

Forum I: Hiroshima, August 5, 2025

Joseph Gerson

U.S.A.

First, let me thank Gensuikyo for the privilege to serve on this panel. I have always felt the disjunction of being a U.S. American speaking in Hiroshima. This feeling is compounded by the refusal of the US government to acknowledge and beg forgiveness for one of the world's most disgusting and deadly war crimes, and by the lies which insist that the A-bombs were necessary to end the war and to save American lives. The historical record tells a different story.

This is an unusually perilous time. There are reasons that the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* reset their Doomsday Clock to 89 seconds to midnight, the closest to annihilation it has ever been. In the midst of the 1930s interregnum, the Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci wrote that "The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born, now is the time of monsters." This description also applies to this era of tectonic geopolitical changes with new nuclear arms races, new Cold Wars, and new fascist forces, including here in Japan.

As the scholar and former U.N. official Richard Falk recently commented, we live in an era of rising fascism, the deadly rule of great power autocrats, and sterile liberalism. Even with the TPNW, it is difficult to gain the needed political traction to lead governments to do what we and many others know they should. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the nuclear threats, the Ukraine war's daily death toll of nearly 2,000 soldiers a day., and in Gaza, where the hegemonic Trump-Netanyahu axis is inflicting a

brutal genocide before our eyes. These, Trump's bombing of Iran and his lust for Greenland, Panama, and Canada are sabotaging the United Nations charter order and endangers us all.

Now, with the worst, dangerous and ignorant US president operating on the basis of his greed, ignorance, and whims, waging wars, and commanding an omnicidal nuclear arsenal, the dangers are even greater. That said, U.S. peace, democracy, and nuclear weapons abolitionist forces are alive, well, and deeply engaged in nonviolent resistance.

Since shortly before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, I have been privileged to be a participant in a confidential U.S., Russian, European track II process. In its early days, these arms control negotiators, senior diplomats, analysts and even generals sought to prevent what became the Ukraine War. With the war having shattered diplomacy between the West and Russia the group has worked to identify ways that nuclear war can be avoided, and arms control negotiations renewed. As the lines of the New Cold War have hardened, the focus has been on finding ways to reestablish strategic stability. With these people's power circumscribed, it has not been a hopeful process. Popular movements, force and pressure from below are required to change the geopolitical landscape.

The elite group's consensus is that critically important arms control negotiations, including a possible extension of the New START Treaty, and efforts to construct a new European security architecture are impossible before Ukraine War ends and power relations have been clarified. With the recent escalations by all the warring parties, the totally incompatible Ukrainian and Russian negotiation demands, that day of diplomatic openings seems increasingly far into the future.

The other depressing consensus is that, disregarding the lesser nuclear weapons states, we are now “three scorpions in a bottle” – the U.S., Russia, and China, and this greatly complicates risk reduction and disarmament diplomacy. Beijing wants parity with Moscow and Washington before engaging in serious arms control diplomacy and may be moving away from its minimum deterrence and no first strike nuclear doctrines. Beijing insists that the U.S. adopt a no first strike doctrine before engaging in arms limitations diplomacy with the U.S. And Washington, remember, has prepared and threatened first strike attacks many times during international crises and wars – including against China - to maintain its empire. Tragically the Biden and Trump governments have seen the threat of first strike attack against China as the only way to ultimately defend Taiwan. As we have seen with Putin’s nuclear saber rattling, Moscow has been using the U.S. playbook to keep NATO at bay and seize much of Ukraine.

