficult to come to a consensus. Frustrated by disorder regarding disarmament, McCloy vented to his old friend Walter Bedell Smith, “All I can say from my discussions ... is that if confusion is the beginning of wisdom, I shall be wise before too long.”¹⁶⁶ While individual and institutional disagreements had repeatedly hampered Eisenhower’s efforts to craft a coherent disarmament approach, ambiguity about how to proceed characterized the early days of Kennedy’s presidency.

For all their uncertainty about features of a comprehensive disarmament policy, members of the new administration shared a desire to make progress towards a test ban treaty. Crucially, Kennedy was also willing to make more concessions to close the gulf between the US and Soviet positions when talks in Geneva had broken off.¹⁶⁷ With test-ban talks scheduled to resume in mid-March, preparations for these negotiations became a central priority. Accordingly, McCloy initially devoted considerable attention to this issue. McCloy advocated for lowering the number of on-site inspections from twenty to ten to shift closer to the Soviets’ preferred number of five. Kennedy ultimately rejected this and reverted to the figure of twenty carried over from Eisenhower. McCloy also proposed that Arthur Dean, a longtime friend, should head the US delegation to Geneva; to this, Kennedy acquiesced. This would enable the disarmament adviser to continue working on his other two priorities – an expanded arms control agency and a framework for broader disarmament negotiations with the Soviets.

¹⁶⁶ Bird, *The Chairman*, 500.

¹⁶⁷ Tal, *The American Nuclear Disarmament Dilemma, 1945-1963*, 172–73.

The guidance Arthur Dean received before leaving for Geneva made reaching an agreement unlikely without major concessions from the Soviets. Furthermore, Dean did not possess the greatest temperament for diplomatic compromise.¹⁶⁸ As a result, the negotiations stalled yet again. In a letter to Senator J. William Fulbright in mid-May, McCloy suggested that negotiations in Geneva had not progressed very far. McCloy hinted that, due to the current impasse, his attached report detailing US positions for the negotiations might “be somewhat academic at the present time.”¹⁶⁹ A month later, Dean was recalled from Geneva as Kennedy sought to signal his frustration at what he saw as Soviet intransigence on the inspection issue.¹⁷⁰ Stalemated test-ban talks led Kennedy to encourage McCloy to discuss disarmament principles with the Soviets to potentially open a different forum of productive dialogue.

On June 19 – one day before Dean was recalled from Geneva – McCloy met with Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Valerian Zorin at the State Department to prepare for a new round of disarmament negotiations. Their initial meeting ran for nearly two hours as both sides sought to resolve procedural disagreements about how to renew the ten-nation disarmament discussions that had broken down two years earlier.¹⁷¹ Ultimately, negotiations between McCloy and Zorin in Washington bogged down and the two sides agreed to a two-week recess before renewing talks in Moscow. These negotiations took

¹⁶⁸ Ambassador James E Goodby, “Interview with James E. Goodby,” December 10, 1990, 182.

¹⁶⁹ Jack Raymond, “McCloy Indicates A-Talks May Fail,” *The New York Times*, May 21, 1961.

¹⁷⁰ John W. Finney, “Dean Is Recalled From Atom Talks,” *The New York Times*, June 21, 1961.

¹⁷¹ John W. Finney, “McCloy and Zorin Meet to Clear Way For Talks on Arms,” *The New York Times*, June 20, 1961.

place against the backdrop of the deepening Berlin Crisis, which remained unresolved after a brief summit between Kennedy and Khrushchev earlier that summer. Rising tensions over Berlin, paired with the lack of progress during previous discussions, left McCloy pessimistic as he prepared to depart for Moscow.¹⁷²

Two weeks of back and forth with Zorin over semantic differences between “general and complete” vs. “total and universal” disarmament seemingly justified McCloy’s cynicism. Caught in such banal conversations, McCloy was surprised to receive an invitation to visit Khrushchev at his dacha in Sochi. Aside from a few moments of levity between McCloy and Khrushchev, their talks produced no breakthrough. In fact, Khrushchev’s intense frustration alarmed McCloy so much that he wrote back to Washington to voice his concerns.¹⁷³ Within two weeks of McCloy’s return to Washington, East German troops began unrolling barbed wire along the border between East and West Berlin.¹⁷⁴

