

## News Conference by Henry Kissinger (22 June 1973)

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## News Conference of Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, on the U.S. Soviet Agreement. (June 22, 1973)

Ladies and gentlemen, let me put this agreement first in its context, describe what it is seeking to achieve, and then go through its specific provisions, a little bit of its history, and then I will take your questions.

The principal goal of the foreign policy of this Administration ever since 1969 has been to set up what the President has called a structure of peace, by which we mean an international system less geared to the management of crises, less conscious of constant eruptions of conflict, in which the principal participants operate with a consciousness of stability and permanence.

This requires that all of the nations operate with a sense of responsibility, and it puts a particular obligation on the two great nuclear powers that have the capacity to destroy mankind and whose conflicts have produced so many of the crises of the post war period.

In achieving this objective, the United States has operated on many levels. We have always believed that it required adequate strength to deter aggression. But we also have believed that we have to move from the period of military confrontation to a period which is characterized more by restraints and, eventually, cooperation. In our dealings with the other great nuclear superpower, the President, from the day of his first inauguration, has emphasized that we wanted to move from confrontation to negotiation.

In those negotiations we have operated on many levels. We have attempted to remove specific causes of tension. We have attempted to forge specific instruments of cooperation. And finally, we have attempted to develop certain principles of conduct by which the two great nuclear countries could guide their expectations and by which both in relations to each other and in their relations to third countries, they could calm the atmosphere and replace purely military measures by a new attitude of a cooperative international system.

It is in this spirit that last year in Moscow the United States and the Soviet Union signed certain principles of conduct which were described then as a roadmap on a road that no one was forced to travel, but that if we wanted to travel it, it was there for the two major countries.

I believe we have travelled on this road in the last year, and, therefore, it was decided to formalize some of these principles in an agreement, to extend them in some respects, particularly concerning consultation. The origin of the negotiation, as it turned out, was at the last session of the Moscow summit meeting when there were some general exchanges with respect to how to control nuclear weapons in a political and diplomatic sense, beyond the negotiations going on in strategic arms limitations.

These discussions were continued between the President and Foreign Minister Gromyko on the occasion of Gromyko's visit to the United States last October. They were continued in exchanges between the two leaders. There was some discussion when I visited the Soviet Union in September of last year, and the discussions continued this spring and were extensively pursued in Zavidovo and finally concluded here. Throughout, the United States has held the view that any obligations with respect to international conduct that applied to the two great nuclear powers, also had to apply to their relations to other countries, and we have held the view which was shared by the Soviet leaders that the principal problem was how to prevent a war and not how to conduct a war.

Therefore, this is an agreement which is designed to regulate the relations of the two nuclear powers to each other and to other countries in time of peace. It is an attempt to prevent the outbreak of nuclear war. And to the extent that it contributes to this task, it can be a significant landmark in the relationships of the United States to the Soviet Union and in the relationships of the two great nuclear countries towards all other countries of the world.

Now, let me run through the articles, which are largely self explanatory. Article I states that it is an objective of both the policy of the United States and the policy of the Soviet Union to remove the danger of nuclear

war and the use of nuclear weapons. This has been a consistent goal of American foreign policy, and is a goal shared by all of mankind.

Article II applies this objective to the general conduct of both sides, that is to say, the prevention of nuclear war presupposes the avoidance of situations capable of an exacerbation of relations, avoidance of military confrontation, and it is in that context that the outbreak of nuclear war can be excluded.

The second article states this more concretely, by elaborating that the prevention of nuclear war presupposes the avoidance of force or the use or threat of force by the two nuclear countries towards each other and towards other countries.

Article III is a general article that simply states that the two nuclear countries have to develop their relations with each other and with third countries in a way consistent with the purposes of this agreement, and it makes it clear that while it is a bilateral agreement, the obligations are multilateral.

Article IV states that in any situation in which the two great nuclear countries might find themselves in a nuclear confrontation, or in which either as a result of their policies toward each other or as the result of developments elsewhere in the world, there is a danger of a nuclear confrontation between them, or between them or any other country, they are obligated to consult with each other in order to avoid this risk.

Article V permits the consultation, that these consultations be communicated to the United Nations, and to other countries, a clause which we would, of course, apply to our allies.

Article VI makes clear that this agreement deals with the prevention of war, and that if it fails, the existing obligations in existing documents, treaties, and alliances will be maintained.

So, we see the basic significance of this agreement as a step, a significant step toward the prevention of nuclear war and the prevention of military conflict. It is a formal obligation that the two nuclear superpowers have taken towards each other, and equally importantly towards all other countries, to practice restraint in their diplomacy, to build a peace that is permanent, to pursue a policy whose dedication to stability and peace will become, as General Secretary Brezhnev said last night at the banquet, irreversible.

