

# ATOMS FOR PEACE + 50

## Nuclear Energy & Science

### for the 21st Century

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Susan Eisenhower, Chairman, The Eisenhower Institute

**Panel Chairman:**

**Dr. Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr.**, President, Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, and Shelby Cullom Davis Professor of International Security Studies, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University

**PFALTZGRAFF:** First of all, I would like to introduce Susan Eisenhower, who is Chairman of the Eisenhower Institute. She is an advisor to the Department of Energy. She is also an Academic Fellow in the International Peace and Security Program in the Carnegie Corporation of New York. She has been a member of the International Space Station Management and Cost Evaluation task force, Director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the author of two best selling books, which are books that you would want to recall and to read. *Breaking Free* is the first one and the second one is *Mrs. Ike*, both excellent books worth your reading, if you haven't already done so.

**EISENHOWER:** Thank you very much. Thank you very much Dr. Pfaltzgraff. It is a real pleasure to be here today and to begin the panel to discuss the background on "Atoms for Peace." It's a particular pleasure for me because I'm sort a 'two-fer' you could say. I can represent the Eisenhower family in this process. But it's a treat to address this group, as I've been in nuclear issues myself for a very long time. Only people in this room would understand the thrill of getting inside the third perimeter fence at Chelyabinsk-70, once a closed nuclear city in the Ural Mountains of Russia, which I did a number of years ago as part of the Baker-Cutler Commission.

Being a member of that Commission gave me, certainly, an opportunity to see one of the important places in the Cold War confrontation that we had between ourselves and the Soviet Union, but it also gave me a real sense and a feel to what it is we try to do at gatherings like this.

Thank you very much for that wonderful introduction to the history of this. Being involved in contemporary affairs with respect to nuclear weapons, it's always interesting to go back and look at many of the historical underpinnings of where we find ourselves today. And, of course, "Atoms for Peace" was a very big part of the legacy that we are now dealing with.

When I came here this morning I was thinking how appropriate it was that we were starting the Conference at the crack of dawn because C. D. Jackson, Eisenhower's advisor who had been tasked with writing the early drafts of the "Atoms for Peace" speech, convened his group to discuss what the shape of the speech would look like, at the Metropolitan Club. And since they met early in the morning, they decided they were going to call it 'Operation Wheaties'. So it seemed to mean we were having an "Operation Wheaties" here this morning as well.

In any case, Dr. Robert Pfalzgraff outlined a wonderful introduction with respect to how the "Atoms for Peace" speech came about. Winston Churchill had been briefed about the speech in advance and praised it, calling it "a great pronouncement that will resound through the anxious bewildered world." I think it would be well to take a moment and reconstruct that anxious and bewildered world.

Here we are, after the Cold War is over. Sometimes it is easy to assume that it was going to turn out the way it did. But certainly in 1953, the world looked like a horrifying place indeed. The nuclear terror that was unleashed by the atomic carnage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki was only heightened four years later when the Soviet Union tested an atomic weapon on August of 1949. Great Britain, without help from the United States, followed suit in October 3, 1952.

And then, with the Korean War still raging, only a month later, in November of 1952, the world entered the age of the hydrogen bomb. The destructive capacity of this weapon was awesome in the old and Biblical sense of the word. On its detonation, it vaporized the test island and blew open an underwater crater 15 hundred yards in diameter. Less than a year later, the Soviets made their own announcement on August 19, 1953 that they had successfully broken the United States' monopoly on the hydrogen bomb.

The Soviet Union had been all but destroyed during World War II making it obvious that a nation's wealth was not a prerequisite for gaining nuclear knowledge and capability. It was clear to the President that if the world took its current path, soon others, and possibly all countries, would be able to acquire and develop nuclear weapons. "Eisenhower," wrote one analyst, "sought to reconcile the ambiguities and contradictions of nuclear politics, offering some hope for the future."

On the one hand the hydrogen bomb had the destructive capacity to bring about a nuclear holocaust, yet this weapon of unthinkable terror was also, ironically, the same device that served as a deterrent central to our national security calculations. At the same time, advancements in the nuclear field held out the promise of using the atom to provide ideally limitless nuclear power for energy and humanitarian purposes.

I would like to take this opportunity to say that Eisenhower was knowledgeable about the promise of peaceful nuclear energy and deeply impressed by it in large measure because of the very good relationship he had with the scientific community that dated back not only to his army years but also the period when he was President of Columbia University. In any case, Eisenhower felt strongly that this issue needed leadership and management. He had originally intended the "Atoms for Peace" speech be the first major foreign policy address of his administration. But Stalin's death at the outset in March of 1953 prompted the Eisenhower

administration to think about approaching the Soviet Union on disarmament talks. President Eisenhower thought that this would be one way to do it, to bring about some idea that would create an opportunity for cooperation, which would then, even if it was “the tiniest of starts”, he said, could evolve into something broader than just humanitarian efforts. How could the tide of nuclear proliferation be stemmed? After all, it was the belief in 1953 that some, and possibly all, countries could acquire nuclear technology.