Lobbying for ACDA

At the very outset of the new administration, McCloy had sought to deliver on Kennedy’s promise to increase the number of people focused on disarmament policy within the government. On the campaign trail, Kennedy repeatedly criticized Eisenhower’s disarmament efforts and assured that “less than one-hundred persons in the government” were actively working on disarmament. During McCloy’s first weeks on the job, he began

¹⁷² Bird, *The Chairman*.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ “All Means Blocked,” *The New York Times*, August 13, 1961.

expanding the US Disarmament Staff from forty-three to nearly one-hundred people. Paul Nitze similarly oversaw the growth of Defense Department staff working under him on disarmament. As the ranks of the US Disarmament Administration swelled, the president and his advisors grappled with whether to set up an independent agency through legislation or to just expand existing operations through executive order.

This issue concerning the need for congressional approval was one of several unanswered questions that continued to hang over the prospective new disarmament organization. Where was it to be housed? Would it remain attached to the State Department? Would its head report directly to the president or to another cabinet member? What would the budget look like? Would the staff report only to the new agency, or would it rely on rotations from other departments? The answers to many of these questions held implications for how the administration started setting up the new agency.

During the transition period, Kennedy expressed that he would prefer to place the new agency within the Executive Office. The president-elect felt that such a move would convey the “new status and seriousness” of his commitment to disarmament.¹⁷⁵ However, several of Kennedy’s advisors warned that placing it within the executive office marked too much continuity with previous ad hoc initiatives whose “divorce from old-line Departments” led them to have only “precarious influence and tenure.”¹⁷⁶ Settling for a

¹⁷⁵ Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*.

¹⁷⁶ Edmund A. Gullion, “Memorandum on A United States Arms Control Administration,” 1960, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

small organization located in the executive office would fall short of the ambitions for disarmament envisioned by Kennedy throughout the 1960 campaign.

Instead of housing the agency in the executive office, many felt it should remain institutionally linked to State because disarmament represented just one element of broader US foreign policy. Following up his briefing to Kennedy during the transition, Gullion continued to advocate for the agency to remain a constituent part of State. This option made it possible the president could try to broaden the organization's scope through an executive order similar to what Eisenhower had used to establish the Disarmament Administration.¹⁷⁷ However, such a move was likely to leave the agency fully subordinated to State and the official departmental position taken by the secretary. This arrangement fell short of the initiative promised during the campaign and called for by the DAC's proposal.

A final viewpoint advocated for an independent agency in keeping with both Humphrey and Kennedy's plans articulated during the Democratic presidential primary. However, erecting an entirely new agency would certainly require statutory approval from Congress. Ultimately, Richard Neustadt proposed a compromise measure that would establish a semi-autonomous agency within the State Department whose director would enjoy direct access to the president. Such an arrangement seemingly required legislation to give the organization sufficient powers and funding outside of the State Department hierarchy and budget. Neustadt's compromise measure won out and the bill proposed to Congress in late June reflected this vision for a semi-autonomous agency with an

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

empowered director. While many officials testified to the “wisdom” of this structure, its novelty caused considerable consternation during congressional committees’ discussions of the legislation.

As McCloy began his work as disarmament adviser, he recognized the significant challenges impeding him from accomplishing the objectives outlined by Kennedy. A consummate administrator, he recognized the only way to succeed on all fronts was through an effective division of labor. McCloy designated responsibility for test-ban negotiations to his friend Dean. While McCloy worked toward a framework for broader disarmament talks with the Soviets, his deputy Fisher began crafting legislation and laying the groundwork on Capitol Hill for setting up a new disarmament organization. The staff had to hammer out answers to the many questions surrounding the agency.

Fortunately for McCloy and his staff, disarmament appeared to represent a central priority for the ambitious new president. On May 25, 1961, Kennedy delivered a special message to a joint session of Congress in which he outlined nine “urgent national needs.” In his speech, the president reiterated that he was “determined to keep disarmament high on [his] agenda” to “develop political and technical alternatives to the present arms race.” The president vowed to transmit to Congress “a measure to establish a strengthened and enlarged Disarmament Agency.”¹⁷⁸ Such signaling suggested this proposal would receive extensive executive branch support.