Of course, anyone who has studied the history of the last 30 years must recognize that agreements, are not always maintained, and that there is nothing self enforcing about this document. However, if the two great nuclear countries continue to be animated by the spirit in which they have conducted their policy of the last 2 years, then this document could mark a landmark on the road toward the structure of peace of which the President has been speaking and can be seen as a step towards a new era of cooperation in the relations of all nations and of lifting from them increasingly the fear of nuclear war and of war in general.

Now I will be glad to answer your questions.

**Q.** Dr. Kissinger, please, does Article II have any relation to our bombing of Cambodia and does Article II have any relation to the supply of the belligerents by both the Soviet Union, the United States, and other countries, of military support?

**DR. KISSINGER.** What is the question?

**Q.** Does Article II have any bearing or any relation to our bombing in Cambodia or to the military supply of the Indochina belligerents by both the United States and the Soviet Union?

**DR. KISSINGER.** obviously, in interpreting this agreement we could go around the world and see how it specifically applies to each individual country and to each conceivable situation.

Let me answer first as to Cambodia. The military operations now going on in Cambodia were in progress when this agreement was being negotiated, and it was not raised as applying to that particular situation.

Now, I don't want to go into the relationship of particular articles to particular events. I don't think it would be appropriate at this point to do it.

Let me say as a general proposition this: It is not possible under this agreement for either side and I was specifically exempting Cambodia for the reason that this is an operation that was in progress at the time but it is not possible for either side to use force in circumstances that can threaten international peace and stability, as is said in Article II, without breaching the letter and the spirit of this agreement.

Now, one then has to decide to what extent the clauses of Article VI apply and to what extent particular operations threaten international peace and stability, and I don't think this is the appropriate time to discuss it.

The purpose of this agreement is to legalize, to symbolize, and to bring about restraint on the part of the two nuclear superpowers in their international relationship so as to produce at least contribute to the preservation of peace, and it cannot be approached from the point of view of a sharp lawyer pushing against the limits of every clause because if that is going to be the attitude, the agreement will not have any significance.

**Q.** I would like to ask a naive question, if I could. It seems to me that we agreed on the desirability of motherhood here. I don't see why it took so long to reach this agreement and what the disputes were. I wonder if you could outline some of the negotiations that went on, and what were the issues in this discussion?

**DR. KISSINGER.** Well, I don't agree, first of your premise because this agreement was made by two countries whose conflicts and confrontations have characterized the entire post war period. For them to formalize these series of restraints, the willingness to consult, was a very major step.

Secondly, I don't think it is useful at the conclusion of the negotiation to go through all of the debates and provide a scorecard. I have indicated the general approach that we took, which was to extend the applications to the international system in general and not just have them apply to the United States and to the Soviet Union, and to put the emphasis on the prevention of war rather than on how wars might be conducted.

But I don't think any useful purpose is served by going through all of the complexities.

**Q.** I have a two part question. According to Article II, would China be regarded as an ally of the Soviet Union? And secondly, to what degree would this document be conceived as an effort to forestall any kind of military action against China?

**DR. KISSINGER.** What Article II says is that force and the threat of force cannot be used against the ally of another country; it doesn't say anything about one's own allies. But it also says force and the threat of force cannot be used against any other country, so clearly under this agreement the use of force against any country under circumstances that would have wide international repercussions would be precluded.

It was not conceived as a protection for any particular country, but I think its practical consequence is that if it were observed — as we, of course, expect it will be — it will have the practical consequence of applying both to the situation you described as well as to many other conceivable situations.

**Q.** May I follow that up, Dr. Kissinger, please? Did you have prior consultations when you met with the Chinese representatives several days ago about any form of this document? And would you at some point this year or next like to broaden the document to include China as a signatory?

**DR. KISSINGER.** The United States consulted several countries prior to the completion of this document, but I don't want to go into an enumeration of which countries were consulted. I do not discuss my conversations with the head of the Chinese Liaison Office, but I have no particular reason to suppose that

they will necessarily approve a bilateral agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, whatever its consequences. I will let them speak for themselves.

**Q.** Dr. Kissinger, there is one qualifier in Article II, where it says that both parties will refrain from the use or threat of force in circumstances which may endanger international security. When the Soviets went into Czechoslovakia, they obviously thought it didn't endanger international peace, and when the United States went into North Vietnam, they felt it didn't endanger international peace. Isn't that a large hole for a truck to go through?

