

**George F. Kennan
and the Origins of
Eisenhower's New Look**
An Oral History of Project Solarium

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Introduction: The Solarium Exercise of June 1953

The following monograph contains the recollections of three individuals—George F. Kennan, Andrew J. Goodpaster, and Robert R. Bowie—who helped to formulate and, in the case of the latter two, also to implement the foreign policy of the Eisenhower administration. In 1988, after the passage of thirty-five years and removal of the top secret classification from the record, they came together at Princeton University to talk with students and scholars about their activities as government officials.

In May 1953 Dwight D. Eisenhower had been president of the United States for four months. Since the previous November, the month of his landslide election, the war-hero president had concerned himself with a series of events having profound security implications for the United States. The Korean War—which ultimately would cause the deaths of thirty-five thousand Americans, millions of Koreans, and hundreds of thousands of Chinese—continued in a bloody stalemate across the mountainous peninsula while armistice negotiations were deadlocked over the issue of prisoner exchanges. The United States—having found itself in a nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union—had set off the world's first hydrogen explosion. And initial efforts by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to create a European defense community had failed because of French resistance to admitting a rearmed Germany and concern about communist efforts to expel France from its colony, Indochina. Moreover, in Guatemala, a leftist president had nationalized large tracts of fruit trees belonging to an American company; and in Iran a new government, perhaps also under communist influence, had nationalized oil concessions belonging to the British, threatening the flow of petroleum to world markets. Adding to the uncertainty, the Soviet Union also had a new leader. Stalin had died in March, an event that set off a contest for his successor among Politburo members. Seeing

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an opportunity to reach out to the Soviet leadership, Eisenhower gave a speech at the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April 16. He called it "The Chance for Peace," and it was perhaps the most eloquent of his career. Later also referred to as the "Cross of Iron" speech, it inventoried the costs of "a world at arms" and proposed measures to reduce tensions. Unfortunately, the Soviets failed to respond. Yet another concern was the fact that Eisenhower's recently installed national security staff and cabinet secretaries needed policy direction.

The question of the day was what Eisenhower intended to do. Pundits noted that John Foster Dulles, his new secretary of state, had written the foreign affairs plank of the Republican campaign platform. The program called on the U.S. to regain the foreign policy initiative, seek a free, democratic, and unified Germany, and even "roll back" communist control from Eastern Europe. And, the pundits wondered, what was the new president going to do about the Korean War? He had said during the campaign that he would "go to Korea," and he had done so soon after his election. Still, in late spring 1953, no armistice was yet in sight. Would the new president, they asked, overturn the nation's policy of containment and assume a new, more belligerent posture toward Soviet power? President Truman had already modified it, responding to the Soviet testing of an atomic weapon, the communist takeover of mainland China, and the North Korean invasion of South Korea by implementing the recommendations of a planning document, NSC 68. They enlarged the American strategic perimeter to include South Korea, Taiwan, and Indochina and drastically increased defense spending from \$13 billion to over \$50 billion.

In early May 1953 Eisenhower began to provide answers, though not to the pundits. The new president's directives, classified top secret, were not available to them. The pundits would have to divine them as the administration's policies unfolded. And interestingly, they would spring, not from Eisenhower directly, but rather from a process, an exercise—at once deliberative and educational—that he put in motion code-named Solarium. For many years, the record being closed, most historians would argue that Eisenhower had replaced Truman's foreign policy of containment with something quite different called, variously, "roll back," "brinkmanship," or simply the "New Look." With the passage of time and the release of more information, a different view began to emerge. Eisenhower's foreign policy seemed increasingly to resemble ~~more~~ what Truman had been doing—a forceful brand of containment—~~from~~ the approach that John Foster Dulles had proposed in the 1952 ~~GOP platform~~.

As a result of the declassification of the Solarium documents in 1985, it became clear that the different view was the correct one. Indeed, what historians discovered, to their amazement, since Dulles had forced him out of the State Department only several months earlier, was that the individual who wrote the main thrust of Eisenhower's policy, mapped out by the Solarium exercise, was none other than the official who, in 1946 in his famous "long telegram" from Moscow and as director of the Policy Planning Staff of the State Department in 1947, had provided the intellectual framework of containment: George Frost Kennan.

The exercise, code-named Solarium for the room on the top floor of the White House where it was conceived, brought together three task forces to examine separately and in detail the most promising approaches being considered at the time by the national security establishment. (1) Task Force A was assigned to modify, with additional initiatives, the Truman policy of containment. (2) Task Force B was to delineate the perimeters of U.S. security interests on the globe and announce that should the Soviet Union or its allies cross those lines, war would ensue. And finally (3) Task Force C was to propose measures short of war—including political, economic, diplomatic, and covert—to eliminate Soviet influence from the free world and weaken communist control in both Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union itself. To compound the irony of his return to the councils of government, Kennan found himself in charge of Task Force A, assigned to perfect the very policy whose architect he had been.

None of the scenarios envisioned forcible overthrow of the Soviet government, but all were designed with the purpose of establishing a stable peace and regular diplomatic relations and in the long run, it was hoped, causing it to collapse from within. Each approach assumed a different level of threat. The first, A, assumed a short-term strengthening of the Soviet competitive position, to be followed after ten or fifteen years by its failure. The second, B, assumed a somewhat less aggressive, more rational set of Soviet intentions. The third, C, assumed that time was on the side of the Soviet Union rather than of the United States but that the United States, by taking action, could reverse the situation. The exercise was conducted at the National War College, Fort McNair, in Washington, D.C., from June 10 to July 15. There were twenty-one participants, with seven in each of the task forces.

Eisenhower's purpose in calling the exercise was to provide a counter to his secretary of state's pessimism and more unilateralist proposals. The president did not take part in the deliberations, but he did recommend participants: it was he who suggested that Kennan chair

Task Force A. The president also worked closely with his special assistant for national security, Robert Cutler, in setting the overall agenda, ensuring the integrity of the process, and providing access by the members of each task force to any government agency that could provide assistance. He also set the deadlines and stipulated a daylong rehearsal before formal presentation of findings at a meeting scheduled for July 16 of the National Security Council.

On that day, the conference over, Eisenhower listened to the discussion of all options. He then stood, congratulated the participants for their work, summarized what had been said, and stated his conclusions. Kennan recalled that Eisenhower "spoke...with a mastery of the subject matter and a thoughtfulness and a penetration that were quite remarkable. I came away from it with the conviction (which I have carried to this day)" he said, "that President Eisenhower was a much more intelligent man than he was given credit for being. But like Foster [Dulles] (although in a different way) he didn't reveal [to the public] how discriminating and thoughtful a person he was, or how well he could present all these things."¹

The president authorized that the findings be the basis for a new basic national security policy for consideration by the National Security Council. Meanwhile, the NSC Planning Board, he said, should recommend any actions proposed by the Solarium study that could be implemented at once.

The Solarium findings included recommendations for "a U.S. capability for a strong retaliatory offensive, a base for mobilization, and continental defense"; a "strong, independent, and self-sufficient groupings of nations friendly to the United States centering on Western Europe (including Germany), on the Far East (including Japan), and a position of strength in the Middle East." U.S. foreign assistance, they said, would be less necessary over time in Western Europe but would be needed for "a longer term" in the Far East and the Middle East. The U.S. would need to determine areas in which "a clearly recognizable advance by Soviet bloc military forces will be considered by the United States as initiating war." It would need to take "take selected aggressive actions of a limited scope, involving moderately increased risks of general war, to eliminate Soviet-dominated areas within the free world and to reduce Soviet power in the Satellite periphery." It also would need to "take action other than military, to reduce indigenous communist power in the nations of the free world." The purpose, they said, would be "during the near future

to create a 'climate of victory' to bolster the morale and strength of the free world while forcing the Soviet bloc on the defensive."²

The Influence of the Solarium Report on Cold War National Security Policy

The findings of the Solarium report—which essentially updated and continued (institutionalized) Truman's policy of political, diplomatic, economic, and, where necessary, military containment of Soviet expansion—became structural elements in the foundation of United States cold war policy from 1953 to 1991. The Solarium deliberations produced the framework for a policy in which the United States, while developing strength both at home and abroad and taking steps both to stop Soviet expansion and to reduce communist influence, made no plans to overthrow the leadership of the Soviet Union. Instead, the United States proposed to reach out to them—avoiding actions that might lead either to a garrison state at home or to military action abroad, seeking ways to communicate, even to negotiate if possible. This policy established the American side of a confrontation whose dynamic brought resolution of several confrontations in Berlin and an arms race that resulted during the Kennedy administration in the Cuban missile crisis, as well as a limited nuclear test ban treaty. It involved a refusal by the Eisenhower administration to intervene to rescue the French in Indochina in 1954 after their army was surrounded by the Viet Minh at the fortress of Dien Bien Phu. But it also involved Central Intelligence Agency actions that toppled governments in Iran and Guatemala. This dynamic brought Eisenhower's condemnation and reversal of the French-British-Israeli invasion of Suez in 1956 and, later, the decision of President Lyndon Baines Johnson to embark on an ill-fated U.S. intervention in South Vietnam. While avoiding nuclear war, this dynamic brought the world perilously close to Armageddon by the early 1980s, as both sides attempted to deter the other through an escalating series of breakthroughs in nuclear-tipped intercontinental missiles, air-launched and submarine-launched missiles, and antimissile systems. They would break off talks in 1983, but gradually, with the advent of a new, younger Soviet leadership, arms control and summit conferences between the two sides resumed. By 1987 the dynamic of the policy established by the

² *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1984), 2:440-41.