¹⁷⁸ John F. Kennedy, “President Kennedy’s Special Message to the Congress on Urgent National Needs.” (Joint Session of 87th Congress, Washington D.C, May 25, 1961),

During the final days of McCloy and Zorin's first round of talks in Washington, the White House made good on its promise. Kennedy delivered to Congress a proposal to establish a new agency: the "US Disarmament Agency for World Peace and Security." The proposal marked the culmination of five months of work by McCloy to evaluate the "governmental effort and organization necessary" to realize major disarmament objectives as an alternative to the arms race. Kennedy's letter to Congress detailed the need for continued presidential attention to disarmament matters while also emphasizing the need to better coordinate efforts. Accordingly, the director of the new disarmament agency would have "direct access to the president" and would be expected to engage in "close working-level coordination" with State, Defense, and the AEC. Kennedy's missive also included a memorandum from McCloy articulating the disarmament adviser's assessment of the draft bill.

McCloy detailed key features of the proposed agency designed to accomplish Kennedy's vision for disarmament. McCloy highlighted that the agency had the support of the secretaries of State and Defense, as well as other affected agencies. To facilitate the cooperation extolled by Kennedy and McCloy, the new agency was to serve as a "focal point for the integration of the government's over-all [sic] efforts in disarmament." Furthermore, McCloy described how the organization would be responsible for both researching the technological viability of arms control measures and acting as the principal negotiator with foreign countries to reach agreement in this field. However, McCloy was

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/united-states-congress-special-message-19610525>.

careful to leave room for future maneuvers by noting that the “exact nature of the skills or organization required to perform the tasks envisaged for the agency cannot be clearly foreseen at this time.” To this end, the new organization and its director would need flexibility to recruit the appropriate staff and make arrangements to fulfill its mission.¹⁷⁹

Just over a month after the proposal was sent to Congress, McCloy returned from Moscow six months into his work as disarmament adviser with little to show for his efforts. He had endured Soviet opposition to every initiative he advanced in negotiations. Now, during the late summer of 1961, he faced a different form of opposition on Capitol Hill. Upon accepting his position, McCloy had received repeated assurances of Kennedy’s fervent support for disarmament measures, including establishing an independent agency to help guide US policy in the area. However, when the going got tough in congressional committees crafting legislation to set up a new agency, McCloy was left to lobby for its passage largely without support from the White House.

Throughout the campaign, Kennedy had expressed his intent to prioritize disarmament policy through the creation of an independent agency. In his first State of the Union Address on January 30, the new president reiterated his commitment to “coordinate and expand [the US] disarmament effort” and “make arms control a central goal” of his administration. McCloy joined the administration anticipating ardent support from

¹⁷⁹ Special to The New York Times, “Kennedy and McCloy Letters Proposing Disarmament Unit,” *New York Times*, 1961.

Kennedy in his work. McCloy's staff began drafting legislation expecting to introduce it with a spirited White House-led lobbying effort behind them.

During the summer of 1961, Kennedy's legislative agenda collided with congressional opposition. Legislation for an independent disarmament agency became one of the early casualties of White House efforts to re-evaluate priorities. Several advisors warned that passing legislation to create a new agency would require considerable political capital. Conscious of the finite nature of such political goodwill towards him, Kennedy decided that he could put it on his "must" list which included other legislation he preferred to prioritize.¹⁸⁰ Even Humphrey, the leading advocate for the agency on the Hill, felt defeatist about the bill's prospects. While McCloy was meeting with Zorin in Moscow, Humphrey told Kennedy directly that the legislation had "no chance of passage" considering the congressional opposition forming against it.¹⁸¹ Such discouraging assessments led Kennedy to drop a new disarmament agency appreciably lower on his legislative wish list.

The administration's re-ordering of preferences caught the new disarmament advisor by surprise. Upon returning from the Soviet Union, McCloy was startled to hear from Kennedy that he "couldn't give this bill the full Administration support."¹⁸² A frustrated McCloy responded, "This pulls the rug completely out from under me."¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ John J. McCloy, Interview with John J. McCloy, interview by Paige Mulhollan, July 8, 1969, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum, <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/mss/mfdip/2004/2004mcc09/2004mcc09.pdf>.