**DR. KISSINGER.** If either of the two signatories wants to find an excuse to go to war, it will find an excuse to go to war. This has been the history of the post war period. We are talking here of restraint on significant military actions, and what endangers international peace and security is not determined by the unilateral declaration of the country going to war but also by the reactions of other members of the international system, because this is what produces the threat to international peace and security.

Therefore, again, I can only repeat, if any of the signatories deal with this like sharp lawyers pushing against the edges of the agreement, they will, of course, then find ways of doing so.

On the other hand, the movement into sovereign countries of large forces would not be in our view consistent with the spirit of this agreement, but I really do not want to go into a detailed analysis of every conceivable situation that could arise.

**Q.** Dr. Kissinger, while realizing you cannot go into specific circumstances, could you discuss in a general way what your expectations are for applying this principle, for example, to the Middle East area or Asia to reduce the dangers of nuclear war in either of those areas?

**DR. KISSINGER.** I really do not want to go into specific areas. Obviously, if we did not believe that this agreement could make a contribution to bringing about international restraint in areas which have been demonstrable sources of international tension, if we did not believe it could make a major contribution to this, we would not have agreed to proceed with it.

So, as a general answer to your question, I would say that it is our intention to proceed on the basis that the restraints foreseen by this agreement will become an increasingly vital factor in international affairs. But I think that you can understand why one cannot at this moment give a precise description of every situation which might arise.

**Q.** Dr. Kissinger, I have two questions. You have said it would be impossible to indicate in every situation what this might tend to prohibit or inhibit. Could you give us an example looking back over the past 20 or 25 years of any situation in which force has been applied which you think it would be inhibited in the future? That is the first question.

The second question is: This is the kind of agreement which the Russians have been inclined to sign with a number of countries. And I wonder whether or not it was they who were the ones who originally raised the idea back in Moscow last May?

**DR. KISSINGER.** As to the agreement as it has now emerged, it would be difficult to say who raised the particular nature of this agreement. When the discussions were first raised in Moscow last year, it was indeed by the Soviet Union, but in a different context.

The original discussion that gave the impetus to this has been transformed into an agreement in which, I think, the contribution of both sides can be said to be equal .

**Q.** You are particularly talking about the broadening aspect to other countries?

**DR. KISSINGER.** .....and the emphasis on the prevention of war in general. But again, on the approach, I

think at this point it can be said that both parties made a substantially equal contribution to this agreement.

Now, secondly, with respect to situations that might be prevented, I can think of several crises in this Administration, and I would have thought in previous periods, the Cuban missile crisis would be one example.

Several Berlin crises that we have had would be other examples that would have been avoided. I can think of some in this Administration, but again, when we are talking about restraint, we are talking about things that do not happen.

It is never very easy to demonstrate why something has not happened. I think it reflects the changes that have, occurred in the international environment that such an agreement which would have been inconceivable, say on the visit 15 years ago of Khrushchev, can now be described in one question, as simply affirming motherhood — it is not the virtues of motherhood or desirability of motherhood.

**Q.** Dr. Kissinger, this agreement obviously will have a long term effect within the United States and other countries. I wonder why this was not written in a treaty form so that the Senate could get a chance to discuss it in its entirety and question you about it. And two, has there really been discussion with the NATO allies? I know you didn't want to discuss that, but obviously in Europe there will be concern about the American credibility in case of large scale conventional attacks in central Europe.

**DR. KISSINGER.** There can be no concern because Article VI fully covers existing NATO obligations, and because if war is not prevented, there is no particular restraint then about how it is conducted.

Secondly, several NATO allies were closely consulted over an extended period of time, but I don't want to go into details.

**Q.** As to the first part of the question, on the treaty?

**DR. KISSINGER.** Excuse me. With respect to why it was not made in treaty form, it does not involve any particular positive actions that the United States has to take, and it is a general statement of policy.

The President, however, is meeting with the Congressional leaders at 11:30, and he will discuss with them ways in which the Congress can register its support if it wishes to do so.

**Q.** You have now signed a new document of détente, and yesterday you pledged to go for new strategic arms agreements by 1974. Can you explain how the Administration will then be able to ask Congress for more arms in the strategic arms field, and will you discuss some insight into how you will argue your case?

**DR. KISSINGER.** We have believed that the limitation of strategic arms should be achieved by agreement, and, of course, we will scrupulously observe the limitations that the agreement we hope to sign in 1974 will be carried out.

However, it would be destructive of the negotiations if we now unilaterally imposed on ourselves the limitations that we are attempting to negotiate. We believe that one of the elements that has brought about the present situation is the military balance that exists between us and the Soviet Union.