Eisenhower administration had brought the beginning of arms reduction and, finally, four years later, the demise of the Soviet regime.

Kennan's Contribution

For several decades, with the release of documents and the publication of monographs, historians have understood that Eisenhower's New Look national security policy, far from being a policy of "rollback" or "massive retaliation," was in fact a continuation of Truman's containment. Accordingly, though surprising, it was not illogical to find that Kennan figured in the formulation of the New Look. But it was a continuation of Truman's policy with a twist. It is important to note that as set forth by the Solarium discussions, while keeping the main parts, the recommendations of Kennan's task force, which formed the nucleus of the Solarium report, took issue with several assumptions and emphases of Truman's policy. They implied that, as enunciated in its post-Korean War incarnation, NSC 68, containment was too pessimistic about Soviet power, involved excessive emphasis on military action (and a supposed deadline for Soviet nuclear danger—1954), and required too high a level of economic mobilization—all criticisms Kennan was himself leveling at containment by 1953. He had come to bemoan the loss of what he considered to be the central ideas he had brought forward in 1946 and 1947—long-term resistance to Soviet expansion in Western Europe using political, economic, and diplomatic pressure. The architect-now-critic of containment was thus a logical choice when Eisenhower was seeking an individual to chair Task Force A—the task force charged with exploring the continuation, but modification, of Truman's policy.

The Dulles Centennial Conference

The "John Foster Dulles Centennial Conference: The Challenge of Leadership in International Affairs" was held at the Woodrow Wilson School of Princeton University on February 25–27, 1988, to commemorate the centennial of Dulles's birth. An extraordinary gathering of individuals who had formulated and carried out U.S. foreign policy during the Eisenhower administration—the keynote speakers and distinguished panelists—provided a retrospective on the national security strategy of the 1950s for an audience of students, political scientists, and historians.³

³For a listing of participants and topics see the following website: <http://libweb.woodrowwilsoncenter.princeton.edu/findingaids/dullesconference.html#series>.

The session entitled, "Project Solarium: A Collective Oral History with Andrew J. Goodpaster, Robert R. Bowie, George F. Kennan," was made possible by the fact that the Eisenhower Library had recently declassified and made available to scholars the record of the Solarium exercise. Conference organizers selected the panelists—Goodpaster, Kennan, and Bowie—because of their participation in the exercise or in implementing the resulting policy or (in the case of Goodpaster) both. Kennan, as mentioned, was chairman of the Task Force A. He had retired from his career as a diplomat. Goodpaster served on Task Force C and then in 1954 became White House Staff Secretary and Defense Liaison (a position similar to today's national security adviser). Bowie, in 1953, was the newly appointed director of the State Department Policy Planning Staff (replacing Paul Nitze in that position) and a member of the Planning Board of the National Security Council. He was in the audience at the presentation of the Solarium findings on July 16, 1953. In the months that followed Bowie helped formulate a policy that reflected their guidelines and, after acceptance by the president, elicited State Department support for Eisenhower's national security policy, NSC 162, which contained most of the Solarium findings.

The Three Panelists: Goodpaster, Bowie, and Kennan

Andrew J. Goodpaster, a graduate of West Point and decorated veteran of World War II, won the Distinguished Service Cross and the Silver Star for gallantry in combat during the Italian campaign. At the time of the Solarium exercise he was a lieutenant colonel. Having earned a graduate degree in engineering and a Ph.D. in international relations from Princeton, he was by this time perhaps the army's leading expert on the role of nuclear weapons in war. (At the request of the Army Chief of Staff in 1946, Goodpaster had organized the Advanced Study Group at the Pentagon, the first effort by the military to address this issue.) Prior to the summer of 1953 he served as special assistant to General Alfred Gruenther, Eisenhower's chief of staff as Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. After the death of General Paul T. Carroll in early 1954, President Eisenhower asked Goodpaster to take Carroll's place as White House Staff Secretary and Defense Liaison. In this capacity, Goodpaster briefed Eisenhower every morning on the world situation and handled all communications between the president and the Departments of State and Defense, the CIA, and the NSC. He was, said one of Eisenhower's biographers, "the one man from whom Eisenhower had no secrets." After Eisenhower's departure from the presidency in 1961, Goodpaster, who by this time had been promoted to brigadier general, continued to

serve him, eventually as personal liaison with President Johnson. During the 1960s Goodpaster asked for and received orders to troop command. He quickly rose to the rank of four-star general and from 1969 to 1974 served as NATO supreme commander.⁴

Robert R. Bowie received his bachelor of arts degree from Princeton University and his law degree from Harvard. He practiced law in Baltimore and was assistant attorney general of Maryland from 1941 to 1942. From 1942 to 1946 he served in the U.S. Army Legal Division, Services of Supply in Germany, rising to the rank of colonel. From 1945 to 1946 he was Special Assistant to General Lucius Clay, then Allied commander of occupation forces in Germany. From 1953 to 1957 he was general counsel and special adviser to the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany and, during the same period, as mentioned, directed the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department and served as the department's representative on the NSC Planning Board. Later, from 1977 to 1979, he was deputy director of the CIA for national intelligence. He was a professor of law at Harvard University from 1946 to 1955 and organized and served as director of the Harvard Center for International Affairs from 1957 to 1972. At retirement in 1980 he was Clarence Dillon Professor of International Affairs.⁵

George F. Kennan was by 1953 the leading and most influential postwar United States expert on the Soviet Union. Educated at St. John's University and Princeton University, he was an expert in Russian language and culture who joined the State Department in 1926, becoming part of a State Department group that kept track of events in the Soviet Union, a country with which the U.S. did not have diplomatic relations for another seven years. During World War II he was minister-counselor under Ambassador Averell Harriman at the United States embassy in Moscow. In 1946 he wrote a telegram from Moscow, the so-called long telegram, in which he characterized the Soviet system under Stalin as brutal and bent on hostile expansion through intimidation and subversion. It was broadly influential as a foundation for American policy toward Stalin's Russia in the postwar period. As director of the Policy Planning Staff of the State Department in 1947, he elaborated on this theme in an article entitled, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," published in the journal *Foreign Affairs* under the pseudonym Mr. X. This article, when its author

⁴ William B. Pickett, "General Andrew Jackson Goodpaster," in David Anderson, ed., *The Eisenhower Tradition in America since 1945* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 2003).
⁵ The Eisenhower Institute. (<http://www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/programs/andrew-bowie.htm>).

was later identified, exposed Kennan as the source of the ideas for President Truman's doctrine of containment. Kennan served as U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1952 to 1953. By the time of the Solarium exercise, however, he was no longer a government official (although from 1960 to 1963 he would serve as U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia). After the outbreak of war in Korea and the militarization and globalization of containment via NSC 68 (drafted by Paul Nitze, his successor at the State Department Policy Planning Staff), he became disenchanted with the course of Truman's foreign policy. With the election of Eisenhower as president and the appointment of John Foster Dulles to replace Dean Acheson as secretary of state in 1953, Kennan found himself out of a job. He retired to become professor of historical studies at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, N.J., where he made his home. When, in the spring of 1953, he received a call from the White House inviting him to participate in the Solarium exercise, he was surprised but flattered and, of course, willing to serve.⁶

Key Issues of the Solarium Session

The Solarium session of the Dulles centennial conference was the first time the three principals—Kennan, Goodpaster, and Bowie—had been together since the Solarium exercise thirty-five years earlier. It was in this sense a study in historical memory—an opportunity to reflect on past actions and their importance in light of the passage of thirty-five years. To prepare for the session, the moderator, historian Richard Immerman, gave each principal the pages from the *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1953* that contained the record of the exercise. Memories thus refreshed and still sharp, the principals responded to questions from both the moderator and the audience—a gathering of some thirty-five or forty historians, political scientists, graduate students, and former officials. These responses, which elicited additional memories as the session progressed, revealed general agreement about the conclusions and value of the 1953 exercise. They were essentially as follows:

1. The Soviet Union was a long-term rather than an imminent threat—one that would diminish if the United States acted prudently.