¹⁸¹ Bird, *The Chairman*, 504.

¹⁸² McCloy, Interview with John J. McCloy.

¹⁸³ McCloy, Oral History Interview with Mr. John J. McCloy, 42.

Offering cold comfort, Kennedy told McCloy that if he continued working on the legislation the White House “wouldn’t interfere” but that his disarmament adviser and his team were “largely on [their] own.”¹⁸⁴ Without presidential investment in his effort, McCloy’s already uphill battle to pass legislation grew considerably steeper.

Congressional Consideration of the Arms Control and Disarmament Act

After the introduction of S.2180, “A Bill to Establish a United States Disarmament Agency For World Peace and Security,” at the end of June 1961, the Senate first referred it to the Committee on Government Operations. The bill remained in committee there until August 3, when it was referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC). The FRC held hearings over the course of three days in mid-August to hear testimony concerning the bill. Every one of those who testified during these hearings supported the bill and argued it helped address critical weaknesses in US disarmament policy. Despite the array of support behind the bill, this stop at the FRC chaired by Senator J. William Fulbright posed the biggest barrier to its passage during the 87th congress.

Although bereft of official presidential backing, McCloy assembled an impressive line-up of past and present officials, religious leaders, and other figures to speak in support of the legislation. Past officials who endorsed the legislation included Herter, Lovett, Lodge, and Eisenhower’s Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates. Furthermore, Secretary of State Rusk, Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric, JCS Chairman Lyman

¹⁸⁴ McCloy, Interview with John J. McCloy.

Lemnitzer, and AEC Commissioner Leland Haworth also voiced their support. Additionally, religious leaders – such as William Nagle, chairman of the committee on nuclear warfare and the Catholic Association for International Peace, expressed support for the new agency. The final component of McCloy’s coalition was a group of scientists including John Toll, the chairman of the Federation of American Scientists, and Herbert York, former director of defense research and engineering.¹⁸⁵ Finally, McCloy underscored such widespread support by securing Eisenhower’s endorsement which he transmitted to the Senate along with the draft of the bill.¹⁸⁶

In fact, during hearings before the FRC not a single person or entity testified against the bill. Despite ostensibly unanimous support, several committee members still harbored serious reservations about the proposed agency. During the executive session’s markup of the bill in late August, the senators rehashed many of the arguments about the agency’s structure that McCloy’s staff had sought compromise on while drafting. At the outset of the executive session, chairman Fulbright surmised that the idea for formalizing disarmament research and planning was “all right” but that the committee ought to consider whether this bill was “the right way to set it up.”¹⁸⁷ Several committee members worried that creating this agency would suggest that disarmament was near at hand, when, in reality,

¹⁸⁵ “Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate on a Bill to Establish a United States Disarmament Agency for World Peace and Security,” § Committee on Foreign Relations (1961), iii.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁸⁷ “Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee” (Washington, D.C.: 87th Congress - 1st Session, 1961), 468–69.

they believed it remained a distant and challenging possibility. This spurred several other semantic debates and discussions about the intended purpose of the organization.

Hawks had long considered the term “disarmament” a naive fantasy unable to be attained given the lack of trust between the US and USSR. Accordingly, the committee about how including “disarmament” in the name of the agency might shape its reputation – for better or worse. Senator Symington raised the question of what to call the proposed agency and the meaning of “disarmament, arms control, and controlled disarmament.” Symington advocated for including language to suggest that arms control represented important steps towards disarmament. He mocked those who opposed “arms control” for its lack of “political sex appeal,” asking, “What are we talking about, sex or security?” While the committee reached a consensus to include language about researching arms control in pursuit of eventual disarmament, this issue of naming resurfaced again before the bill passed.

One of the few qualms about the disarmament agency during the committee’s hearings came from Lovett, concerning the process of staffing the agency. Lovett highlighted that it would be important to ensure the agency did not “become a mecca for a wide variety of screwballs” including groups with slogans such as “Better Red than Dead.” Responding to concerns that the agency would prove a haven for peaceniks and Soviet sympathizers, Henry “Scoop” Jackson proposed more “rigorous” security checks for agency personnel.¹⁸⁸ However, the more substantive concern of the committee – one that

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 472, 477.

predominated their discussion – was how the new agency might disrupt the established chain of authority within the US national security apparatus.

