

Atoms For Peace Summary And Purpose

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Summary And Purpose

The speech “[Atoms for Peace](#)” was delivered by “Dwight D. Eisenhower”, the president of the United States, at a meeting of the “United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).” It addressed both the Americans and the global community. One of the primary goals of this speech was to present the US as a peacemaker and to justify the accumulation of atomic weapons by the country. The objective of this speech was to make the masses realize that “the miraculous inventiveness of man shall not be dedicated to his death but consecrated to his life” (International Atomic Energy Agency). This famous speech of 1953 aimed to resolve the terrible problem that plagues humanity by suggesting that the atom could be a source of value for us rather than a curse. This speech was an embodiment of Eisenhower’s vision and the nuclear initiatives taken by him. Numerous peaceful atomic programs stemmed from the speech. Moreover, it created an awareness among the masses about the debate related to nuclear science and technological advancements. It gave control to the people of America rather than selecting a few contractors and government officials.

President Eisenhower was deeply concerned about the atoms for war, and this speech reflected his concern. The intensifying race to acquire nuclear-powered weapons between the Soviet Union and the United States, as well as the development of thermonuclear explosives, were the reasons underlying this speech. Although the world had gained awareness about the terrible destructive power of nuclear arms since Hiroshima, there was a dramatic surge in the development of these nuclear weapons. Thus far, nuclear technology was a forte of the American minds; however, in the name of development and progress, it was soon to become a part of the arms of the Soviet Union. President Eisenhower realized his moral obligation to warn the American masses and the global citizens of this harsh new reality. The president stressed that the United States no longer had the “monopoly of atomic power” and that any surprise attack could result in terrible loss of life and material destruction (International Atomic Energy Agency). Many nations had embarked upon the journey of weapon development in the name of defence and warning. However, no amount of expenditure on nuclear arms could assure absolute safety, as a strategic surprise aggressor could wreak unimaginable havoc. In his speech, Eisenhower also established that in case of any aggression against the United States, the country would fitfully and swiftly respond; however, claiming to annihilate the aggressor was not in line with the true spirit of this nation. He projected a peaceful and constructive image of America by sharing his hope of peaceful agreements rather than wars. His speech also promoted the idea of living in freedom and letting other nations choose their way of life.

Historical Context

Over the years, analysts have shed light on the purpose of Eisenhower's speech. Many believe that it was a very strategically crafted narrative constructed during the era of the Cold War to secure a psychosomatic triumph over the Soviet Union. It is also termed as a reply to the continued peace aggression taken up by the Soviets. Others believe that this speech was conceived to persuade the world at large about nuclear arms reduction and to portray the dedication of the United States regarding nuclear weapons management. However, to establish the purpose of this speech, it is important to take note of the historical events that preceded it. In this context, three events of the Eisenhower administration are particularly noteworthy. These include the Oppenheimer Report authorized by President Truman in February, the death of Stalin in March, and the deliverance of the "Age of Peril" speech in April.

The Oppenheimer Report

The Oppenheimer Report was a top-confidential document approved by President Truman and conveyed to John Foster Dulles, the new Secretary of State. This document enforced the need to research new methods that would aid the nation in avoiding the perils of warfare. To achieve this goal, the document further encouraged that wider public discussions must be held to help the common masses understand the impact of the nuclear Holocaust. This was viewed as an important change in American foreign policy, and it came at the time of Stalin's death, which was announced in March 1953.

Stalin's Death

The demise of Stalin was regarded as an important opportunity to advance the cause of freedom not only within the Soviet Union but also in other countries of Europe. This hope for freedom was widespread as many believed that the Soviet state would be helpless in planning for succession. This idea was most popular within the inner circle of Eisenhower. Charles Douglas Jackson, who was designated as the special assistant to the President and a Cold War strategist, regarded Stalin's death as both an event of alarm and excitement. To exploit the situation, Jackson persuaded the president to start a peace offensive.

Age Of Peril

The speech is viewed as the initial shot in psychological warfare, and it established the United States' objectives for Korea, Germany, Austria, and Indo-China. Continuing with the offensive and to manipulate the situation further, a report was drafted for the American people, making them aware of the devastating capacity of nuclear warheads (Medhurst).

Atoms For Peace

The speech starts with a positive note, emphasizing terms such as “hope”, “great honour”, “privilege”, and “exhilaration”. He further pays homage to the United Nations by stating that this was a historical event that brought hope to so many people. His speech takes a sombre turn as he warns the audience that “if a danger exists in the world, it is a danger shared by all —and equally, that if hope exists in the mind of one nation, that hope should be shared by all” (International Atomic Energy Agency). With this opening, “Eisenhower prepares the audience for a speech about the way out of the atomic dilemma that confronts humanity” (Medhurst). The speech further sheds light on the extent to which nuclear arms have increased since 1945, and the underlying message is for the Soviets to reevaluate their plans for a preemptive attack against the US. It is also important to note that the two authors of this speech, Strauss and Jackson, aimed to establish a fitful retaliation to any outside threat while maintaining a less hostile language. Hence, the open threats and underlying warnings are encapsulated in the intentions of establishing peace. The global audience, as well as the people of America, gained an insight into the harsh outcomes of nuclear war; this was planned as per the Oppenheimer Report.

The “Atoms for Peace” address is considered a masterpiece as every phrase was carefully added or barred for a specific determination that was to gain strategic benefits. This speech had a multitude of purposes, which ranged from gaining a psychological advantage against the Soviet Union, warning the American audience of the age of peril, and seeking approval from the global audience. The Americans did not view it as a propaganda speech. Rather, they believed that it presented a proposal to create an increasingly conducive environment for nuclear disarmament (Medhurst).

Works Cited

International Atomic Energy Agency. *Atoms for Peace Speech*. IAEA, 16 July 2014, <https://www.iaea.org/about/history/atoms-for-peace-speech>.

Medhurst, Martin J. ‘Eisenhower’s “Atoms for Peace” Speech: A Case Study in the Strategic Use of Language’. *Communication Monographs*, vol. 54, no. 2, 2009, pp. 204–20. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637758709390226>.