⁶ *Britannica Student Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Kennan, George Frost." <http://www.search.eb.com/ebi/article?eu=336142>; George F. Kennan, *The Nuclear Delusion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 208.

2. The threat was from Soviet troop strength, conventional weaponry, and a tendency to use intimidation and alliances to further its goals of creating a security zone in Eastern Europe and Asia and of overthrowing independent governments. None of these were as important, however, as the increasing number of nuclear weapons in the possession of the Soviets and concomitantly their capacity to deliver them.
3. The United States needed to avoid both public alarm—which could bring excessive military preparations—and complacency—which might encourage the Soviet Union and its allies to take risks, as in Korea. The United States thus should maintain a system of alliances circumscribing the Soviet bloc and military readiness, both conventional and nuclear.
4. The United States would pursue its national security in conjunction with its allies, and this pursuit would involve, not “rollback” of Soviet power, but, rather, a continuation of containment.
5. The most useful strategy for the United States, once it had established its deterrent capacity and resolve, would be political and educational—conveying the truth about capitalism, democracy, and human rights by various means to the populations of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.
6. The Solarium exercise served important administrative purposes—enabling Eisenhower to learn from and to brief his newly appointed national security officials and providing a common awareness of his purposes and expectations, a starting point for policy deliberations, and guidelines for action in the event of a crisis.

These conclusions, seen from the vantage of thirty-five years—despite the intervening tribulations ranging from the Cuban missile crisis, the Vietnam War, to the Carter Doctrine in the Persian Gulf—seemed by the time of the Dulles centennial in 1988 to have been correct. The Soviet empire, having become worn down by brutal misrule, corruption, and—after 1985—opened to new ideas by Mikhail Gorbachev’s efforts at reform, seemed by that time ever more precarious. The cold war had lasted considerably longer and been more costly than they had expected or desired, but by 1988 it had moved in the direction that Eisenhower, Dulles, Kennan, Goodpaster, and Bowie had hoped and for which they had planned thirty-five years earlier.

Conclusion

Eisenhower’s Administrative Method

One can only wonder what would have happened had succeeding presidents beginning with John F. Kennedy in 1961, retained the

Eisenhower method of planning and deliberations. It is perhaps impossible to exaggerate the difficulty of attempting to produce a national security policy. The task requires taking into consideration such imponderables as the whims of foreign leaders and collective decision-making bodies as well as the necessarily fragmentary and sometime erroneous information from a variety of intelligence agencies. After scrutiny of the presidencies that followed—including those that brought such events as the Bay of Pigs, the Vietnam escalation, the Iran hostage crisis, and the Iran-Contra affair—students of presidential history have come to praise the Eisenhower model. “Plans are nothing but planning is everything,” Eisenhower used to say. “The secret of a sound, satisfactory decision made on an emergency basis,” he said, “has always been that the responsible official has been ‘living with the problem’ before it becomes acute.”⁷ Truman had had little experience with handling such matters and depended heavily on recommendations of the Policy Planning Staff of the State Department. And Kennedy, at least at first, did not try, preferring to manage such matters from the Oval Office. All presidents after Eisenhower, it turns out, kept the National Security Council, but none of them, it would seem, understood very well how to use it.⁸ Not surprisingly considering his career as a strategist, planner, and commander, Eisenhower knew both the importance—in matters concerning life or death and the destinies of nations—of getting the best possible information before deciding on a course of action and of selecting and organizing his planners in a way that increased the probability that they would help him discover the correct one.⁹

The Solarium exercise was thus worth studying thirty-five years later. Eisenhower, its participants could see in retrospect, considered it so important that he attended to the smallest details of preparation. The briefing room, he said, needed to have a raised podium and be air-conditioned. He desired that the exercise bring together some of the best thinkers and most experienced individuals to explore dispassionately and free from public scrutiny and comment the three most feasible approaches for the desired policy outcome. The final product needed to be a kind of debate in which participants in their preparation had access to each other and to the best intelligence available. Then, gathered

⁷ Fred I. Greenstein and Richard H. Immerman, “Effective National Security Advising: Recovering the Eisenhower Legacy,” *Political Science Quarterly* 115 (November 3, 2000): 342.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 344–45.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 337.

in one big room, they could argue their positions before an audience of those responsible for carrying out policy.¹⁰ It was perhaps not surprising that the Solarium exercise produced guidelines that, although based largely on the report of Task Force A, drew elements from each of the three approaches. These guidelines—as incorporated into official policy by the National Security Council under President Eisenhower—became part of the foundation for his foreign policy. The Solarium exercise involved Eisenhower's national security advisers in the details of their mission, sought their creative cooperation based on specific guidelines, and let them know, in his commentary on their findings, what his policy would be.

The Usefulness of the Session for Further Declassification of Documents

Still another, if subsidiary, value of the Dulles centennial session on Solarium was its helpfulness in obtaining the declassification and release of the remaining portions of the report of Task Force C. The three principals, in the months that followed—after responding to challenges from the audience about the necessity, thirty-five years later, of making these portions available—helped researchers obtain their declassification and release.

The Hidden George F. Kennan Revealed

Perhaps the most human as well as enlightening revelation of the declassified Solarium papers and the session at the Dulles centennial conference concerned George F. Kennan's service to two administrations, the second clandestinely. Prior to the release of the Solarium documents, historians had concluded that Eisenhower, rather than pursuing some other, perhaps more militant policy such as "rollback," continued Truman's policy of containment, albeit a version of the more active, costly, and multifaceted, post-Korean War variety. What they did not realize until release of the documents—and Kennan's comments about them at the Dulles Centennial Conference in 1988—was an important reason for that continuity: that the same individual, Kennan, was involved in the formulation of Eisenhower's foreign policy, too. Indeed, in a rare moment of gloating, Kennan recalled during the 1988 session the satisfaction he had taken looking down at Secretary of State John Foster Dulles from the conference podium during the final plenary session of Solarium on July 16, 1953, and thinking: "Since it was only three months

since he had fired me from the foreign service, this gave me a certain satisfaction, I must say. I could talk, and he had to listen, for about a half an hour.¹¹ It is important to note, however, that Eisenhower's actual foreign relations, as opposed to plans, and the way the United States pursued its interests abroad as the cold war unfolded were not undertakings for which Kennan claimed authorship or credit, either at the Dulles centennial conference or later. Indeed, he had been and continued to be an outspoken and articulate critic of their too frequent reliance on military force at the expense of diplomacy. This, he believed, gave aid and comfort to the Kremlin hardliners and needlessly prolonged the cold war.¹²

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¹¹ See transcript below, 19.

¹² For example, see George F. Kennan, "America's Far-Eastern Policy at the Height of the Cold War (1984)," in Kennan, *At a Century's Ending: Reflections 1982-1995* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 93-98.

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The Planners of and Participants in the Solarium Study

Working Committee

- General Walter Bedell Smith, acting secretary of state
- Allen W. Dulles, director of central intelligence
- Robert Cutler, special assistant to the president for national security affairs

Panel That Drafted Terms of Reference for Each Task Force

- General James H. Doolittle, chairman
- Robert Amory, Jr.
- Lt. General Lyman L. Lemnitzer
- Dean Rusk
- Admiral Leslie C. Stevens

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- George F. Kennan, chairman
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- C. Tyler Wood
- J. Maury
- Captain H. S. Sears, USN
- [seventh member unknown]

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Project Solarium: A Collective Oral History with Andrew J. Goodpaster, Robert R. Bowie, George F. Kennan

This session of the "John Foster Dulles Centennial Conference: The Challenge of Leadership in International Affairs" took place at the Woodrow Wilson School of International and Public Affairs of Princeton University on Saturday, February 27, 1988. The session was moderated by Dr. Richard Immerman, who was then associate professor of history at the University of Hawaii and visiting fellow at the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton.

