



HIROSHIMA, TECTONIC GEOPOLITICAL CHANGE, AND THE LIGHT OF HIROSHIMA

**A Speech By Joseph Gerson Before The World Conference
Against A & H Bombs**

Friends,

It is a delight and privilege to rejoin the World Conference. Given the increasingly dangerous great power confrontations and accelerating nuclear arms races, as well as the unique opportunity that the TPNW affords us, our collaborations are more important than ever.

As a U.S. American, I was shocked by Ambassador Emanuel's machinations in engineering the sister park arrangement between Hiroshima and Pearl Harbor. The

agreement obscures the scale of my country's massive A-bomb war crimes. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was certainly a dastardly war crime launched to reinforce Japanese Asia-Pacific imperialism. It claimed just over 2,000 lives, most of them military. But the A-bombings indiscriminately claimed almost 200,000 innocent civilian lives – more over time – in the first strike of the Cold War.



The A-bombings did not cause Japan's surrender. Japan was already functionally defeated. Senior U.S. military leaders advised Truman that Japan's unconditional surrender could be achieved with a blockade. Truman's inner most circle rejected this because they sought an immediate end to the war to limit Soviet influence in Asia and to intimidate Soviet leaders. It was Moscow's August 9 declaration of war that led Hirohito to order the surrender. The sister-park agreement reinforces the U.S.-Japanese military alliance and reinforces the myth that the A-bombings were a just response to the attack on Pearl Harbor.

We meet in a challenging time. Following in the U.S. tradition of preparing and threatening to initiate nuclear war during international crises and wars, Putin and other Russians have been rattling their nuclear sabers. The weapons are unlikely to be launched unless Ukraine unexpectedly threatens Russian control of Crimea, which has functionally been Russian since 1853. Putin is deploying nuclear weapons to Belarus to offset Moscow's deteriorating conventional military capacity. A source of concern is whether these nuclear weapons will be securely under anyone's control in Belarus. And senior Russians advise that for years to come Moscow's conventional inferiority will increase its reliance on nuclear weapons.

Elsewhere, the U.S., Japan, and their allies are massively increasing their military spending. This sacrifices spending for human needs, including for climate resilience. In the U.S. it includes replacing the entire nuclear arsenal and its triad of delivery systems. It also pays for missile defenses which can function as shields to reinforce nuclear first-strike swords. New U.S. nuclear weapons are being deployed to Europe, and U.S. nuclear powered and nuclear armed submarines are returning to South Korea. Also, here in Northeast Asia all parties to the region's tensions have functional first strike doctrines, including Japan's conventional preemptive strike capacity reinforced by U.S. cruise missiles. Indian-Pakistani tensions continue apace, with Pakistan again on the brink of becoming a failed state. And then there's France, Britain, and Iran's nuclear program.

After Bush II and Trump attacked the foundations of the world's arms control architecture by withdrawing from the ABM and INF treaties, Moscow has put the last nails in the arms control coffin by suspending participation in the New START and Open Skies Treaties. Refusing to be intimidated by the U.S. and NATO, China

has increased its nuclear arsenal and is preparing to achieve nuclear parity with Washington and Moscow.

All of this takes place in the context of Biden's National Security Strategy which states that: "the post-Cold War era is definitely over, and competition is underway between the major powers to shape what comes next." Fiona Hill put it another way: The Ukraine War, she wrote, marks "the passing of Pax America apparent to everyone". Not everyone. Many in Washington and most of the public have failed to recognize this reality. The belief that "America is the indispensable nation" still guides U.S. policy makers, fueling self-defeating policies and provocative and dangerous actions including seeking Russia's strategic defeat and sending warships through the Taiwan Strait.

The U.S. is not alone in refusing to adjust to the multipolar disorder in life. Putin seeks to rule in the tradition of Peter the Great. China seeks to establish East Asian hegemony. And the Cold War never ended on the Korean peninsula. If we are to prevent escalation to nuclear cataclysm, we must address what former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd named "the avoidable war."

The contest for Asia-Pacific hegemony is related to the outcome of the Ukraine War. China has much to lose as well as to gain in the Ukraine War. With its economic and diplomatic support for Russia, China's leadership seeks to ensure that Washington and NATO continue to face Russian military power in Europe in order to limit the threatening military buildup on China's periphery. But, Beijing's Ukraine peace plan, its warnings against Russian use of nuclear weapons, its Global Security Initiative, and its facilitation of the Iran-Saudi agreement demonstrate that China's partnership with Moscow is not "unlimited."