How could we slow down the number of countries that were likely to go nuclear? Eisenhower saw his proposal as a way to involve developing countries as we have heard. Could the post-imperial world, increasingly restless with the double standards imposed by developed nations, sit still for long as the “Nuclear Club” seized the restricted access to the benefits that nuclear power promised? And how, and I think this is critically important, how could the President enhance public understanding of the issue and garner their support?

General Andrew Goodpaster will tell you how seriously Eisenhower took that particular issue. He was crafting the concept and considering countless drafts of the speech – and, by the way, you would not have wanted to be a speechwriter for Dwight Eisenhower. I’d like to remind you that he was a speechwriter for Douglas McArthur and he knew a thing or two about drafting a speech.

In any case, after seeing many of these drafts, President Eisenhower was completely frustrated and he wrote to a friend, “Every version I’ve read left listeners with only a new sense of terror. So I began to search around for a new kind of idea that could bring the world to look at the atomic problem in a broad and intelligent way and still escape the impasse to action create by Russian intransigence in a matter of mutual and neutral inspection of resources.”

“I wanted, additionally, to give our people and the world some faint idea of the distance already traveled by this new science but to do it in way that would not create new alarm... I wanted to give them certain knowledge that the taxpayer’s hard earned tax dollars had not been spent for destructive purposes alone, that there could be economic and social benefits from this pioneering research.” “The atom,” Eisenhower would later say, “was non-political, neither moral nor immoral, only man’s choice would determine the way in which it would be used.”

The speech not only gave presidential legitimacy to the international pursuit of atomic energy but, in the context of the Cold War, it raised the United States standing within the developing world. Did Eisenhower know the historic forces he set in play? I believe he did. When I read accounts that Eisenhower was naïve, I’ll defer to General Goodpaster on this, but I knew him very well myself. I don’t think so. I think he understood that there was probably no other solution at this particular time, and especially with the belief that all countries could soon acquire this technology if they so chose, that we as a nation had an obligation to bring these benefits to all of humankind.

As we look back now, “Atoms for Peace” has had some success. Given the 1953 calculation about the potential of nuclear weapons being available universally, we have to admit that the rate of those countries that have acquired nuclear weapons are well below the rate anticipated in 1953. Furthermore, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the International Atomic Energy

Agency, and the international community have gained leverage and access to countries that would have otherwise remained off-bounds because of reasons of sovereignty. So, I find that issue of access extremely important.

No nuclear weapon has been use since World War II and the nations of the world had essentially at this point stopped testing nuclear weapons. Nuclear electric power accounts for nearly one-fifth of the world's electricity. Nuclear power has reduced global tensions by replacing oil in many applications and providing much of the world's electricity that is generated without the release of greenhouse gases or other destructive emissions.

Many other nuclear and radiation-related technologies, especially in radiopharmaceuticals and medical advances have saved millions of lives through cancer treatments and other applications. And while "Atoms for Peace" as well as the institutions it created, such as the IAEA and eventually the NPT, have come under fire in recent years, the complaints, I believe, are largely a function of poor implementation rather than conceptualization. "Atoms for Peace," let's not forget, was a vision and not a blueprint. It's hard to imagine a world in which country might have its own nuclear capability without international oversight and inspection or that the benefits of nuclear medicine and agriculture would be available only to a chosen few.

Fifty years later, however, the nuclear dilemma is still with us. It is now informed by a different set of threats and concerns, but it seems to me that the biggest problem that I see is not the small amounts of material located in research reactors around the world, although we need to secure those urgently, but by the legacy of the arms race that continued unabated well after Dwight Eisenhower left office. The Soviet Union is gone today. Russia is as our partner in many areas and so, quite frankly, in my estimation, we have no excuse.

We have the opening that Eisenhower hoped for and prayed for and, in some respects, planned for. And so it seems to me that we need to accelerate our agenda on a number of issues. Despite the work that's already been conducted in Russia, much needs to be done: for instance, a hundred metric tons of plutonium and highly enriched uranium have not received security upgrades. This is an urgent task.

We still have weapons deployed on high alert. President George W. Bush and President Vladimir Putin could well direct the immediate stand down of all forces scheduled for reduction under the Moscow Treaty. Both presidents could increase the decision time for nuclear response from minutes to hours. And even though the Cold War is over, there remains the potential for catastrophic accident or for the more remote possibility of unauthorized launch.