Jackson also sought to smooth over this worry with an amendment to clarify the relationship between the proposed agency’s director and the secretary of state. However, Jackson’s amendment did not alleviate the anxieties. The compromise measure that had resulted in a semi-autonomous agency attached to the State Department, but whose director had direct access to the president, confounded several members of the committee. Senator Bourke Hickenlooper (R-IA) warned that the legislation as written would create a supra-agency that threatened to “cut across all other agencies ... and superimpose its activities ... to the confusion of [other established] departments.”¹⁸⁹ Hickenlooper derided such an idea as a “mare's nest or a can of worms.” Symington considered the arrangement “loaded with dynamite” that threatened to “pretty badly mix [things] up.” The committee expressed their preference that the new organization be a “service agency” tasked with resources but lacking the ability to shape and direct disarmament policy.¹⁹⁰

Intertwined with questions about the proper bureaucratic arrangement was the relationship between the agency’s new director and the secretary of state. The committee proposed that the new agency’s director should serve at the rank of undersecretary within the State Department. Symington felt strongly that this was the proper chain of command, saying that they could “make [the new director] the Pope as far as I am concerned, so long

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 469.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 471–79.

as he reports to the Secretary of State.” Such a system would curtail the agency’s autonomy and guard against disagreements between the director and secretary of state. Fulbright pointed out how disagreements between Dulles and Stassen had repeatedly caused problems during the Eisenhower administration. By the end of the executive session, many members favored sending the bill back to be reworked by the White House and reintroduced the following year.

The general skepticism that pervaded the initial mark-up session of the bill can likely be attributed to Humphrey’s absence. On the Senate floor and in previous committee discussions, Humphrey had consistently acted as the leading champion for the legislation, but he was unable to attend the first committee meeting on August 28.¹⁹¹ Word of the precarity of the legislation made its way to Betty Goetz, who acted swiftly to try and save the bill’s chance for passage during the current congressional session. Goetz went to her old boss and convinced him to give her a copy of the transcript of the executive session. Armed with this insider information, Goetz went to McCloy and shared with him which senators represented the greatest threat to the bill’s success. Over the next few days, McCloy paid these senators a visit and leaned on them to pass the bill with amendments during the current session. Goetz reflected later that “the legislation just would not have passed without [McCloy’s lobbying efforts].”¹⁹² Certainly, McCloy’s intervention at this

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 469–86.

¹⁹² Bird, *The Chairman*.

critical junction was essential for keeping hope alive that he could accomplish at least one of the priorities laid out for him at the start of his tenure.

One of the last questions ironed out in the legislation was what to call the new agency. The debate over naming reflected underlying assumptions about the agency's purpose and prospects for success. The proposed bill sent by the White House to Congress put forward the rather pretentious title of "US Disarmament Agency for World Peace and Security." When asked about how the proposed title might anger conservative members of Congress, Fisher mischievously replied, "We don't want the devil to have all the good tunes."¹⁹³ Other potential names advanced at different points included "US Peace Agency for World Disarmament and Security," "US Advisory Agency for Arms Control, Peace and Security," and "US Arms Control Agency."

Superficially, such quibbling seemed purely semantic. However, the debates teased out fundamental differences in beliefs about the meaning of "arms control" and "disarmament," and the feasibility of either or both. In the strictest definition "disarmament" meant the total elimination of weapons, nuclear or conventional in the interest of preventing war. By contrast, "arms control" was considered incremental limitations placed on weapons that stopped short of total disarmament. Debate over the bill in Congress illustrated the range of opinions on these terms and preferences for one or the other. Many feared that "disarmament" implied the US would "throw away [its] arms

¹⁹³ Interview with George Bunn as cited in: Michael Krepon, Amy E. Smithson, and James A. Schear, "The U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency: Restructuring for the Post-Cold War Era" (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, December 1992).

tomorrow” and “completely abandon its strength.” Meanwhile, Senator John Sherman Cooper warned that abandoning the term disarmament could be interpreted as “an indication of weakness” by diluting US commitment to “true disarmament.” Ultimately, the compromise name of “US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency” won out. Many considered the sequencing important to intimate the US would pursue arms control measures in hopes of reaching total disarmament in the future.¹⁹⁴ The day-long debate over the agency’s name revealed considerable skepticism about its chances to conclude meaningful arms control agreements. Fortunately, this cynicism did not scuttle the legislation, but instead gave the agency a fighting chance.

