

Nuclear Energy: Opportunities and Problems

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Forty years ago, in December 1942, in a laboratory under the stands at Alonzo Stagg Stadium in Chicago, an international team of engineers and scientists created the first sustained and controlled nuclear chain reaction. Their success that night changed the world for all time. And it brought to the world some of its most awesome opportunities and some of its gravest problems. Their work opened many doors and afforded opportunities for good things—to light our cities, to power our factories, to diagnose and cure the illnesses of mankind. But their work also made possible the manufacture of nuclear explosives and brought problems we still are wrestling with today. And that is what I want to talk about tonight—the opportunities and the problems we have before us and what they may mean for the future of the nuclear industry, the people of the world, and ultimately the future of life on our planet.

From the dawn of this new age, U.S. policy has had two fundamental objectives. From the first, we have tried to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons. At the same time, we have continuously sought to make the peaceful benefits of nuclear energy—the most astounding technology of the age—available for all mankind. Those twin goals are enumerated in the statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and they are enshrined in the Nonproliferation Treaty. They are not mutually exclusive; indeed, they are compatible and complementary. Those goals are the goals of the Reagan Administration today.

Some have alleged that this Administration does not have a nonproliferation policy. Nothing could be further from the truth. President Reagan articulated in clear, unmistakable terms in July 1981 the policy of this Administration—a policy which has been pursued ever since. But let me emphasize that the policy of this Administration is not a radical departure from that of the past.

In historic terms, the dual goals we profess today were the bases of the Atoms for Peace program which President Eisenhower announced in his December 1953 address to the U.N. General Assembly. That program was undertaken at a time when we possessed a virtual monopoly on peaceful nuclear technology. But we believed then, as we

still believe, that the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy should be available for all the peoples of the world. It also has been true from the outset that all must share in the commitment and the burden to assure against its potential problems. Thus, we sought in the Atoms for Peace program to create an international regime that could, in an orderly way, begin to deal not only with the opportunities of nuclear energy but with its problems as well.

Nonproliferation Position

We do not believe that nuclear power necessarily means nuclear bombs. Rather our position is founded on the notion that the peaceful use of nuclear power does not, per se, present a proliferation risk. This is the bargain implicit in the nuclear nonproliferation treaty—that nations which renounce the idea of nuclear weapons can and should enjoy the benefits of nuclear power. I regret that this relationship has been widely misinterpreted and misunderstood. Some allege that this implies nuclear commerce conducted without regard to its potential problems and dangers. They would argue that thus our policy is critically flawed. Perhaps this misunderstanding arises because the thesis is not a simple one; perhaps because we have not explained our position well enough. Whatever the reason, I repeat, this is a misunderstanding of our objectives and of our policy.

Our strong commitment to the goal of preventing further proliferation rests on the very valid—I think indisputable—notation that the spread of nuclear weapons to additional nations could eventually mean the end of world order as we know it. The spread of nuclear weapons endangers not only American security interests, it is equally threatening to the security and well-being of every country on Earth—a fact which they should understand.

To realize our nonproliferation objectives, as President Reagan has made clear, we are working to inhibit the spread of sensitive technologies, facilities, or material, particularly where there is a danger of proliferation. We also are working with other suppliers to strengthen the international rules of nuclear trade. These steps are important elements in our policy, but it would be a mistake to think that the policy could rest on export controls alone. They can buy time. But we must use that time wisely to get at the causes and not simply the symptoms of proliferation.

There are many countries today—especially the highly developed industrial nations—which could produce nuclear explosives if they chose to do so. But they do not for a number of diverse reasons. Their security does not require it, their perceived political interests do not warrant it, or their domestic political opinion will not accept it. The basic causes of proliferation, in other words, are not present.

Yet, we cannot be blind to the fact that there are serious proliferation risks in several regions of the world. Where there is such a risk, this Administration is trying to get at the root causes which might impel a nation to embark on a weapons program. We seek to improve regional stability and to lessen tensions and security concerns. We must try to convince those who might be bent on such a course that acquisition of nuclear weaponry will not promote their security. For the plain truth is the opposite: The further spread of nuclear weapons will not enhance anyone's security. Instead, it will promote instability and rivalry, and it could lead to tragic miscalculations for all.

Where animosities are old and stubborn, the lessening of regional tensions is an exceedingly difficult task. But, we must use the tools we have—political, diplomatic, security—to assuage old passions, to reduce those tensions, and to foster a stable order.

The Nonproliferation Treaty and the Latin American treaty of Tlatelolco are critical instruments in the attack on the causes of proliferation—116 non-nuclear-weapons states today adhere to the Nonproliferation Treaty and 22 countries have embraced Tlatelolco. Thus, an overwhelming majority of nations in the world accept the idea that renouncing nuclear explosives is entirely compatible with and, indeed, essential to their security. We can and will continue our strenuous efforts to achieve universal adherence to the Nonproliferation Treaty and full implementation of Tlatelolco.

To achieve our nonproliferation goals, we must also maintain a position as a leading and reliable nuclear exporter. For only from this position can we expect to influence international standards and norms in a way consistent with our own nonproliferation goals.

We reject the unilateral approach of yesteryear because, in a word, times have changed. America can no longer call the shots by itself. We no longer possess a monopoly on nuclear technology. Common sense tells us that we must

take this fact into account as we fashion our policies. We must view the world as it is; not as it once was; not as we would like it to be in our imaginings. This realistic view will, I suggest, better help us to achieve our nonproliferation goals.

It follows then that we are seeking to insure that our domestic nuclear industry can compete on a fair and equitable basis with the nuclear industries of other supplier nations. But this must be a cooperative effort. For a refusal to recognize the existence of very real proliferation risks and the sacrifice of nonproliferation goals in the pursuit of commercial and economic advantage cannot be the policy of any responsible state.