The U.S. and Russia must get a grip on tactical nuclear weapons as well. And the United States, in my opinion, must think long and hard about the implications of adding other weapons to our arsenals, for instance, earth-penetrating "bunker busters". Not only could they prompt other countries to devise a nuclear deterrent against "bunker busters", I think just as worrisome is the fact that their name and their low yield may lull some people into thinking they could really be used.

“Atoms for Peace” institutions, including the IAEA and the NPT, have to be properly funded, reformed and augmented. Their mandates need to be broadened. We need to look again at nuclear power and to step up to the plate. It may be one of the most effective ways of minimizing our dependence on foreign oil, and reducing the potential for proliferation through the use of new reactor technology.

Given the environmental problems that the international community is facing, we have no alternative, and the sooner we start moving forward on these issues, the better off we are going to be.

Let’s look to enhance the security of the atom but let us not hold the world hostage to the fears that President Eisenhower tried to put aside. While the “Atoms for Peace” speech was given 50 years ago, the impulse to reduce the dangers of nuclear war and to extend the life-giving benefits of the atom remains as valid as ever and so I would like to conclude my remarks by quoting Dwight Eisenhower in his December 8th address, when he said, “The United States pledges before you and therefore to the world its determination to help solve the fearful atomic dilemma, to devote its entire heart and mind to find the way by which the miraculous inventiveness of man shall not be dedicated to his death but consecrated to his life.” Thank you very much.

[Applause]

#### **Questions and Answers:**

**PFALTZGRAFF:** We now have an opportunity for a few minutes at least for questions and comments from the group here, all participants. I won’t say the audience because everyone is a participant here and we hope that you will feel free to intervene at this point. Would anyone like to ask a question or two in the time that we have? Yes. And please make sure that everyone identifies himself or herself.

**PFALTZGRAFF:** Any final questions before we conclude the panel?

**BRODSKY:** Thank you. I’m Alan Brodsky, Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University and senior scientist at SCIC. These excellent presentations bring me back 50 years. And I remember something else that I think happened during the Eisenhower administration. He also seemed to realize that perhaps our efforts would fail. And I know, since I was part of it after a little while, that he established an excellent civil defense program, which was decimated in 1994. And I’ve been trying to get some of this re-established as a past chairman of Homeland Security for a healthy society.

And I wonder if you could tell me, to what degree President Eisenhower really thought about protecting the population as well as these other issues?

**PFALTZGRAFF:** We have time for one final comment from Susan Eisenhower.

**EISENHOWER:** Well, I would like to mention one or two things in conclusion. You know, every president expresses himself in a different way and, so, therefore there are different ways to get to know each person who has been president of the United States. I would just like to

emphasize that Dwight Eisenhower was a great writer. He really was and he was an avid diarist and many of these diaries are now available.

The thing that is quite striking is that he wrote many very deep and penetrating letters to his personal friends. The Johns Hopkins University has done a magnificent job of putting these papers together and you can see the whole transformation, or I should say the evolution, of Dwight Eisenhower's thinking through these letters he wrote to one of his childhood friends for instance. So, I think it is a wonderful source.

The only other comment I want to make really responds to Richard Garwin's question. What is striking for me today that in my opinion, most of what we are trying to accomplish is tactical and not strategic. And at the end of the day, it doesn't matter what you want to say, but Dwight Eisenhower was a great strategist and was extremely comfortable in looking at big problems and parsing out the various elements that went into those big problems. Let's face the fact that Eisenhower had a lot of experience from his time in the Army through the role he played in World War II.

For instance, there is a lot of discussion still about his farewell address in which he identifies the potential unwarranted influence of the military industrial complex. This was not a speechwriter, by the way, and I think it is wonderful that at least five former Eisenhower's speechwriters claim that speech. But it's 100 percent Dwight Eisenhower's and it goes back to his experience in the early 1930s, between the World Wars, when he was placed with the responsibility of trying to figure out how to reindustrialize industry in case of war, which, in fact, was only coming in less than ten years. So he had 'reverse engineered' that concept by working the problem on the other side.

In conclusion, if you want to know more of Dwight Eisenhower, his works are gloriously available because he wrote up a storm his entire life and that is very helpful for all of us who are interested.

**PFALTZGRAFF:** Well, I know that everyone will join me in expressing thanks for this outstanding panel for opening the conference in the way that it has and setting the stage as it has and providing for us some unique insights into the life and times of Dwight D. Eisenhower and especially the setting in which the "Atoms for Peace" speech was developed and delivered and discussing its legacy.

**END**