“Putting it Over the Top”

Over several mark-up sessions during the first week of September, Humphrey redoubled McCloy’s efforts to assuage the fears of holdout senators. Humphrey’s dogged defense helped shepherd the bill throughout the rest of the committee’s deliberations. Although the committee continued to haggle over details of the legislation, including the budget and salary for the director, they reported it back to the full Senate on September 6, where it was passed two days later. The bill was then reconciled with the House version in conference over the third week of September. The legislation was finally approved by both chambers and sent to the president’s desk on September 26th, one day before the end of the congressional session.

¹⁹⁴ *Congressional Record*, 87th Congress, 1st Session, September 8, 1961, pp. 18726-18728.

Humphrey's initial pessimism about ACDA's prospects proved unfounded. Even without direct presidential lobbying, the legislation passed both chambers by wide margins. S. 2180 sailed through the Senate 73-14 with almost all votes against coming from conservative Southern senators. Two weeks later the House version of the bill passed easily, 253-50. In a speech delivered on the House floor on the final day of the session, Representative Robert Kastenmeier expressed a sense of optimism shared by many of the bill's supporters. Kastenmeier described the agency's "broad mandate" over the "greatest problems of peace." Furthermore, he praised how the new director would "have sufficient status to resolve disarmament disputes between the various agencies" – a power that previous executive disarmament advisers had lacked. Although tensions with the Soviet Union remained in the fall of 1961, Congress adjourned with high hopes for the new "agency of peace."¹⁹⁵

Even without much direct help from the White House, McCloy and his team successfully promoted a new agency with considerable powers. Timely interventions and an impressive slate of bipartisan proponents of the bill proved crucial to overcoming congressional reluctance. Reflecting on the effort decades later, McCloy wryly remarked that Kennedy "thought that I was the greatest lobbyist there ever was."¹⁹⁶ McCloy felt considerable pride about this pushing the bill through with "a whoop and a holler" and he

¹⁹⁵ "Appendix," Congressional Record (Washington, D.C.: 87th Congress - 1st Session, October 13, 1961), A7909, [https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy-test.lib.utexas.edu/congressional/result/pqpresultpage.gispdfhitspanel.pdflink/\\$2fapp-bin\\$2fgis-congrecord\\$2f9\\$2f3\\$2fe\\$2f6\\$2fcr-1961-1003_0app_from_1_to_77.pdf/entitlementkeys=1234](https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy-test.lib.utexas.edu/congressional/result/pqpresultpage.gispdfhitspanel.pdflink/$2fapp-bin$2fgis-congrecord$2f9$2f3$2fe$2f6$2fcr-1961-1003_0app_from_1_to_77.pdf/entitlementkeys=1234).

¹⁹⁶ McCloy, Oral History Interview With Mr. John J. McCloy.

attributed much of his team's success to the compelling testimony of past and present military officials.

In marshalling support for the bill, McCloy tapped into his extensive network of former War Department colleagues. Bringing in prominent military figures from WWII served to help dispel criticism of disarmament as a naive "peacenik" position. Noting the irony of "founding members" of the nascent military-industrial complex promoting a peace agency, McCloy credited their testimony with "put[ing] the disarmament agency over [the top]."¹⁹⁷ McCloy's ability to deliver such an array of officials from both sides of the aisle validated Kennedy's decision to tap the elder, conservative establishment figure for the job. The effort to launch ACDA also benefited from a strong supporting cast.

The efforts of Goetz and Humphrey at the bill's moment of vulnerability while in committee served as a turning point. Despite a clear ideological divide between the liberal Humphrey and Goetz and the conservative McCloy and Fisher they acted effectively in concert to create an impressive institutional advocate for arms control in the US foreign policy establishment even as Cold War tensions rose and devotion to the doctrine of deterrence deepened. Securing a statutory basis and funding independent of the State Department elevated ACDA well above the previous ad hoc initiatives put forth by Truman and Eisenhower.