US responses to the “three scorpions in a bottle” reality are terrifying. Amid the Trump Nuclear Posture Review, a deeply disturbing article by former senior U.S. officials appears in the current issue of the elite journal *Foreign Affairs*. It states that the U.S. “faces a Category 5 hurricane of nuclear threats...mounting nuclear dangers “ It argues that nuclear dangers, “now lurk in every region of vital interest to the United States.” Imagining a coordinated Chinese and Russian attack on the U.S. and its allies, the authors warn that Washington “will likely need a larger – and different – deployed nuclear arsenal to be able to deter both China and Russia in twin crises.” Their solution: 1) Add more Columbia class nuclear armed submarines, and 2) place more nuclear weapons on the entire fleet “increasing their number by 40%. 3(Retain Land-based ICBMs “ \until at least 2050” along with deploying new Sentinel land-based ICBMs. 5) NATO must develop a longer range ALCMs for F-35s. 5) The U.S. should deploy low-yield

SLCMs for U.S. attack submarines in the Pacific, and 6) lower-yield nuclear warheads should be paired with existing tomahawk missiles on older Los Angeles-class attack submarines. That is not a recipe for human survival

As we were reminded by the recent Indian-Pakistani conflict, the nuclear dangers are not limited to the three great nuclear powers. Physicians for Social Responsibility and leading climate scientists demonstrated that even a comparatively small nuclear exchange of 50 to 100 nuclear weapons would do more than immediately kill hundreds of millions of people. Smoke from the nuclear fires would spread across the northern hemisphere, resulting in a decade of global cooling, resulting in crop failures, and deaths by starvation and fallout of up to two billion people.

Some also wonder if President Trump was lured into attacking Iran's nuclear sites by a Netanyahu threat to use Israel's "temple weapons" against those installations, much as Golda Meir did in 1973 to open floodgates of US weapons and spare parts for Israel. Even as the US deploys new B-61 nuclear gravity bombs across Europe, France and Britain have announced their nuclear collaborations as a hedge against possible loss of the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Pyongyang is constitutionally committed to remaining a nuclear power. And the IAEA's Rafael Grossi warns that Trump's bombing of Iran's nuclear sites could accelerate a race for Iran to finally build a nuclear bomb, And here in East Asia most South Koreans support their nation becoming a nuclear weapons state, and the SDF's has long asserted that Japan's constitution gives it the right to possess tactical nuclear weapons, a right they have simply opted not yet to implement.

The hour is late, but let us celebrate that the Hibakusha and Japan's peace movement been the primary obstacle to Japan becoming a nuclear power and leading forces for the world's disarmament campaigning – including winning the TPNW. We

must do all that we can to ensure the our 80th year commemorations of the cruel and criminal Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bombings serve as inspirations and powerful forces for nuclear disarmament and abolition – perhaps most importantly in next year’s NPT and ICAN Review Conferences. Successes there could stanch the growing dangers of nuclear weapons proliferation.

in the U.S., in addition to our struggle to preserve constitutional democracy and to defend our immigrant neighbors, peace and justice activists and organizations, and some members of Congress are pressing the Back from the Brink Campaign. It calls for nuclear weapons abolition, halting the two trillion spending for the new nuclear arsenal, a no first strike policy and more. There is also state legislation pending in support of the TPNW.

As we commemorate the A-bombings here in Hiroshima and provide Hibakusha a powerful platform to warn and inspire humanity, commemorations are being organized across the U.S. Perhaps the biggest will be in Boston, my hometown. Yesterday we ran this full-page advertisement in one of our country’s leading newspapers. It features the hibakusha’s warning that human beings and nuclear weapons cannot coexist, explains that the A-bombings were not needed to end the war, warns of current nuclear dangers, and urges people to take action for abolition. .

Tomorrow’s Boston commemoration will feature speeches and videos on a giant screen in a popular public park, including by Hibakusha, members of Congress, and abolitionists from around the world, as well as appeals to support the back from the Brink legislation/s

Is this enough? No!. Single issue campaigning is critically important, but the most efficient path between two points may not be a straight line. Let me suggest to the

ambassadors here that the paths to universalization of the TPNW, to full implementation of the NPT, ending the Gaza genocide and stanching climate change, could come via a Uniting for Peace General Assembly resolution as provided by the U.N. Charter. That would overcome the Security Council's veto power, open the way for meaningful sanctions initiated by the Global South, neutral, and TPNW nations. As we face unprecedented dangers, we must think and act outside of the box. Friends, imagine, risk and take action!.

No more Hiroshimas. No more Nagasakis. No more Hibakusha. No more War and injustice!