

Press Conference by Henry Kissinger (21 June 1973)

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News Conference of Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, on the “Basic Principles of Negotiations on the Further Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms”, June 21, 1973

MR. ZIEGLER. As we mentioned to you this morning, President Nixon and General Secretary Brezhnev have reached agreement on the basic principles of negotiation of further limitation for strategic offensive arms. The final agreement of those principles was reached in the meeting yesterday evening.

Also, an agreement will be signed today between the United States and the Soviet Union on scientific and technical cooperation in the field of peaceful uses of atomic energy. The signing of both of these matters will take place at 3:30 in the East Room, which we have already announced.

Before Dr. Kissinger briefs you on the matters I have just referred to, together with Ambassador [U. Alexis] Johnson, I should tell you that the morning meeting between the President and General Secretary lasted for slightly over an hour. It began at 11:30 and ended at 12:30. Dr. Kissinger participated in most of that meeting.

The President and General Secretary then took a brief break and resumed their meetings at 1:20 and are still meeting at this time and plan to return to Washington for the signing ceremony at 3:30. With that, I will present to you Dr. Kissinger.

DR. KISSINGER. Ladies and gentlemen, I will go over the agreement on SALT principles with you. Due to some misunderstanding between Camp David and my office here, the actual text hasn't been distributed to you, but it will be at the end of the meeting. I thought that in order to explain it adequately, I would read to you each of the principles and then explain what they mean.

There is no need for you to take down the text itself, because we are going to distribute it right after the meeting, together with a fact sheet, and my apologies for not having gotten it to you before this briefing.

Let me first give you some background on the principles that have been agreed upon and what they are intended to achieve.

As you know, the second round of SALT started last November, and as you know also, our representative is Ambassador Johnson, who is here to help with the briefing.

The objective of these talks has been to consider a permanent agreement limiting offensive weapons to replace the interim agreement that was signed in Moscow last May and which came into effect last October to run for 5 years.

Now, in negotiating a permanent agreement, one faces problems that are more complex than those in an interim agreement. The essence of the interim agreement was that both sides froze their offensive weapons at the level they had achieved last May and, frankly, at the levels that were foreseeable over the terms of the interim agreement, for a period of 5 years.

And as you know, we have always rejected the argument that we had agreed to a numerical inferiority in the interim agreement precisely because there was no possibility of overcoming that numerical inferiority in the 5 years for which the interim agreement was designed.

On the other hand, when you are dealing with a permanent agreement, you are affecting the long-term strategic interests of both countries, and, therefore, numbers that are acceptable in an interim agreement will have a different connotation in a permanent agreement, and safeguards will have to be looked at in a different context.

Secondly, with respect to a permanent agreement, we now face the situation that the numerical arms race, quantitative arms race, has been, in some respects, eclipsed in significance by the qualitative arms race.

Throughout the 1960's, it was considered that the build-up was the greatest threat to the stability of the arms race and hence to international peace. In this period we have to consider as well that the improvement — refinement of arms — in terms of accuracy, in terms of throw-weight, in terms of multiple warheads can be profoundly unsettling to this strategic equation, even when the numbers on both sides are kept fairly constant.

And thirdly, when one is talking about a permanent agreement, one has to consider the question not only of limiting arms, but the objective of reducing arms. It was in this context that the negotiations started last November and have been conducted for the last 6 months.

The negotiations went through the usual phase of some exploratory discussions, followed by some more concrete proposals by both sides. However, we faced the situation in April, where it became clear that a comprehensive agreement of a permanent nature would require more time than the interval before the summit allowed, and, therefore, the President, General Secretary Brezhnev, in their communications with each other, decided that perhaps the approach of agreeing on some principles that could guide the negotiators, coupled with some full discussions while they were meeting in the United States, could give a new impetus to the talks on strategic arms limitation. This is what was done.

In the closest consultation with Ambassador Johnson and with the allies most concerned, we developed a set of principles on a preliminary basis, which we have further discussed since the General Secretary has arrived in the United States, and which led to the agreement which we are releasing today.