¹⁹⁷ McCloy, Interview with John J. McCloy.

Kennedy Signs S. 2180

On the morning of September 26, 1961, President Kennedy signed H.R. 9118 into law, officially creating the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA). From his suite at the Carlyle Hotel – the “New York White House” – Kennedy delivered an address praising Humphrey and McCloy’s efforts. The president lauded how the agency offered “renewed hope for agreement and progress in the critical battle for the survival of mankind.”¹⁹⁸ Kennedy’s first year in office had not provided abundant opportunities for optimism. Although the economy began to emerge from the recession he inherited, the year was otherwise marred by fallout from the Bay of Pigs and enduring tensions with the Soviets over Berlin. Furthermore, staunch conservative opposition in Congress had frustrated or watered-down many of Kennedy’s legislative initiatives. The successful creation of ACDA largely in line with the young president’s vision served as a small victory – even if he had abstained from actively lobbying for it.

Kennedy concluded his remarks on the creation of ACDA by announcing that William C. Foster would serve as its first director. McCloy had reached the end of his promised nine-month tenure and intended to return to New York full time to resume work at his practice. In Foster, Kennedy had a man cut from the same cloth as McCloy to lead the new agency. Like McCloy, Foster was a dyed-in-the-wool Establishment Republican. After two-decades of work as a successful businessman, Foster worked in procurement for

¹⁹⁸ John F. (John Fitzgerald) Kennedy, *John F. Kennedy: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 20 to December 31, 1961*, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1962), 626–27, <http://archive.org/details/4730886.1961.001.umich.edu>.

the Army Air Forces during WWII. Foster held several posts during the Truman administration including as Undersecretary of Commerce working for W. Averell Harriman. After the launch of the Marshall Plan, Foster served a critical administrative role as Harriman's deputy. Foster's final appointment under Truman was Deputy Secretary of Defense under Lovett.

In 1953, Foster left government service and returned to the private sector, holding several executive positions. Although not directly employed in government during the Eisenhower administration, Foster had been involved in several disarmament initiatives in the latter 1950s. The most notable of these roles was as the head of the US delegation to the Surprise Attack Conference held in Geneva in late 1958. Foster remained involved in disarmament efforts and consulted McCloy throughout the latter's service as disarmament adviser. Such an extensive resume of administrative experience and impeccable conservative credentials distinguished Foster as an excellent candidate to help get ACDA off the ground.

Sixteen years after the dawn of the atomic age and following repeated failed attempts to realize meaningful progress towards disarmament the US finally had an institution with sufficient scope and scale to serve as a foundation for research and negotiation of arms control measures. As McCloy concluded his disarmament work, Foster began the challenging process of building up a new organization in the "turfy" foreign policy space. Earlier arms control efforts lived or died based on the level of executive support. In many ways, ACDA remained heavily dependent on presidential support to have

any hope of success. Although relations with the Soviets in late 1961 did not augur promising prospects for an arms control agreement, the institutional basis established through ACDA would prove essential for future negotiations that bore fruit in the form of several test ban treaties and other arms control measures in the latter 1960s and early 1970s.

Conclusion

As Hiroshima and Nagasaki – twin epicenters of the dawn of atomic warfare – lay in ruin, the sheer scale of devastation caused by nuclear weapons came into focus. The horrors of these bombings – particularly the hair-raising injuries borne by survivors – jolted observers the world over, even many of those numbed to the violence of two unprecedented world wars in the span of thirty years. Anxieties about the dangers of these new weapons proliferated and US policymakers struggled between competing impulses: maintaining the American atomic monopoly and trying to “put the genie back in the bottle.” Nuclear policies in the Truman administration reflected the tension between these competing efforts. Between 1945 and the end of 1946, the US sought to internationalize control of atomic power, most notably through the Baruch Plan put forth at the UN in June 1946. However, US policymaker’s inability to see eye-to-eye with the Soviets and reluctance to cede their atomic arsenal made it impossible to put this plan into practice.