IMMERMAN: [To the panelists] How did you first learn about Solarium? Do you know why you were selected to participate and, more specifically, why you were assigned to a specific task force? Ambassador Kennan chaired Task Force A, and General Goodpaster was on Task Force C. Did your assignment reflect recognition of your views? Or that you would be an effective advocate regardless of which task force you happened to be on?

GOODPASTER: [To Ambassador Kennan] Why don't you start, George?

KENNAN: At the time this concept came into existence, which I suppose was along about May 1953, I had been away from the State Department for a couple of years. I actually had left the foreign service or was just in the process of leaving it. I had officially severed my connection with it in March or April, and for three months I continued to receive my salary. In the midst of that, in the month of May, I was approached—I think it was by [White House assistant] C. D. Jackson. He described this [Solarium] exercise, and said the president wanted me to participate in it and to lead one of the task forces. It was all highly secret. You have no idea how well this was protected. Nobody knew about it that whole summer, despite the fact that fifty to a hundred people were involved in it. I was not permitted—nobody was permitted—to say anything about it. It began in June, I think.

IMMERMAN: June, correct.

KENNAN: We worked down in the old [Army] War College [now the National Defense University], where I had only recently been as deputy for foreign affairs and had lectured extensively. Each task force, as I recall, consisted of between five and seven people. I was very fortunate in the [individuals] that I had around me. They were drawn from different departments of the government, and some were outsiders. Our instructions were as described here. It is my impression that we were not asked to take [the specific task-force working] paper as something that had been approved and that we had to recognize as valid. We were, however, to approach it critically. But we were to take off from that paper, where we disagreed with it, to say that we disagreed, or where we were in accord with it, to say so and to base our paper accordingly.

I suppose I was selected because I had been somewhat earlier, for three years, head of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff and was regarded in certain respects as one who had played a permanent part in devising the first reaction to what was seen as the Soviet threat. Since this first task force [Task Force A] was to operate roughly within the framework of what we had been doing, I think it probably occurred to the organizers that I would be a good person to explain it and to lead that particular task force.

So this was done and you know the rest. We worked for some weeks down there. We had access to all the information that anybody could have had access to, I think, in the United States government: intelligence information and other. We talked these things out. I was not happy about this assignment, because I didn't like [having what] we were supposed to defend being prescribed for us in advance. I was sometimes accused of arrogance, and I'm afraid there was some justification [to] the accusation. In any case, I was used to stating my views independently, and I didn't like to start by being known as the defender of a given position, however vague it was.

I also, of course, had to compromise this position by reconciling views within our task force. That was probably good for me and good for the government, but what came out of it was not entirely my view. The political parts of it, historical, and, you might say, philosophical parts were my own. I wrote most of those parts. But there were other large parts dealing with governmental expenditures, military preparations, and so forth, where other members of the task force took the lead and did most of the drafting. To that, we all agreed. We all knew we couldn't expect to put our own personal opinion through pure, that we would

have to come to some sort of a collective idea about these things. And that we did.

I noted, reading over the paper today (it's the first time I read it over for all these thirty-four years) that we did say [at the time] that while our task had been prescribed for us, we nevertheless were all prepared to stand by the statements [we] made in [our] paper.

I cannot judge from this distance how useful this paper was or how useless. It probably had less importance than we thought at the time [but] perhaps greater importance today, historically. I say we thought it had less importance than we thought at the time. It gradually sank down into the sands of the vast bureaucracies of Washington and got, so to speak, absorbed into all the rest of governmental thinking that went through so many committees. Well, by the time it had gone out to the departments and their views had come back, what emerged in the end was something not too different from what had existed before we [the Solarium participants] came into the picture but with a greater stamp of presidential approval than had existed before.

This was, after all, a new administration. What had grown up before had grown up under the Truman/Acheson administration; and to the extent that all this was [to be] acceptable to the new administration, it was important that President Eisenhower should approve it. And I think the new administration was in accord with what finally came out of it. And a good deal of our report—of the Task Force A—had, I think, the new president's approval; because when July 26 [*sic*; actually, July 16] came and we all got together in the basement of the White House—members of the cabinet were there—I derived, I must say, a certain amount of amusement from it. Because I had to present our whole task force's report personally, and Foster Dulles sat at my feet and was thus instructed on what the policy ought to be toward the Soviet Union. Since it was only three months since he had fired me from the foreign service, this gave me a certain satisfaction, I must say. I could talk, and he had to listen, for about a half an hour.

But I didn't know what happened after that. I went back into private life and lived out in the country, and I just didn't know what occurred.

A lot of our report—I think most of it—that related to financial matters (the financing of national defense, how large an armed establishment we needed to have, what it would cost us, how much we had to rely on our allies, and all that) went through, I think, quite successfully and was adopted into governmental practice. The political parts of the report I think were accepted silently by those who listened but were not taken too seriously.

To me, reading it over again today, I think the most interesting and most significant parts were those relating to Germany. I had succeeded in getting into the report some of my own thoughts about Germany and about the need for our having a more plausible negotiating stance over the question of German unification and the future of Germany.

Up to that time what we had been saying amounted only to this: if the Russians want to get out of East Germany, that would be acceptable to us. But we wouldn't pay them anything to do it. We wouldn't consider withdrawing our own forces from Germany or anything of that sort.

Of course, that was not a realistic negotiating position. There was nothing in it for the Russians, no reason they should have accepted it. And I had tried for years, and continued to try for a couple of years after that, to see to it that we at least had a negotiating stance which would be more forthcoming and would put the onus of holding out against German unification more on the Russians and less on us. That was all argued in the report.

But I can see in the later records of the United States government absolutely no impact of that at all. This position ran counter to the ideas of the West European division of the State Department who were very quiet, polite, but stubborn people; and they went right on with their own ideas, which were the ideas of the French and the British. [They] didn't allow themselves to be influenced at all.

On other political parts of the paper, I think we were moderately successful, but not entirely. As I say, the whole set of papers within a few months [was] absorbed back into the general workings of the Washington bureaucracy. The president got up at the final [Solarium] meeting on July 16, after the others of us had presented our reports, and spoke about the whole range of these problems. He spoke, I must say, with a mastery of the subject matter and a thoughtfulness and a penetration that were quite remarkable. I came away from it with the conviction (which I have carried to this day) that President Eisenhower was a much more intelligent man than he was given credit for being. But like Foster [Dulles] (although in a different way) he didn't reveal [to the public] how discriminating and thoughtful a person he was or how well he could present all these things.

What he said on that occasion gave me the impression that in general he was prepared to accept the thesis we [Task Force A] had put forward, that our approach to the problem of the Soviet Union, as it had been followed in the immediately preceding years, was basically sound. This or that feature of it might be improved or altered, but [it was his view] that there was no need for a drastic change.

The thesis of my task force [was] that [the United States was] not really doing badly in the cold war, that its position had not deteriorated vis-à-vis that of the Soviet Union. The greatest apparent deterioration since 1945 was, to our mind, the communist revolution in China. But we pointed out that even then, the Chinese, in the normal course of things, would become more and more nationalistic and less and less available as a puppet for the Soviet Union.

All of that, I think, was accepted. So if the Solarium exercise had any effect, I would say that it was to clarify the general outlook of a new political administration and to prod a lot of people in the Washington bureaucracy—military and civilian—into taking a new look at the things we had been trying to do, to see whether they could improve on the previous performance. That was, as I see it, its immediate effect.

It's interesting to look at these papers thirty-four years later, and I think you learn a lot from them.

IMMERMAN: Thank you, Ambassador Kennan.

General Goodpaster, could you look at it from the point of view of Task Force C, which is probably a different perspective?

GOODPASTER: That's right. Well, first let me say I'm just delighted to have had the privilege to be here and to hear this exposition by George, which I highly commend to you. I think you [in the audience] have just spent some of the most valuable moments in your life of scholarship listening to what he had to say. George, once more, my profound congratulations!

How did I first learn about Solarium? Well, I had been a staff officer at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe—North Atlantic Treaty Organization [SHAPE] when then general Eisenhower set up the headquarters [in February 1951]. I had worked very, very closely with him on matters of security policy. This, of course, was with direct relation to military planning but in the context of what was then called the political-economic capabilities of the member nations. [I worked with] the famous "three wise men," Averell Harriman [from the U.S.], Jean Monnet [from France], and initially Hugh Gaitskell [from the UK], succeeded by Edwin Plowden. I was General Eisenhower's representative and liaison officer to that group and was brought into very close and continuous contact with him on issues of that kind. I remained, of course, in contact with him until he returned to the States in May of 1952 to run for the presidency.