Now, since you don't have the text, I think the best thing I can do is read it, and then attempt to explain its significance — what we understand by it. It isn't very long. I see somebody is looking at his watch.

[Laughter]

The preamble says, the President of the United States and the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, having thoroughly considered the question of the further limitation of strategic arms, and the progress already achieved at the current negotiations, reaffirming their conviction that the earliest adoption of further limitation of strategic arms would be a major contribution in reducing the danger of an outbreak of nuclear war and in strengthening international peace and security, have agreed as follows.

The primary significance of the preamble is the emphasis that both leaders give to their conviction of the importance of the earliest adoption of further limitation of strategic arms, not only with respect to reducing the danger of the outbreak of nuclear war, but with respect to the strengthening of international peace in general and, therefore, the personal backing that they are giving to a sense of urgency in the conduct of these negotiations.

The first principle is as follows: The two sides will continue active negotiations in order to work out a permanent agreement on more complete measures on the limitation of strategic offensive arms, as well as their subsequent reduction, proceeding from the Basic Principles of Relations between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics signed in Moscow, May 29, 1972, and from the interim agreement between the United States and the U.S.S.R. of May 26, 1972.

Over the course of the next year, the two sides will make serious effort to work out the provisions of the permanent agreement on more complete measures on the limitation of strategic offensive arms with the objective of signing in 1974.

The first principle substantially speaks for itself. It commits both sides to accelerate their efforts, and it commits both sides to make a major effort to achieve an agreement in 1974, or during the course of 1974. The two leaders would not have made this formal statement if they did not believe that this goal was within reach and was attainable.

Therefore, it represents a commitment by both sides to bring about — to do their utmost to bring about a

permanent agreement on the limitation of strategic arms during the course of next year. This agreement is to be based on the basic principles of international relations that were established last year in Moscow and on the interim agreement. However, the United States' position has been clear that the agreement has to be more comprehensive and that the numbers that last governed the interim agreement would not be the numbers of a permanent agreement.

The second principle is: New agreements on the limitation of strategic-offensive armaments will be based on the principles of the American-Soviet documents adopted in Moscow in May 1972 and the agreements reached in Washington in June 1973; and in particular, both sides will be guided by the recognition of each other's equal security interests and by the recognition that efforts to obtain unilateral advantage, directly or indirectly, would be inconsistent with the strengthening of peaceful relations between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

This article attempts to set out the basic guidelines in which the two sides will approach the negotiations. It makes it clear that neither side can attempt to achieve, through these negotiations, a unilateral advantage and secondly, that we have always maintained the position that we did not separate our security interests from those of our allies.

I must mention one other point with respect to the first principle, which is to say that both sides have agreed that the negotiations should include not only limitations on strategic arms, but measures for the reduction of strategic arms.

The third principle states: The limitations placed on strategic offensive weapons can apply both to their quantitative aspects as well as to their qualitative improvement.

This is one of the essential differences between SALT I and SALT II. SALT I concerned primarily exclusively the question of numerical limitation. SALT II will include, as well, qualitative restraint. That will involve discussions on MIRV's, on throw-weight, and issues introduced by the other side with respect to specific types of armaments, for example, on airplanes.

The fourth principle states: Limitations on strategic offensive arms must be subject to adequate verification by national technical means, which is a familiar principle from the previous SALT discussions and which the negotiating record makes it clear that we include, also, the imperative that both sides will maintain practices which facilitate monitoring the agreement.

The fifth principle applies to the modernization of arms and states: The modernization and replacement of strategic offensive arms would be permitted under conditions which will be formulated in the agreement to be concluded.

The essence here is that on the one hand there will be some provision for modernization and replacement. On the other hand, it also makes clear that the modernization and replacement cannot take place except under agreed conditions that do not threaten the purposes of the agreement.