Eisenhower entered office hopeful that atomic energy could still be placed under international control and harnessed for peaceful purposes. The new president feared the consequences of the incipient arms race beginning to grip the US and USSR. Even as prospects for international control or complete disarmament dimmed, Eisenhower

tempered expectations and sought to instead accomplish at least incremental arms control agreements. However, infighting and institutional resistance within his administration stymied these efforts as much as disagreements with the Soviets. Distrust of disarmament throughout many of the new national security agencies, including the Defense Department, JCS, and AEC hamstrung early efforts to slow and reverse the arms race. Stassen, the president's special advisor for disarmament, was buffeted by bureaucratic battles over the proper home for arms control policymaking. Skepticism about the value of arms control within the defense establishment and the AEC and a personal feud with Secretary of State Dulles derailed Stassen's earnest efforts to craft a coherent – and conciliatory – disarmament policy.

As arms control efforts stumbled over both domestic and international hurdles, the arms race of the early Cold War accelerated. During the latter half of the 1950s, all three nuclear powers ramped up testing of new warhead designs. While this testing spree demonstrated the failures of previous efforts to slow the spread of nuclear weapons, the radiation released from these detonations served to raise awareness about their danger to public health. Concerns about nuclear weapons' harmful effects helped galvanize a coalition of scientists, intellectuals, and politicians to coalesce in support of a nuclear test ban. This coalition persuasively made the case for a test ban on ethical grounds, however if encountered opposition within the administration. The Defense Department, the JCS, and the AEC all initially pushed back on a test ban, fearing Soviets would cheat and close the gap of US nuclear superiority. Eisenhower compromised and continued testing until a natural lull in the atomic research program before unilaterally declaring a testing

moratorium, a measure that the Soviets reciprocated. However, subsequent multilateral talks about a test ban collapsed as US-USSR relations deteriorated following the U-2 incident and escalating tensions over Berlin.

Although relations with the Soviets remained especially turbulent during the election of 1960, leading Democratic candidates campaigned on promises to pursue peace and disarmament if elected. Stevenson, Humphrey, and Kennedy all endorsed variations of the idea for a new peace and disarmament agency advanced by the Democratic Advisory Council in late 1959. Democratic leaders' calls for greater effort to pursue peace spurred Eisenhower to reinvigorate work on disarmament that had languished since Stassen's resignation in early 1958. Eisenhower and Secretary of State Herter established the US Disarmament Administration within the State Department in September 1960, but the office failed to gain much traction or even be fully staffed by the end of Eisenhower's second term several months later. Following his victory over Nixon in November, President-elect Kennedy vowed to make disarmament a central pillar of his foreign policy.

During the transition, Kennedy laid the groundwork to pursue three arms control priorities at the outset of his term: restarting test ban negotiations, defining a framework for disarmament policy, and establishing a new peace and disarmament agency. Anticipating opposition to these measures and criticism of disarmament as being too dovish, Kennedy sought out Republican members of the Establishment to lead these efforts. Ultimately, he chose John McCloy to serve as his arms control advisor and leading advocate for a new agency devoted to disarmament. McCloy proved a wise choice who

managed to establish ACDA even as other administration initiatives sputtered out on Capitol Hill. Creating a semi-autonomous agency with a sizable budget, expanded staff, and empowered director marked the greatest investment in arms control up to that point. Reaching agreement would depend on defrosting relations with the Soviets but establishing an institutional advocate for arms control with greater permanence than previous ad hoc efforts proved critical to the success of later agreements. ACDA assumed a dual role as both the center for research on technical issues of arms control as well as a leading voice in crafting US positions for the test ban treaties of the late 1960s and later arms control agreements.

The creation of ACDA in the fall of 1961 served as a critical precondition for negotiations with the Soviets after the Cuban Missile Crisis imbued greater urgency to the need to manage the nuclear arms race. Without ACDA acting as both a research institute and lead actor in coordinating US negotiating positions, yet another opportunity to marginally ease tensions and slow nuclear proliferation in the mid-to-late 1960s may have slipped away. Unsurprisingly. ACDA's creation did not suddenly create consensus by eliminating the institutional disagreements that hampered earlier arms control efforts. However, the agency became a consistent champion for arms control measures whose influence expanded over its first decade of existence.

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