He was succeeded by General [Matthew] Ridgway and then by General [Alfred] Gruenther, as the Supreme Allied Commander—the top NATO commander in Europe—and I stayed on as a staff officer in SHAPE.

I had occasion to come back to the States with General Gruenther, who was testifying before the Congress and seeing then President Eisenhower in April, perhaps early May, of 1953. While I was there, I went around to the White House to visit with some of my friends who had been at SHAPE—General Paul “Pete” Carroll, in particular, who was a staff assistant to Eisenhower at that time. I had lunch with him. And joining our table was [White House Special Assistant for National Security Affairs] Bobby Cutler, a Boston lawyer and banker who during World War II had risen to the rank of Army brigadier general.

The moment Pete Carroll introduced me to Bobby Cutler, Cutler's eyes opened up, and I could tell there was really something on his mind. We had an interesting conversation, but he did not reveal what was on his mind.

He told me in June when I came back to participate in the Solarium exercise, that at the time of the luncheon he had just come from a talk with Eisenhower, and Eisenhower was assigning individuals to each of these task forces by name and giving his reasons for doing so. And as Bobby Cutler told me (and as Eisenhower himself told me later when I came to join the White House staff, succeeding Pete Carroll, who died of a heart attack in 1954), President Eisenhower had put me on Task Force C. He wanted the “rollback” option thoroughly evaluated. He said he [Eisenhower] wanted somebody with some common sense (using his term—I don't claim that for myself) on Task Force C to see that they didn't go completely off in their analysis. I had had no particular prior association with the concept or policy of rollback, but I think that, indeed, was how I came to be on the Task Force C. I accepted the task that was given to me, which I understood to be for our group to take that line [rollback] and make the best case, the most persuasive case that we could for that policy. And we undertook, during this period George was describing, to do so.

It was very interesting to me to see how, as we got into specific planning and evaluation and beyond rhetoric—if I can use the term—our thinking became more precise and a great deal more modest than some of the earlier public statements had suggested.

Why do I think Eisenhower set up this group?

Incidentally, it got the name Solarium, Bobby Cutler and C. D. Jackson and me, because they had met with Eisenhower in the Solarium of the White House to talk about this idea and to begin to take it from an idea

toward a planning and evaluation exercise.

It was characteristic Eisenhower; he liked to have very thorough, comprehensive evaluations made, targeted on specific options and specific lines of policy. We went through all of this.

I would just add one point, George. I think that you were there when Foster Dulles came down, at least once and maybe twice, in the evening and met with us at General Lyman Lemnitzer's quarters there—Lemnitzer being a member of the task force that I was on—to discuss with us some of the questions that he had in mind. They included the background of the study, the kind of assumptions that we shared, and the ultimate purpose of the safeguarding of our security and the security of our freedom of decision and the security of the values that underlay our whole system of government and political culture. On that premise, [he asked] what would be the best route to try to pursue?

There had been in the air, for example, this idea of a date of maximum danger. We tried to reduce that to some more concrete and definite understanding. Our particular task force finally came down on the idea of a date when the Soviet Union could conceivably have sufficient atomic weapons and atomic power to do devastating damage to the United States or to pose very great threats to our allies in Europe. That was as close to a date of maximum danger that we ever came.

I, myself, had had a hand in the analysis of this when I was working as a staff officer with Eisenhower at SHAPE. We reversed the idea of a date of maximum danger, and I still held that view. My colleagues on my task force, I think, accepted that there was no real date of maximum danger; rather, there was a time when we would begin to come under that kind of threat [of nuclear attack] and that would provide a useful phase line for our analysis.

George, do you remember the phrase that Foster Dulles used during one of those evenings? He said, “What we are hoping for is a time when the Russians turn their ponies back to the East, as Genghis Khan had done so many centuries before.” We gave our presentations [on July 16], as George has described. [For] our particular one we broke it up and Admiral [Richard] Connolly, who served as the chairman of our group, gave our overall concept. That was followed by General Lemnitzer, who gave in more detail just what our proposed program would entail; and then I followed with some discussion of how it would be implemented within the government and some evaluation of the range of outcomes that we might expect. President Eisenhower told me later that he was appreciative of the rather sober assessment that our task force had come to and which it was my duty to present that day.

Now, I would add to what George has said, first of all, a phrase that he, himself, used in describing Eisenhower's summation, which was a tour de force that has stayed in my mind as well. George, who has this wonderful command of expression, said once to me in another group that Eisenhower showed his "intellectual ascendancy over every other man in the room on these issues." I would subscribe to that.

Now, what did he [Eisenhower] get out of this? Task Force B was never really a contender—the notion that you draw a line and that there is somehow a categorical moment when you unleash massive attack. It was well presented; General Jim McCormack headed that task force. It was as well presented as I think that idea could be presented, but it did not seem to command much support.

So what was left was the proposal around which Task Force A had made its report and the proposal around which Task Force C had made its report.

In the process of our [Task Force C's] evaluation, we had narrowed the lines of action that would be considered for the furthering of the rollback policy to political action plus possible covert action of many kinds. Noticeably missing was any idea of resort to military action which would have involved direct conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Even as thus confined, however, in Eisenhower's summation one could see the demise of the policy of rollback. I don't think, George, that we told him that day anything that he hadn't thought through before. But he now had the best work of these three groups on which he could draw, really, to put behind him the rhetoric of rollback which had been a part of that electoral campaign. I think in Eisenhower's fashion that was one of the things that he had intended to do.

Now he had added to the idea of passive containment the idea of political action and even some covert action aimed in particular at the Eastern European countries, which could be used to augment containment per se. I think that's what he really wanted our groups to do, when he asked that we stay on and produce a synthesis for the consideration of the National Security Council and for his consideration. There was real resistance to that, however, on the part of our groups.

We were exhausted, as I recall. We had been away from home a long time and had worked every day during that period. My recollection is that we started at 8 o'clock and broke for lunch briefly, and for dinner. We might have an hour of exercise in the afternoon but then worked until about midnight and had done that for about five weeks. That was

But another part was that, at least in the view of some members of our task force and I think the other task forces as well, there were differences of philosophical premise that entered into our reports. We thought that the product would be—I think someone used the term—mongrelized if we attempted in that way to combine it. He had hoped that that would be done, and, indeed, that was the task that he was going to pass back to the planning board [of the National Security Council] and into the government.

How did this serve him? I know that from the time when I came back to be a staff assistant to him in late 1954, from that time on we really had gone beyond the time of talking about rollback which would involve the use of force. That was, I think, the contribution—or one of the contributions—that he had sought. I think that Foster Dulles was quite satisfied with what we came up with. Because our exclusion of rather radical and, in my view, quite dangerous use of force—or use of the threat of force—was, I think, useful to Foster in terms of dealing with some of the talk and some of the proposals that were coming from the Pentagon at that time.

So those are the principal lines on which I would read this. And as I look back through the six and a half years that I spent with Eisenhower in the White House, this was the central line of policy on which he and Foster Dulles, in particular, guided the operations of the government over the remainder of his term in office.

IMMERMAN: We've not only seen demonstrations of tremendous recall but I also should commend all the participants. I sent them the reports in addition to a bunch of other documentation which I had hoped would not frighten them so much that they would refuse to participate. Not only did they not, but it's quite clear that they read all the material.

GOODPASTER: [It was the] first time I had seen it in thirty years.

IMMERMAN: That's right. We can perhaps echo [historian] Melvin Leffler's request that these materials continue to be declassified, since particularly [the full report of] Task Force C has just been made available within the last seven months.

I'm going to come to Mr. Bowie very soon. Evidently when the Solarium [participants] finally were able to go home and get some sleep, he began to lose his, trying to synthesize [the various reports] without mongrelizing them.

If I can return for a moment to that July 16 briefing which you both comment on, the masterful performance by the president in summing up. [I would mention that] one of the other aspects of that briefing evidently took place right at the beginning. The president referred to the striking similarities and parallels among the different reports. [Then] the task force members themselves, and particularly A and C, focused on what were to be irreconcilable differences between the two reports—particularly concerning the perception of the Soviet threat. That perception was, I think, defined more in terms of intentions than capabilities—which, of course, is always the most difficult aspect of threat perception.

And I wonder if both or either of you would like to comment on why the president would have focused on or discussed those similarities when the discussion then really revolved around the differences. I also [wonder] whether those different threat perceptions were, in fact, part of the tasks themselves or whether those different perceptions came through the process of your deliberations. I assume you had access to similar intelligence material.