The sixth principle is: Pending the completion of a permanent agreement on more complete measures of strategic offensive arms limitation, both sides are prepared to reach agreements on separate measures to supplement the existing interim agreement of May 26, 1972.

The significance of this principle is that, with respect to some issues that are time-urgent, in which the interval between now and the time in 1974 when we expect the permanent agreement to be concluded, that this interval might have a major impact on the existing strategic situations, both sides have agreed that they would be prepared to negotiate supplementary or separate measures to the interim agreement which would probably be of shorter duration and which would, of course, be absorbed by the permanent agreement.

The seventh principle is a reaffirmation of the accidental war agreement, which is to say that each side will continue to take necessary organizational and technical measures for preventing accidental or unauthorized

use of nuclear weapons under its control in accordance with the agreement of September 30, 1971, between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

To sum up, the statement of principles which will be signed today, first, formally commits the two principal leaders to the urgency of completing a permanent agreement and the relationship between international peace and security and the completion of such an agreement.

Secondly, it states a deadline for the completion of the agreement, in 1974.

Thirdly, it includes reductions as one of the objectives of the agreement and not simply limitation.

Fourth, it defines a permanent agreement as one that will limit the number of weapons systems as well as to limit their qualitative improvement and, therefore, opens a dimension to the negotiations that was not covered by SALT I.

And it defines some general principles as yardsticks against which the negotiations can measure progress.

Now, these principles have to be seen also in terms of the negotiating record at Geneva, where both sides are now discussing concrete proposals and where it is, therefore, perfectly clear what both sides mean by such phrases as “qualitative changes” and other phrases.

It must also be seen in the light of the extensive discussions that took place yesterday between the President and the General Secretary which dealt with how to give effect to these principles and how to move forward to these negotiations so that the timetable that has been set out in these principles can be realistically met.

These, then, are the principles which will guide our actions over the next year. We expect that they will be seen as a major step in developing a permanent agreement on the limitation of offensive weapons — the ultimate reduction — as a move toward bringing under control not only the pace of the arms race, but its nature and, therefore, will contribute to long-term prospects of peace.

Now I will be glad to answer any questions.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, why do you find the need to provide for further interim agreements if you think you are going to have a permanent agreement within 18 months?

DR. KISSINGER. This issue will, of course, be left in detail to the negotiators. The need could arise, for example, in the case of certain technological developments, where restraints on the pace of testing could affect the situation in the space over the next 12 to 18 months. It would be applied to those issues which are sensitive to the time interval that has been outlined in this agreement. It would not, obviously, apply to such issues as the numbers of weapons to be deployed because that would not arise in the 12- to 18-month period.

Q. Does the United States seek parity in numbers in the permanent agreement?

DR. KISSINGER. The issue of how you define equal security and no unilateral advantage is one of the most complex. As you know, with respect to the interim agreement, we believe that the larger number of our warheads compensated for the somewhat larger number of their missiles, and also the larger number of our airplanes. And we also concluded that in the 5-year period of this agreement we were not going to increase the number of these weapons anyway.

With respect to a permanent ban, the limitations must be equitable, that is, they must take into account the numbers of weapons and the numbers of warheads. And we will certainly seek, and we will obtain what we consider strategic parity.

Q. So you don't have to have exactly the same numbers in terms —

DR. KISSINGER. It depends what other limitations exist, and, therefore, it is very difficult to answer it in the abstract. In general, our objectives will be equality, but how you calculate this equality, we have to leave open to the negotiators.

In effect, though, the total compositions of the forces should be substantially equal.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, you said in reading this over, I don't know if you meant it, that in principle three —

DR. KISSINGER. If I said it, there is a chance I meant it. *[Laughter]*

Q. You said this is qualitative as well as quantitative, and later on you said the agreement will deal with qualitative. In relation to that, if you mean that it will deal with qualitative matters, can you relate principle four on the use of national technical means of inspection to the control of MIRV's? Are you announcing that the United States is prepared to use national technical means of inspection to verify any kind of MIRV agreement that might be forthcoming?

