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## Jacobson: Diplomats, Scientists, and Politicians: The United States and the Nuclear Test Ban Negotiations

Bernard G. Bechhoefer  
*Member of The District of Columbia Bar*

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## BOOK REVIEWS

DIPLOMATS, SCIENTISTS, AND POLITICIANS. The United States and the Nuclear Test Ban Negotiations. By *Harold Karan Jacobson* and *Eric Stein*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 1966. Pp. ix, 538. \$8.50.

This book is essentially a detailed and lucid history of the nuclear test ban negotiations which started in 1957 and resulted in the Moscow Treaty of 1963, banning all except underground nuclear testing.

The key to the approach which the authors have chosen is found in their title—"Diplomats, Scientists and Politicians." Certainly, the nuclear test ban treaty was a major international event. It dispelled the fears of many that further testing in the atmosphere would result in a dangerous release of radioactive products. In addition, the treaty could be a step toward further and more extensive agreements to deal with the problem of proliferation of nuclear weapons, which many regard as the top priority problem in the maintenance of world peace. However, an historical narrative which is confined to chronicling the events leading to these achievements would disregard what may be the most interesting and significant feature of the negotiations—the revelation of the processes and methods of diplomatic negotiation employed by both the Soviet Union and the United States to achieve a precise accord. Therefore, it seems to me that the title properly places the emphasis.

During the more than ten years of disarmament and arms control negotiations in the United Nations which had preceded the test ban negotiations, it had been virtually impossible to focus the negotiations on a practical program of arms control in counter-distinction to broad, sweeping generalities, such as the Soviet "Ban the Bomb" propaganda slogan of the 1940's, and sweeping declarations of the desirability of regulation and reduction of all armaments under adequate safeguards. Only in the early discussions of the Baruch Plan for international control of atomic energy in 1946 and 1947 had the Soviet Union been willing to consider the vast arrangements which might be required for any arms control program. But in 1958, and for five years thereafter, the Soviet Union, having reversed its long standing practice in connection with this one problem, concentrated on the most precise details—the number of inspection posts that would be required, their location and composition, the organization and direction of an international control organ, and many other similar problems. Additionally, for the first time, scientists played an appreciable role in the development and presentation of the positions of the negotiating powers.

In describing the significance of the negotiations, the authors point out that:

[These negotiations] perhaps better than any other international negotiations which have been conducted since the end of the Second World War [reveal] how the United States has attempted to resolve the complicated issues relating to the formulation, implementation, and substance of security policy stemming from the emergence of nuclear weapons. They also offer sharp insights into the functioning of the international political system in the nuclear era and possible future developments.

The negotiations provide the opportunity to test not only the substance of American security policy, but also "the consensus-building model" in formulating and implementing that policy.

[The negotiations] illustrate in a graphic manner the interaction between domestic events, national policies, and international occurrences. They offer a striking picture of diplomatic intercourse between a totalitarian state with tightly sealed policy-making and close controls over its mass media on the one hand, and two relatively open, pluralistic states on the other.

The book achieves its greatest success in its discussion of the methods of formulating United States policy and both the achievements and limitations of that policy. The narrative demonstrates convincingly the impossibility of completely separating scientific and political considerations. The very nature of the technical problems requires an intermingling of scientific and political factors in establishing value judgments. The American and Soviet scientists might agree on the specific data and nevertheless reach diametrically opposed conclusions from the data on such essential matters as the significance of seismic signals.

The narrative points out the many limitations, indeed handicaps, inherent in policy formulation in the United States—the occasions when the American negotiators had to take positions in international forums in advance of obtaining the factual data to support their positions, the political considerations which delayed, sometimes for years, the formulation of positions which take into account the newest technical developments, the difficulties of obtaining in the highest levels of our government an understanding of the positions based upon new developments, and the obtaining of the necessary policy clearances. Anyone reading this book will acquire some idea of one of the prime problems which has always confronted the negotiators in the field of arms control—the tremendous dilution of thought which takes place in transforming a technically sound position into the broad general terms required for international negoti-

ations. The reader will also realize that with the advent of the administration of John F. Kennedy, came a gradual lessening of obstacles and delays in United States policy-making.

It would have been highly desirable if the authors could have achieved a detailed analysis of Soviet policy-making along the same lines. However, access to the individual policy-makers in the Kremlin—the “one-feather indians” as well as the “chiefs”—was out of the question. The necessarily inadequate substitute is a close analysis of the changing Soviet technical positions and their relationship to world events, a course which the authors have followed while recognizing that their conclusions, in many instances, can be little better than surmises. Perhaps the analysis might have benefited from greater reference to the substantial amount of literature which has appeared in the last three or four years in the Soviet Union, some of which has been translated into English, on Soviet strategic policy. I believe that this literature furnished one factor which would help to explain the increasing Soviet intransigence during the latter years of the negotiations on the question of on-site inspection. Nuclear capabilities can be achieved by the “have not” states through two methods: testing, or transfers from the “haves.” Commencing in 1961, the Soviet Union seemed to place more emphasis on the latter method than on the former. There is much evidence to indicate that Khrushchev’s final agreement to a limited test ban stemmed from a belief that the next step which would follow quickly would be the unqualified prohibition of weapon transfers from the “haves” to the “have nots.” In the absence of a satisfactory United States formula to achieve this result, further progress toward an unlimited test ban seemingly became a low priority in the Soviet Union. A more thorough discussion of the changing relationship between the test ban and other antiproliferation measures would have been useful, but would have greatly lengthened the book.

In attempting a meaningful description of complex negotiations extending over many years, the authors are caught between Scylla and Charybdis. A simple chronicle of events would be meaningless, since in any negotiations with the Soviet Union and particularly in arms control negotiations, the meaning of the events cannot be determined purely and simply from the statements of the parties. Every historian of the arms control negotiations must constantly embark on verbal excursions in order to relate the specific events of the narrative to the background. In the entire literature of arms control, I have never found any volume which has been more successful in achieving the proper balance between narration and explanation, in stressing the background of the developments without losing the continuity. Largely for this reason, I believe that this

book is and will continue to be the definitive narrative of an important historical episode.

*Bernard G. Bechhoefer,  
Member of The District of  
Columbia Bar.\**

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\* Mr. Bechhoefer served as senior officer of the Department of State on the armaments control negotiations from 1946-58, and is the author of *Postwar Negotiations for Arms Control* (Brookings Institute, 1961).