GOODPASTER: Let me give my view and I'm very hopeful that George can add to that—because, just speaking for myself, I frankly didn't see all that much difference in threat perception. And the longer we worked, the closer we drew together. When we eliminated that date of maximum danger and simply talked about the rise in their atomic capability, I would say that narrowed very greatly any difference.

There would have been, I think, some differences within the task forces—within our own task force, for example, as well as between individuals in the various task forces—as to the likelihood and the effectiveness of possible Soviet brandishing of an atomic capability or use of an atomic capability. I think most of us—this would be my recollection—were very dubious that the Soviets would undertake an aggressive use of force against us.

We saw the dangers more as possible division between ourselves and our allies. Also, weakness, particularly in France, had been and was still a matter of very grave concern to us, as well as the really difficult, complicated problems raised by the situation of Germany. We had very good evidence of the intensity of view that was held by the Soviets with regard to the future of Germany.

That's about the way I recall it, and I think that's about the way we assessed it then. But I have to say that there were differences among the members of our team. I'm not sure that even today I'm allowed to

identify by name the representative who came to us from the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], but he was disposed to see this whole confrontation in much harsher terms, I think, than some of the rest of us. [He saw] the necessity for more vigorous and more assertive action on our part. But that difference was not so much between Task Force C and the other tasks forces as between one individual and another.

IMMERMAN: If I can just add something and perhaps you could address that and then, Mr. Kennan, perhaps you can recall.

I remember in Task Force C the argument was put forward that time was on the side of the Soviet Union, and that, therefore—although there was perhaps not the year of maximum danger—more forceful steps needed to be taken. My impression is that Team A did not see it that way and, in fact, tended to perceive time on the side of the United States as long as certain policies could be continued. And that seems to be the point that is emphasized when the term "irreconcilable differences" is used.

GOODPASTER: Let me say that—again, I'm just trying to pull this back from memory—I think we did see a time of some increased danger, that we were indeed entering a time of increased danger. Nobody was avoiding that. We were getting into a nuclear world. That's what it amounted to, with major policy issues and confrontations still existing between us and the Soviet Union.

So that was a matter [about] which we indeed were concerned. But even in our task force I think we had the feeling that over a longer period of time the political system—the political culture of the West—would prove to be superior and that the political culture and system and particularly the police-state controls that existed [and] on which the Soviet system depended were inherently vulnerable to erosion over a long period of time.

So we had this increase in danger, but we also, I think, had the confidence then that over a long period of time ours would prove to be the stronger system.

George?

KENNAN: I have the same impression that General Goodpaster did. I don't think the differences really were all that great. There are elements of the views of both task forces. A and C, which had been present in the policies up to that time and which continued to be present afterwards. They were not mutually exclusive. As to this question of the time of

maximum danger: [historian] John Gaddis—who is here and may speak to this himself later—mentioned this to me this afternoon. I had forgotten about it. It was quite true. This concept first appeared, I believe, in NSC 68. With that paper and with [Paul] Nitze's approach to things generally, I disagreed at the time.

One of the reasons for my leaving the staff [Policy Planning Staff of the State Department] at the end of 1949 was my disagreement with NSC 68. I had the very strong feeling that the Russians were not going to attack us but that, on the other hand, the strength of their armed forces, the disparity between theirs and ours, was a reality and would not go away. It would remain a reality for an indefinite time, and our plans ought not be laid toward an ostensible "peak of maximum danger." They ought to be laid, in the military sense, in such a way as to endure for many, many years into the future as a permanent fixture of our policy.

I'd just like to say one more thing that I hadn't really realized before, but this discussion now enlightens me about it. I now see more clearly why this exercise was held at the time it was held.

Yes, a pattern of response to the phenomenon of the Soviet Union—what was then called the Soviet threat—a pattern of response to this had, of course, been formed under the preceding, Democratic administration. It had been quite clearly formed.

And I see now that General Eisenhower didn't want to take this over without critical examination. He couldn't just say, "Because Truman and Acheson thought that this was the way things ought to be, I accept all of this automatically." He felt it the duty of a new administration to have a new look at all of this, to see how far it was valid or where it had weak points.

And I suspect that the whole purpose, really, of the Solarium exercise was to have this kind of a review and to decide how much of the old Democratic policy it would be permissible for him to take over and how it should be prepared and brought forward to the American public.

GOODPASTER: Let me add just one more point on what George has just said, if I may.

On thinking back, I believe that in later times I explicitly discussed this with Eisenhower. But in any case it was quite characteristic of his way of doing business. He wanted to get, as we came later to express it, ~~all~~ of the responsible people in the room, [have them] take up the issues and hear their views. He had what amounted to a tacit rule that ~~there could be no~~ nonconcurrency through silence. If somebody didn't

agree, he was obliged to speak his mind and get it all out on the table or [directly to him] in the Oval Office. And then in light of all of that, the president would come to a line of action. He wanted everybody to hear it, everybody to participate in it. And then he wanted everybody to be guided by it.

This exercise, indeed, did help to serve that purpose because, as you say, the cabinet officers were there, the Joint Chiefs were there, [and] at the planning level, the assistant secretaries were there. I think there were probably sixty or seventy people in the room, either including or in addition to the twenty-odd members of our group. They were all there. They all heard his summary, and I think we had a pretty clear line then that we were able to follow from that time on.

IMMERMAN: Mr. Bowie.

BOWIE: Well, my participation took place in three ways. First, I had just shortly before come down to join the administration as the head of the Policy Planning Staff [of the State Department] when Solarium was germinating, just about that time. So in an informal way I was asked to join the little group that was planning it. I did not become a member of it, as I recall. But, in any event, I sat in to help in formulating the alternative possible courses that we would like to see examined. And then I had very little to do with it in the period in which the teams were actually working.

Second, I participated by attending the presentation and, as Andy [Goodpaster] says, they had all the cabinet officers, all the principal military people, assistant secretaries from the departments who had any possible interest, the members of the Planning Board [of the NSC], and I think a few additional people like that.

My feeling was that the purposes were pretty much what has been described. But, just to repeat, I think there were really three.

One was a general reexamination. I think in general, Eisenhower essentially felt the containment policy was virtually the only feasible one. But it had been somewhat clouded by NSC 68, which, as I see it, was a brief to induce Truman to break the \$13 billion ceiling which he had placed on military forces. I think the "period of maximum danger" was to try to make him face up to it and not be able to say, "Well, we'll put it off a little."

I don't mean that people like Paul Nitze didn't really believe [the] analysis, but it also fits in with the notion of forcing Truman to raise the

defense budget, which all the other members of the administration felt was necessary. This was in '50.

And then Korea [the North Korean aggression] had opened up the question of how to deal with the peripheral areas, particularly as the public support for the defense of Korea ebbed away and presented the question of: how do you fit the political with the military need?

So I think Eisenhower wanted a review, a general look at the situation and what would be an appropriate strategy to deal with it.

Second, I think—and I believe this was true all through the NSC process—he wanted to educate the people who were going to be involved in any way. He wanted them to hear the arguments. He wanted them to learn the background by hearing these experts expound it and by having the reports. And then he wanted them to hear him say, "This is the way it's going to be."

And, finally, I think he did want to bury the rollback idea. I don't think it was ever serious. But it had been in the campaign, and it had been talked about and there had been a lot of people, particularly [in the] press, who said, "Well, this is what's going to be different." I think he wanted to make that clearly a thing of the past and finish it.

As I say, all I heard was the final presentations. The president said they were remarkable in their clarity and the way in which they laid out the problem.

After that and after the false start of asking the members of the task force to find some common ground, the whole thing was turned over to the Planning Board, along with the [so-called] New Look report from the Joint Chiefs [of Staff]. I think that was [from] what was called the Sequoia exercise—the Joint Chiefs' new look at the question of military structure and strategy. And the planning board worked on this, as you said, for a period of nearly six weeks or certainly a month and attempted to build on what had been in the task force reports—particularly Task Force A, which was pretty much recognized as the principal basis on which the president had come down. That was the one that George [Kennan] had presided over, which was essentially a modification or updating of containment [the Truman Doctrine announced in March 1947] to the situation as it was then perceived.

Then it was necessary to integrate into this the views about the New Look with respect to military forces. The result was NSC 162/2, which was finally approved October 30 [1953].

And I think if you read that over, it's not a bad document, even today, in pretty well laying out a fairly realistic appraisal of the situation. And it seems to me much less exaggerated in its analysis than what was

later claimed to be the general approach of the administration at the beginning.