Support for the IAEA

As we recognized both the opportunities and the problems of nuclear energy, we also saw the need 25 years ago for an agency which could address both. Since its beginnings, we have vigorously supported and relied heavily on the International Atomic Energy Agency. For most of these 25 years the IAEA worked quietly and effectively.

But as with many such institutions, its growth and development have not come without some pain, some dissidence. Unfortunately, political concerns which motivate nations, and which often excite great passions and rhetorical flourish, intrude. So it has been in recent years in Vienna. Increasingly, political concerns, which we and many others believe to be extraneous to the mission and purposes of the agency, began to corrode the atmosphere of its deliberations. Pressures mounted last year, but sensible heads prevailed and accommodations were found.

Unfortunately, at the agency's general conference last September, a majority of member states violated the statute and illegally rejected the credentials of another member state. The U.S. delegation withdrew from the conference, as it was pledged to do, and we began a serious, thorough assessment of the nature and extent of our participation in the agency. I cannot tell you tonight what the outcome of the reassessment will be, but I can share with you some thoughts about how the problem looks to us.

Let us recall why the IAEA came to be. As its statute makes clear, the agency has two equally important goals:

First, to encourage the peaceful uses of nuclear energy so as to realize

that technology's enormous potential benefits mankind; and

Second, to provide effective international safeguards against the misuse of the technology.

Each of these missions is vital. Together they give the institution its philosophical underpinnings. The member states are pledged to accept and support each of these missions. But the agency cannot achieve its dual goals if extraneous political issues divert attention from its legitimate tasks, generate controversy and confrontation, and sap its effectiveness. Nor can the agency function effectively if its members are willing to violate its statute, as when they illegally rejected a member state's credentials. That is why we are so concerned about what has been happening in Vienna culminating in the events of this past September.

The agency, after all, is the sum of its membership. It is a democratic institution, governed by democratic principles. If the members do not support and abide by the principles in its statute, if they are unwilling to rededicate themselves to those principles, the institution will inexorably decline.

We have strongly supported the agency from its earliest beginnings. We continue to hope that it can live up to the promise of its founding, bringing the benefits of the peaceful atom to the world under an effective safeguards regime. To make that possible—and so to assure that its next 25 years can be as fruitful as the first 25—a renewed dedication to that goal by all of its members is essential. If, on the contrary, the trend toward heightened extraneous political debate cannot be reversed, the IAEA's future may be bleak.

The stakes are considerable. Effective international safeguards are an important component of the international nonproliferation regime. The IAEA's technical assistance program helps a growing number of countries. And international nuclear commerce, as we understand it today, depends in no small measure on the success of this agency. I mean this in real terms but also in terms of the perceptions of the political authorities around the world. If the agency is seen to be weak, divided, and inconstant; if its actions are seen to be inconsistent with its statute, then questions inevitably will arise about the agency's ability to carry out its work—about our ability to prevent the misuse of this powerful force. From that time forward, more efforts will be devoted to restraining commerce, more

issues of reliability will arise, and it will be all the more difficult to realize the atom's peaceful benefits. The efforts of nearly three decades will be jeopardized.

In the final analysis, it really comes down to the attitude of the member states. We have reached a critical turning point in the history of the IAEA. The members must now decide which course the agency will pursue. For our part, we want to see the IAEA reinvigorated and refocused on the principles on which it was founded.

Our objective is now, as it always has been, an independent agency in which the international community can continue to repose its confidence, an agency that can be relied upon to carry out faithfully the purposes enumerated in its statute. Achieving that requires a change in the attitudes of many members. And it requires a commitment from all members, not just a few, to the fundamental principles on which the institution was created. That is a tall order, but one which we believe can be achieved. That is our objective.

which have solemnly renounced nuclear weaponry by adhering to the Nonproliferation Treaty. Striking that balance, I am optimistic. I believe that there is still a solid basis for hope. I do not believe that a world with many more nuclear powers is inevitable. That notion, in my view, is the counsel of despair. Widespread nuclear proliferation is avoidable. But to accomplish that goal requires skill, common sense, and careful diplomacy; and hard work, I might add.

It is not, as I'm sure you will agree, a simple issue. It is not, and should not be, a partisan issue. It does not lend itself to speedy solutions in neat little packages. The solutions we seek cannot be reduced to catchy slogans. Achieving our nonproliferation goals requires patience and sober, deliberate action. It requires cooperation with our friends and allies, firmness with our adversaries. It requires support for sensible long-term goals and policies of our government by industry and public alike even where there may be some short-term seeming

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Future Prospects

What about the future? Is there a basis for optimism? I say emphatically: "Yes." Twenty years ago, many academics and even some policymakers seriously anticipated a world with 25 to 30 nuclear-weapons states by the beginning of the 1980s. Although technical capabilities have slowly spread, those gloomy forecasts, thank heaven, have not come to pass.

Instead, today there are only five¹ declared nuclear-weapons states, and India has carried out a so-called peaceful nuclear explosion. Against that, there are 116 states, as I mentioned earlier,

disadvantage or setback. We must stand together in this effort for there are no quick fixes or short-term palliatives. What we do today will have its effects for decades to come.

As we are committed to see the fulfillment of the promise of nuclear energy, so too are we committed to assuring that the essential safeguards and nonproliferation controls are in place. But our objectives cannot be achieved by fiat or by unilateral action on our part alone. Only through the shared commitment and cooperative efforts of nations working together can we succeed. But succeed we must.

¹ Of these, the United States, United Kingdom, and U.S.S.R. are parties to the Nonproliferation Treaty. ■