Q. Can we have the question, please?

DR. KISSINGER. I will repeat the question, but not the introduction to the question. The question is that the third principle says that the agreement can apply both to qualitative and to quantitative aspects, and then the fourth principle says that the limitation must be subject to adequate verification by national technical means.

Miss Berger's question was how these two principles could be reconciled and, specifically, whether we were saying that we were prepared to accept national verification for any kind of MIRV agreement.

I think I would put it another way. I would say any kind of MIRV agreement that may be reached will have to be one that can be verified by national technical means, and, therefore, that those MIRV agreements that are not verifiable by national technical means would be difficult to reconcile with these provisions, and, therefore, the question depends on the nature of MIRV limitations that we are talking about. But as I have made clear, we consider the development of multiple independent warheads one of the major factors of concern in the arms race. And that is clearly understood by the other side.

Q. You are aware that there are stories circulating that the President and Mr. Brezhnev are working on a so-called surprise agreement also in the nuclear field. Can you tell us whether in fact this is the only agreement going to be reached at the summit that has anything to do with nuclear weapons or, in a more general way, whether they are working on some more major surprise agreement — to be announced here, I mean?

DR. KISSINGER. I don't want to comment on everything that they may be working on. I would not characterize anything as a surprise agreement, and I would say that there is nothing that they are working on that is directly relevant to the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, is there any understanding about whether forward-based systems will be considered in these negotiations?

DR. KISSINGER. The basic position of the two sides has been elaborated in previous negotiations. We have left no doubt that we consider our security interests and those of our allies inseparable and that we believe that the central strategic systems should be the principal concern of this phase of the negotiations; that is to say, the ICBM's, bombers, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles.

The Soviet Union has taken a different view in the past. It is a view that we managed to avoid having to address in the first phase of SALT, and it is something which we believe can be negotiated in the second phase of SALT.

But we can state now that with respect to forward-based systems, we will make no agreement that separates

our security interests from those of our allies and that we believe that in this phase the central strategic systems should be the principal focus of negotiation.

Q. What can you tell us of the changes the Soviets have made in the last year in their missile programs and whether they have been completely in accordance with the agreements reached in Moscow?

DR. KISSINGER. The Soviet Union, to the best of my information, has pursued an active program within the terms of the agreement. If we should receive any information that is contrary to that, we will actively pursue it in the Standing Committee and in other channels. Up to now, they have pursued an active program, which is, however, to the best of our current information, within the terms of the agreement.

Q. Could you give just a general outline of what that active program constitutes?

DR. KISSINGER. I reveal Soviet strategic deployments only in bars in the Soviet Union. *[Laughter]*

Q. Henry, I am having a little trouble here with the qualitative principle. What is new about the qualitative principle? I thought it was understood right along that SALT II would be qualitative as well as numerical. Are you saying here there is something in this that now permits the Soviet Union to place a freeze on MIRV's? Is that what is new here? If not, what is the change?

DR. KISSINGER. I am saying this is the first time that there is a formal statement to this effect by both sides. Our position on it has been made clear, and I have enunciated it to this group. This is the first time that an agreed guideline signed by the two leaders, or an agreed guideline by the two sides, to this effect has been enunciated.

Q. So it is that the Soviet Union has agreed to negotiate on MIRV?

DR. KISSINGER. I don't want to speak to the Soviet position because qualitative can include many things in addition to MIRV.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, is the final agreement on SALT contingent on any agreement or understanding of any kind, and if not, what is all this talk about SALT not being reachable if the Soviet Union does not get most-favored-nation treatment?

DR. KISSINGER. The SALT agreement is independent of other agreements, but it is, of course, dependent on the general climate of U.S.-Soviet relations. We have always held the view that the relationship between the general political climate and progress in SALT was close.

It is not, however, linked as a condition to progress in any other negotiation; it has not been stated as such by us.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, may I follow that up? In the event the Jackson amendment is adopted, will SALT go down the drain?