For example, just let me call your attention to some of the assessments. In assessing the Soviet threat, there was a flat statement that there was very little chance of any deliberate Soviet attack or any desire of the Soviets for a general war, that the only way that was likely to happen was by mistake or miscalculation. It was assumed, however, that the Soviets would try all the other things which were possible to try to expand their area of influence.

Second, it was asserted that there was firm control of the satellites which wasn't likely to be shaken in any near term despite the uprising which had taken place in East Germany in June [1953].

Third, there was a flat statement that Communist China was not likely to have its regime shaken in the absence of some general war.

And finally it was stated that the USSR/Chinese alliance was firm. But I think what's interesting was the statement this early that with the death of Stalin and the Korean truce, Communist China, though limited by present military and economic dependence on the USSR, may tend more to emphasize its own interests. In the long run, basic differences may strain or break the alliance, but at that time it seems to be firmly established.

This is in keeping, it seemed to me, with the general idea that containment meant you were counting on forces of change—natural forces, nationalism, internal social change, and the like.

With respect to military capability, as I say, NSC 162/2 adopted the New Look, which stressed the necessity for the capacity for massive retaliation [but] at the same time the necessity for flexible mobile forces which could be moved to areas which might be threatened. This was an effort to find a way out of the box of the Korean War, to avoid meeting aggression necessarily at the point where the aggression occurred.

I think Dulles felt he had contributed the concept of having mobile forces which would be available to punish aggression, but not necessarily by massive retaliation.

Third, stress—heavy stress—was placed on the absolute necessity of allies and the fact that there were many strains on the allies which would have to be dealt with in order to keep the alliance cohesive.

There is another thing that is, I think, quite interesting. It was, after all, the middle of '53. The [Solarium report] stressed the desirability or the necessity, despite the hostility, of trying to seek agreements with the Soviet Union wherever it might be possible. These could deal with

specific problems or should deal, if possible, with arms control, reduction of armaments, or reduction of [the] military threat as long as it could be verified.

Then with respect to the uncommitted areas, there was pretty clear recognition that they were antagonistic to the West. For historical reasons [they] were unwilling to commit themselves in very large part, and yet their orderly development was important to the situation [in] the West. The West [accordingly] should make an attempt to assist them in both their political and their economic evolution.

And then I think perhaps one of the most important points was the awareness that the American monopoly [in] nuclear weapons or its predominance in nuclear weapons was not going to last—that this was already beginning to erode and that this would change the situation.

And the last paragraph of this whole document says: "The foregoing conclusions are valid only so long as the United States maintains a retaliatory capability that cannot be neutralized by surprise Soviet attack." There was stress on the fact that the Soviets would be getting increasingly greater nuclear capability but that [this] did not necessarily mean they would be able to neutralize the American capability. The last sentence is, "Therefore, there must be continuing examination and periodic report in regard to the likelihood of such neutralization of U.S. retaliatory capability."

So essentially the Planning Board took Task Force A's report as a base [and] introduced into it the military strategy and structure which came from elsewhere. I don't think there was any inclusion or any significant inclusion of the idea of drawing the line [across which Soviet or communist influence or power would be tantamount to a declaration of war] in the sense in which it was used in Task Force B. There was a drawing of the line through the making of the succession of pacts which were not seen at the time as duplications of NATO. NATO was seen as creating an effective military capability. The others were really just seen as drawing the line against aggression.

But they were not drawing the line in the sense of asserting that there would be general war if it was crossed. This is where the flexible capability came in. It was expected that if the perimeter was crossed in any area except the NATO area, that they would deal with it via flexible mobile capability rather than a repetition of [the] Korea [intervention].

And, finally, I think Task Force C was not accepted at all. Thank you.

Questions and Statements from the Floor

PROFESSOR JOHN LEWIS GADDIS: Well, I want to ask about another document that hasn't been mentioned yet. I think this is one of these Duck Island memoranda by Dulles, I'm not sure. This is Dulles's memorandum of September 6, 1953, now published in *Foreign Relations [of the United States]*. It is the one in which he calls for an eventual mutual withdrawal of Soviet and American forces from Europe. This is the anticipation of Ambassador Kennan's Reith Lecture position, but five years earlier—which, I must say, really amazed me the first time I saw this document out in the archives. This is September 6, 1953. It's about a month and a half after the presentation of the task forces but before NSC 162/2.

From what I can tell—and the documentation on this has not been published in *Foreign Relations*—this idea for a mutual withdrawal from Europe was actually incorporated into some of the early discussions of the Atoms-for-Peace speech [by Eisenhower at the United Nations on December 8, 1953], but [the idea] was finally shot down on a couple of grounds.

Eisenhower raises the position that to talk about withdrawal from Europe at this point might make the allies nervous.

Bob Bowie makes a very interesting point. On the one hand, you're talking about withdrawal of American bases from Europe, but on the other hand, you're talking about the New Look—which is increasing reliance on nuclear deterrents. The deterrent is forward based, which requires the presence of bases in Europe. How can you have one without the other? You can't do one without destroying the other.

And then Dulles develops reservations about this [withdrawal concept] because of EDC [the advent of the European Defense Community] and, again, [the view that] it's a bad idea to discuss it. So it then gets relegated to something like a long-term aspiration.

But I would like to ask our three participants—and particularly Bob Bowie, since he figures in the documentation on this—what he remembers about this particular Dulles initiative, which was also very far-reaching in its implications.

BOWIE: My memory of this is not what I would call sharp, but I think I can try to tell you a little bit about how it fit in.

It actually didn't figure, as I recall it, at all in the preparation of NSC 162. It was something that was related entirely to a separate line of activity in connection with Atoms-for-Peace. . . . The Atoms-for-Peace exercise went on virtually through all of 1953 before the actual delivery

of the speech at the UN [United Nations] in December of 1953. Acheson, some months before the end of the Truman administration, had named a committee headed by [J. Robert] Oppenheimer [scientific director of the Manhattan Project] with Mac [McGeorge] Bundy [later, President John F. Kennedy's special assistant for national security affairs] as executive secretary to do a study of American positions towards arms control. I think they were expected to come up with proposals.

The report was delivered, I think, about the day Truman left the White House, and so it was really on the desk of President Eisenhower. He took quite an interest in it and had discussions with Oppenheimer and, indeed, encouraged Oppenheimer to write an article for *Foreign Affairs*, which Oppenheimer did in June of 1953. It essentially summarized the conclusions of this report.

The report provided very little in the way of any effective proposals for arms control. But it stressed the image of the two scorpions in the bottle—that the Soviet Union within a very few years would have the great nuclear capability and each side would be able to destroy the other. And this point—the fact of the emerging Soviet capability—was indeed picked up, so to speak, in NSC 162. The report also had said that this reality was such a major element that the United States government, [meaning] the president, ought to launch something called Operation Candor, which would make the public aware of the enormous threat from any kind of a general nuclear war. So Eisenhower asked C. D. Jackson, who was there in the White House—he was from Time-Life [Corporation] and a publicist—to prepare a series of possible talks for this purpose. And Jackson went at it with a will and worked out a plan for six or eight speeches, all of which had the general effect of simply saying, “We face a horrendous future with the prospect of total annihilation.” Ike was not prepared to make a set of speeches which merely focused on that ominous threat. He said, “What can I say about what we can do about it?” And so that led to a series of efforts to try different ways of having something positive to say about it.

In about September one thought that was thrown out was, “Well, maybe we should suggest that we should try for a grand solution, a grand settlement.” And while I don't remember the Dulles outline on the yellow pad, I would suppose it [the mutual withdrawal proposal] was almost surely a result of that effort.

Anyway, I remember well talking with Dulles about the subject. The State Department was asked to prepare a draft laying out what we would propose for some grand settlement. And so then the task fell to [the State Department] Policy Planning Staff to try to put together a

draft. Well, what it amounted to was essentially suggesting readiness to negotiate on a whole range of things but not wanting to be precise about exactly what you would be willing to do or settle for and not knowing really whom you were offering it to. The Soviet leadership was still in flux after Stalin, and their policies, as we saw them, were just holding policies. They had not responded to the speech by Eisenhower in the middle of April [“The Chance for Peace” speech], essentially saying, “Can't we go for arms control, end this wasteful spending on armaments?” And so a [mutual withdrawal] proposal was kind of shooting into the void, without knowing how far to go or really how to lay it out. I'll admit that the result was not a document I was very proud of.