However, we believe that this document can contribute to an atmosphere that will accelerate the discussions on strategic arms limitations, and as I said yesterday, we consider the reduction of arms an important element of the strategic arms limitation talks. And it has been so expressed in the principles that were signed yesterday.

But we cannot anticipate what may be negotiated by unilateral actions on our part.

**Q.** Dr. Kissinger—

**DR. KISSINGER.** Haven't you asked a question already?

**Q.** I reminded you of part of Bernie's question.

**DR. KISSINGER.** You are only entitled to a short question then.

**Q.** My question. Your explanation of not putting it in treaty form is based in part, on it not involving any positive obligations on the United States' part.

How is it different from a limited nuclear test ban treaty in that respect? Could you expand on why it didn't need to be a treaty or shouldn't be one?

**DR. KISSINGER.** The limited nuclear test ban reflected a significant change in our arms policy that had been carried out until that time. This is really a statement of policies that we intend to pursue and have to be applied in individual cases.

It is, therefore, more in the nature of a formalization of a declaration of principals rather than of a specific set of obligations that can be applied automatically to concrete specific circumstances.

**Q.** In your exposé today, you used the word, "superpower." Ambassador Zamyatin, when I spoke to him about this "superpower," he said the Soviet Union is not a superpower, neither a great power, only a big power. Then he said this word is invented by the Chinese. [Laughter]

My other question is about Israel. We in the Arab world welcome this agreement; we are concerned that Israel has so far not signed a partial nuclear treaty. There was an article by Flora Lewis, which referred to you, saying that you had taken a study by the Rand Corporation on how Israel can attack Egypt with an atomic bomb. Within Articles IV and VI, do you think America, as an ally of Israel, will try to bring her to sign this partial treaty?

**DR. KISSINGER.** First of all, with respect to the comments of Ambassador Zamyatin, I welcome the humility that he has expressed, and it was not adequately reflected due to certain personality problems in my own comment.

With respect to the Rand study, I have never seen such a study, and I know it has been written about, although this is a big government and there are many studies floating around in it. They don't necessarily mean, however, that they have any connection with American foreign policy.

Thirdly, the implications of the agreement on the actions of other countries with respect to existing multilateral agreements, I do not want to speculate about. We could not assume that this agreement imposes on the United States a particular additional obligation with respect to treaties whose obligations are already clear.

**Q.** Dr. Kissinger, do you interpret this document as one that supercedes the so called Brezhnev Doctrine?

**DR. KISSINGER.** This document makes no distinction in its application between the domestic structure of various forms of countries.

**Q.** Dr. Kissinger, is this document a renunciation of atomic war, and if not, why not?

**DR. KISSINGER.** Well, I will take you along on future negotiations to fill in gaps that we leave. But this document is designed to prevent the outbreak of nuclear war by imposing restraints on the major countries with respect to nuclear war, and with respect to the use of force in general. Therefore, it does not address the question of what happens if war cannot be prevented, because that is not its purpose. Its purpose is to prevent wars. It is not a renunciation of a particular form of war if war cannot

be prevented, but we hope that it will make a major contribution to the prevention of war, and, therefore, your question will not have to be addressed.

**Q.** Did you discuss the concept of not using nuclear force first against each other, and why wasn't that included?

**DR. KISSINGER.** We can now discuss many things that individual members of the press corps would like to have as part of other agreements.

**Q.** That is a recognized international concept of how to prevent nuclear war, isn't it, Dr. Kissinger?

**DR. KISSINGER.** There are two ways you can look at how to prevent nuclear war. One is by preventing war, and the second is by imposing on yourselves specific restraints with respect to particular categories of weapons if war cannot be avoided.

We choose to go the road of attempting to prevent war, and thereby nuclear war, because many other countries depend upon what actions will be taken in case an aggression occurs. Therefore, we did not believe it would contribute to peace if we made particular distinctions as to categories of weapons in case of war.

The overriding problem is to preserve the peace and to prevent war.

**Q.** Dr. Kissinger, does Article IV oblige the United States to act as sort of an arbiter or mediator of the Sino Soviet conflict if it should get worse?

**DR. KISSINGER.** No. What Article IV provides is that if either of the countries contemplates nuclear war with any other country, or, of course, with the other nuclear country, it has an obligation to consult the other signatory with the purpose of avoiding the situation that would produce such a war.

We have no intention of being an arbiter between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China and we look at this consultation as a mutual restraint rather than as one that creates a right of intervention all over the world.

**REPORTER.** Thank you, Dr. Kissinger.