DR. KISSINGER. I would not speculate on any particular agreement. We have said that in the event that the Jackson amendment is adopted in its present form, that it would have a serious impact on Soviet-American relations. What the particular impact will be on any specific negotiation, I would not want to go into.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, what can we say to our readers in the area of the prospects for reductions? Aren't you kind of dangling out the proposition here that the world can look forward to a reduction in the spending for nuclear armaments? What can we tell them the real prospects might be? When would it come, the lower number of missiles? Would it involve large amounts of savings on either side?

DR. KISSINGER. I don't want to go into specific proposals that are being negotiated. I will only say that

our proposals will be consistent with these principles, and they will include proposals for initial limitations to be followed by ultimate reductions.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, the linkage was not stated by us, with any other agreements. Have the Soviets raised the question of a linkage?

DR. KISSINGER. The Soviet Union also has not raised any particular linkage.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, you said the numbers in the temporary agreement would not be the numbers in the permanent agreement —

DR. KISSINGER. Not necessarily.

Q. — Is it our side's position that the Soviet Union's numbers will have to be decreased more than our numbers have to, to reduce or eliminate the apparent disparity between the numbers agreed upon in the temporary agreement, and if so, do they accept that as a general proposition?

DR. KISSINGER. How you set these limits, and what weapons you include in these limits is, of course, one of the key issues in the negotiations. For example, if you include bombers in the limits, the inequality in total numbers is different than if you are only talking about missiles.

Therefore, at what figure you set the limit, whether you set it at one below both sides' current strength, at the strength of one side, or somewhere in between, that remains to be determined through the negotiations, and I don't want to speculate on that.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, can you tell us, sir, if an attempt was made to reach an agreement in principle here on a MIRV freeze, but that was found to perhaps be too complex to achieve at this stage of the negotiations?

DR. KISSINGER. I don't want to go into the details of any particular negotiation. I don't think that would be appropriate for me to do.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, is there any news about a ban on underground testing?

DR. KISSINGER. We have stated this is a subject under very active review in our Government now, and one on which we will make a decision as soon as the studies are completed, but not during the summit.

Q. I have a double question. The first is: The implication of your earlier comment about national means and MIRV's — does that mean you will have to have a limitation on flight tests, a test ban on MIRV's, and you cannot get into a production ban; and the second question is, if the two leaders are confident enough to set a deadline for the negotiations, why couldn't the other principles be more specific on such questions as MIRV and the numbers than you have been able to be today?

DR. KISSINGER. Because, first, with respect to the question of what sort of limitations are verifiable by national means, it is obvious that flight testing is more easily verifiable than production, and this has been an issue we have covered in previous discussions on MIRV.

With respect to the principles, our objective is to have the permanent agreement, and not have a spectacular announcement. Many issues that can be agreed to in principle, nevertheless leave a margin — a narrow margin, but nevertheless a margin — for subsequent discussion, such as numbers, such as the type of qualitative limitations, and such as the procedures to be followed in eliminating the remaining margins. And for that reason, it was thought to be best if we went no further, then, now. But there have been discussions on how to proceed from here to meet this objective with some confidence.

Q. Dr. Kissinger, when you talk of quality, are you including limitations on technical improvements of accuracy of warheads?

DR. KISSINGER. When I speak of quality, these are all permissible issues to be raised. They have to be seen, however, in the context of verifiability. And the more esoteric the problem the more complex the problem of verification becomes. And it is not in the interests of either side to have agreements, particularly of a permanent nature, in which both sides feel they are at the mercy of developments that they cannot control.

So I would say, in principle, this is something that can be included in these discussions probably by means of restrictions on testing. In practice, however, it is getting into the more esoteric areas.

Q. Can you express confidence that we will have some kind of limitation, particularly on land-based MIRV's, within the next 18 months?

DR. KISSINGER. I have confidence that we will achieve an agreement consistent with the principles enunciated.

REPORTER. Thank you.