And then when it was turned over to the Planning Board, they took potshots at it and very effectively. And so this course was more or less recognized as a nonstarter: that you just couldn't lay out some grand settlement at that stage without either rocking the boat on our side or giving your hand away or whatever else. So I think that's where that died.

And then just about the same time Eisenhower himself came up with an idea in September. He had been off, I think, in Denver, and came back to Washington for a few days. He wrote a little note to Jackson and, I think, [Lewis] Strauss [Atomic Energy Committee chairman] saying, “Why couldn't we make a proposal under which both sides turned over some amount of fissionable material to the UN or some other common body in order to gradually reduce the nuclear capability?” We [then] could avoid what was recognized as a very serious problem—the whole problem of verification—because whatever was turned over, there it was.

And, of course, it was easy to say, “Well, that doesn't affect the real situation much.” He understood that thoroughly. What he said was, “Look, we've got a lot more than they've got, so we can certainly make a good gesture as a minimum; and, second, it might even have the effect of opening up discussions. It might just be a starter. It might be a foot in the door, even if it isn't terribly significant in and of itself.” There was a real doubt about how to get a discussion started since the grand speech in the middle of April hadn't gotten any response. Maybe a small step which was not very controversial and not very significant, coupled with the idea of an international atomic agency, would start the process and highlight that there was an international problem that ought to be dealt with that way.

So that idea ultimately was incorporated in the speech, after going through the ABC's to vet it. That basic component was originated by

Eisenhower himself, after having explored the other possible ways of doing something positive. And that was what was [being] proposed in the Atoms-for-Peace [address].

PROFESSOR RICHARD CHALLENGER: I was struck very much the first time I read that by the timing. I'm wondering if you feel that the actual event of the East German uprising—the problems that that raised for rollback and things like that in the late spring of '53—had any impact upon your thinking at the time and may in some way have contributed to the outcome.

And, secondly, the thing which has intrigued, I think, all of us—why is it only today, the last few weeks, [that] Task Force C [s full report] has been declassified? Why is it, of all the documents, so to speak, of the early years of Eisenhower, that this has been the one which has had the most closely guarded secrecy and that you still feel, for example, that you can't mention the name of an individual who was involved?

IMMERMAN: Mr. Bowie knows that for the last . . . I don't know how long, I've been trying to get the Planning Board papers that went into this. For reasons that have never been explained they are not even undergoing review at this point. That's one of the reasons that we've had such a difficult time with the paper flow.

Would anyone like to perhaps discuss, first of all, the possible impact of the East German uprising, and [whether] the death of Stalin would be involved, also.

GOODPASTER: Let me speak very briefly first about the release of Task Force C [materials].

I don't know—since nobody called me and asked me whether it should be released or not—but my speculation is that it was slow in being released because it did have a large covert operations section. You may notice there are quite a number of pages blanked out. Now, much of that had quite a creative aspect to it, I have to say. But that may very well be why.

Now, on the two things, the death of Stalin and the German uprising—the decision had been taken to establish this exercise before the German uprising. We did learn of the uprising while we were engaged in our study, and it concentrated the mind a good deal that here you had something rather concrete. As a result, one began to think it through in rather realistic terms, rather than in some flight of imagination. You saw

what the practical limitations were in terms of really doing something significant about it.

As to the death of Stalin—again this is speculation—but I think I do recall some comment about that having been discussed and that discussion possibly having had a relation to the creation of the Solarium exercise. Bob may know. I don't know if you [looking toward Bowie] were down with the administration by the time Stalin died, but my impression is the administration did a great deal of floundering around trying to see what the significance of that might be in terms of U.S. interests and U.S. actions. That's as I've had it reflected to me. But I was not there to participate in that.

KENNAN: One thing I'd like to add is that the Team A task force does specifically refer to the death of Stalin and of the possible impact that will have on East/West relations. Team B, if I remember, does not refer to it at all; and Task Force C has only a fleeting reference to it. But for Team A, it definitely does play a major role.

BOWIE: Well, I should have mentioned the death of Stalin as one of the initiating causes [of the Solarium study]. It was assumed at least that with his death there ought to be a fresh look at what should be our policy and whether there should be any change. But I think it's fair to say that judgments were pretty much up in the air at the time, as to whether it had made a change and if so, what. You had the immediate creation of what was claimed to be collective leadership. But I think most of our experts took the view of [Llewellyn] Tommy Thompson, that there was just no way of knowing how stable this collective leadership would be or which of these people, if any, would be the ones who emerged as ultimate leaders. And you remember they went through several sequences from [Georgi] Malenkov and then [Nicholai] Bulganin and finally [Nikita] Khrushchev. And it took a period of practically three years before they really settled on who was in charge.

So there was uncertainty as to exactly what would be the leadership and also what difference it might make. But I don't doubt at all that the death of Stalin was one additional reason for this exercise.

Second, as to the uprisings, they were referred to in NSC 162. Paragraph 5 refers to the recent uprising and unrest in other satellites, which shows the failure of the Soviets to fully subjugate these people or destroy their desire for freedom. And these events necessarily placed internal and psychological strain on the Soviet leadership. Nevertheless, it concluded that the ability of the USSR to exercise effective control over and to

exploit the resources of the European satellites had not been appreciably reduced and was not likely to be so long as the USSR maintained adequate military forces in the area.

So I think that while the uprising was seen as proof that these underlying forces and ferment and nationalism were there, they were not thought at that point or in the near future to be likely to undermine Soviet control.

IMMERMAN: We are beginning to run out of time so if there are a couple of quick additional questions. Jennifer?

Ms. JENNIFER LAURENDEAU: This will be very quick. One of the issues that was very dear to General Eisenhower's heart was somehow gaining control over the defense budget. I wondered, given the outcome of the Solarium report, whether it's your sense at all that that was something he hoped perhaps to use to help him in that effort, or whether you think he might have thought in those terms even earlier.

GOODPASTER: He wanted us to have a look at the questions of military posture—military force, the composition of military force, and the cost of military force. But I don't think he was [thinking of Solarium] as a major assistance to him in his control and direction of the military budget and the military program. He had taken those on quite directly in his talks with Admiral Radford and the Joint Chiefs and Secretary [Charles E.] Wilson in [the Defense Department]. He and Senator [Robert A.] Taft had clashed very strongly over Eisenhower's idea of maintaining some enduring respectable posture of defense. Senator Taft had wanted to cut way back on the defense establishment, following the conflict in Korea. And Eisenhower had had to oppose that and did, with the idea and the argument that the worst thing possible was the kind of stop-and-start fluctuation that we had seen in the past—feast or famine, cutting way back and then getting into crash programs and that kind of thing.

I think he would have been surprised at—and would not have accepted—any idea of a large buildup or crash program. He didn't find it necessary to reject it, because that wasn't, indeed, being proposed. But he had really taken that whole set of issues on separately and was relying on his judgment and his experience.

You may know that he put together the first integrated budget after unification [of the armed services under the National Military Establishment in 1947] for President Truman. Truman had called him

down from Columbia University to do that. There's more of a story than that, but essentially he had that background, and he never lacked confidence as to his superior knowledge and readiness to make decisions about the level of the military budget, that it should be lower than the military people wanted and higher than Senator Taft and some of the others in the Congress were proposing.

IMMERMAN: Mr. Bowie.

BOWIE: I just want to confirm what Andy said from having been there. I think if you look at the *Foreign Relations*, volumes for 1952–4, you'll find there was a succession of meetings with the military leaders and with Wilson and very much with [Secretary of Treasury George] Humphrey. One of the things that does stand out—and is, in fact, reproduced in NSC 162—are the two facets of national security right from the very beginning. One is to meet the Soviet threat to U.S. security. The other is doing so without seriously weakening the U.S. economy or undermining our fundamental values. And Eisenhower felt it absolutely essential to set a level of spending which you could maintain indefinitely without doing damage, as he saw it, to the economy.

And, as Andy says, if you look at those meetings I think you'll see he had full confidence in his own judgment as to the level of military spending. He didn't give Humphrey everything he wanted either. And he stuck with what he thought was a reasonable balance, aiming initially at—I think it was—about forty plus billion after the Korean war, which had left some legacy of unspent appropriations.

And so he was able to use those funds without getting quite the same level of future appropriations. But then he hoped to bring it down to somewhere, I think, near around thirty-five [billion dollars].

GOODPASTER: Thirty-five was the figure.

BOWIE: But I don't think in practice he succeeded quite in doing that. I think really the defense budget fluctuated around forty most of the time. But anyway, that's the general thrust.

End of Session