With its dispatches of warships to the Taiwan Strait, its sorties of nuclear capable bombers across South Korea, its reinforced military alliances, its expanding military presence across the Asia-Pacific, and its undermining of the One China doctrine, the Biden Administration seeks to reinforce the Bretton Woods/NATO systems and threats to the misnamed "rules based" order. Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, China's menacing naval forces in Philippine and Vietnamese waters, and Beijing's rejection of the International Court of Arbitration's South China Sea sovereignty decision are gross violations of the "the rules based order."

So too are the AUKUS challenge to the NPT, Biden's dispatch of cluster munitions to Ukraine, Trump's, and Bush II's assault on the arms control order, U.S. invasions of Vietnam, Panama, Afghanistan, and Iraq among others.

Biden's Security Strategy gives the "China threat" pride of place. China is seen as "the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and increasingly the economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to do it." The Strategy names Chinese military modernization as the "pacing threat" that

drives U.S. military planning, operations, and spending. Biden's cohort understand that the U.S. can no longer enforce U.S. hegemony unilaterally. Thus, the priority given to integrating their allies' military, economic and technological power to resist China's challenge. They encouraged Japan to double its military spending, consolidated the QUAD and AUKUS alliances, pressed Tokyo, and Seoul to build a tripartite alliance. Marcos has reembraced the U.S. military alliance. And NATO's new strategic concept names containing China as an Alliance priority.

China hasn't stood still. It has reportedly doubled the size of its nuclear arsenal and may be aiming for nuclear parity with the U.S. Its navy is larger than the 7th fleet and is the leading edge of its effort to enforce its imperial nine-dash line. It has repeatedly sent its warplanes across the median line in the Taiwan Strait. And its space and cyber weapons challenge those of the U.S.

Taiwan is the most dangerous potential flash point of this geopolitical stew. Unless the DPP recklessly moves toward de jure independence or if there is an unexpected military accident or incident, Beijing has no intention of invading Taiwan in the near term. But bi-partisan madness is driving the U.S. Congress toward confrontation. There are other potential triggers for a catastrophic regional war: militarized Japanese Chinese competition for the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, Korean tensions, and competition for control of the South China/West Philippine Sea.

As I prepared this talk I thought about how my grandson would hear the repeated references to the existential dangers of war, nuclear war, and the climate emergency. In closing, I want to point to sources of hope. As Leonard Cohen wrote that "there are cracks in everything/that's how the light gets in."

We, the movements to stop the killing in Ukraine, those pressing Common Security diplomacy, people working to stanch and reverse the climate emergency, for democracy and to create a nuclear weapons-free world are all cracks in the war and nuclear systems.



We need to continue teaching the lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and celebrating the extraordinary courage of Hibakusha who have provided humanity with the gift of their searing testimonies that eviscerate the illogic of nuclear deterrence.

In addition to rekindling their heart rending testimonies during these commemorations, we must keep their voices, vision, and courage alive.

Reflecting on the links between Hibakusha and the TPNW, Austrian Ambassador Kmentt came to mind. He became the TPNW's godfather after being profoundly moved by the Hibakusha testimonies. They fueled his organizing of the Third Humanitarian Consequences conference and his roles in negotiating and promoting the Treaty. Recently Ambassador Kmentt celebrated the G-20 statement on the inadmissibility of the use of nuclear weapons, achieved by the intervention of TPNW states. He said that he expects more governments - possibly Brazil and Indonesia - to ratify the Treaty. He said that the Second Meeting of States Parties in November will focus on implementing the Action Plan adopted in Vienna, progress toward creating a nuclear weapons victims trust fund, verification processes, and winning universal adoption of the Treaty. There will also be a focus on how to deal with Treaty skeptics, especially nuclear umbrella states like Japan, and there will be a new TPNW declaration that rejects nuclear threats, and which reinforces the nuclear taboo.

There is a debate about whether there is sound when a tree falls in a forest, and no one is there to hear it. Our responsibility, as we work to ensure my grandchildren's and others' futures, is to make sure that there will be sound and powerful reverberations when the TPNW Meeting is held next winter. Representatives of more than 20 organizations, including ICAN, IPB, Peace Action, CPDCS, Gensuikyo and others, have been meeting to plan and coordinate our activities there.. We look forward to hosting our Japanese and other partners as we join to build pressure on the nuclear powers and the umbrella states for the nuclear weapons-free world we need and deserve. I hope to see many of you there as we broaden the cracks and raise a nuclear weapons abolition din to shake the world and let the light get in!



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