

General United States Policy with respect to International Control of Atomic Energy (Through and after the Submission of the Second Report of the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission to the Security Council)

PPS 7

August 21, 1947

[Source: *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1947, I, 604-8*]

After more than a year of unsuccessful negotiation with the Soviet Union in the United Nations on the international control of atomic energy, American policymakers had to face up to the implications of an impasse. PPS 7 marked a turning-point in such considerations, raising the possibility that international control might not be attainable on terms consistent with American security requirements. The document called for continued discussions with the Russians, but in a context that would make clear American willingness to live with military competition if no agreement proved possible. In anticipation of what political scientists would later call "inducement," PPS 7 advocated improving American civil-defense capabilities as a means of encouraging the Russians to negotiate.

Excerpts from PPS 7 are reprinted below.

I. The Situation to Date

After fourteen months of negotiations in the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC) the impasse continues. . . .

Several basic differences divide the Soviet Union and Poland from the other ten members of the AEC. While these differences include, of course, the mechanics of inspection and the relation of the veto to the use of sanctions, there are two points of disagreement which are basic and which have become even more significant:

First, the majority believes that outlawry of atomic weapons should be accomplished only as part of an international agreement providing for the development, by stages, of an adequate system of control, with safeguards necessary to protect complying states against the hazards of violations and evasions. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, evidently does not intend to abandon its insistence on the destruction of atomic bomb stocks before adoption of an international control convention, or at least before it can become reasonably effective.

Second, the United States and most other UNAEC countries believe that an international control plan would afford no security unless it envisaged an atomic development authority endowed with broad powers over practically all operations connected with the production of atomic energy. Its powers would be those which, in Western nomenclature at least, are usually subsumed in the term ownership. The Soviet Union has repeatedly rejected the idea of such an authority, claiming to see in it an instrument for interference with the internal affairs of sovereign states.

Without a settlement on these two points it appears impossible for the United States, even though it continues to seek a solution, to agree with the USSR on a plan for the international control of atomic energy.

II. Basic Requirements of Future U.S. Policy

In the face of these fundamental differences the United States must begin to develop a policy which does not appear to place all our eggs in the UN Atomic Energy Commission basket.

The best estimates indicate that the Soviet Union will have effective use of the atomic bomb within — years.³

A due regard for United States security does not permit us to stand idly by while the Soviet Union continues its filibuster in the UNAEC. The Russians are using delaying tactics in the Commission while they pursue specific objectives outside the meeting hall. These include:

- a. Hastening their own development of atomic bombs;
- b. Dividing opinion in other United Nations, particularly those having atomic energy resources or skills;
- c. Infiltration of research and control programs in any or all other countries;
- d. Breaking down existing secret US arrangements for procurement of raw materials outside the United States;
- e. Extension of their area of effective political domination by infiltration or direct pressure.

This enumeration demonstrates that we cannot consider the debate in the AEC as taking place in a vacuum. The extent to which Soviet strategic and diplomatic objectives are furthered by delay in the Commission is obvious, and too pat for mere coincidence. We must consider Soviet tactics in the

3. To be supplied. [Note in source text]

AEC as part of the Kremlin's general strategy; and we able to recognize the end of the line when we come to it.

We are now faced with the basic fact that under present circumstances the effort to achieve international control affords less hope for protecting our national security than other means. We must begin, therefore, to take alternative measures which, while they would not provide as high a degree of security as effective international control, would at least materially improve the United States position in a world in which others possess atomic weapons.

This means that we turn a corner in our thinking and this turning-point must soon be made unmistakable to the peoples of the United States, the Soviet Union and the rest of the world.

This does not mean, however, that there is any necessity for terminating the work of the Commission at this point. On the contrary it is desirable that the door be left open to further negotiation with the Russians *subsequent* to the taking of these alternative measures. For although the measures would be taken primarily in the interests of our own security, they might just possibly have some effect in inclining the Russians toward the plan of the other UNAEC nations. This is so for the following reasons:

The Russians are trained to reason dialectically. Their diplomatic history shows that they seldom approach an objective along one course without at the same time having in reserve an alternative and sometimes entirely dissimilar course. In pressing their own demands, they are quick to take into account the extent to which their opponent has alternatives to the acceptance of their demands. If they think he has no acceptable alternative, they are insistent and intractable.

Thus far, we have not demonstrated to the Russians that we have any alternative to the present course of basing our future atomic security on general international agreement. On the contrary, we have tended to labor the point that there is no effective means of defense against atomic weapons. The Russians have probably concluded from this that we see no alternative to international agreement. This has put them in a position where they feel at liberty to stall the negotiations indefinitely, believing that as long as they refuse to reach agreement with us their basic security position will not deteriorate, because little will be done here to reduce our vulnerability and to increase our retaliatory power in the face of atomic attack.

The Russians are probably negotiating under the impression that this country has not taken, nor even seriously contemplated, any serious measures of civilian defense. This being the case, the possibility of being able, in the event of a military conflict, to cause great damage and panic by a

surprise attack must be an appealing one to them. It must put a premium, in their minds, on the possibility that they may some day be able to use the weapon against us.

There is no intention here to make light of the damage which can be done by the atomic weapon or the difficulties of defense against it. Nor is there any disposition to minimize the importance of the planning for atomic warfare and defense which has already been done in the military establishments. But there must be degrees in vulnerability to atomic attack; and there are certainly degrees in determination and effectiveness of retaliatory force.

If it were clearly established in the Russian mind that there was no possibility of this country's being a push-over in the face of surprise atomic attack—that there existed in this country mechanisms which would enable us to recuperate with relative promptness and to impose swift retribution, even in the face of the heaviest blow; and that we were ready to depart from traditional American policy in the direction of effective international understandings which increase our retaliatory power—then there could be no doubt that the prospect of the atomic age would take on a somewhat different color to Russian eyes.

It cannot be said with any assurance that the effect thus achieved would be strong enough to overcome the inhibitions on the Russian side which stand in the way of Soviet acceptance of our atomic energy proposals. Indeed, the odds are probably rather on the other side. But the possibility that their attitude might be affected to some extent by such a state of affairs is a strong one; and unless that possibility had been explored before the work of the Atomic Energy Commission was permitted to come to a final end, it would not be possible for us to say that we had exhausted every possibility of bringing the Russians near to our point of view.

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TOP SECRET

Estimate of Probable Developments in the World Political Situation up to 1957

JSPC 814/3

December 11, 1947

[Source: Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on deposit in the Modern Military Records Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C.]

JSPC 814/3 is an early estimate by the Joint Strategic Plans Committee of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of what course world political developments would take in the next