

Negotiations and Common Security for Ukraine and the New Cold War
Joseph Gerson

Let me begin by thanking Reiner Braun for the opportunity to join with you this morning. By way of self-introduction, I am a veteran of the U.S. and international peace movements. I currently work with two U.S. Ukraine anti-war coalitions and a number of international partners. I have also been involved with a Track II process about which you'll hear more shortly. In the U.S., our peace movement has been envious of European mobilizations and calls for a ceasefire and negotiations to bring the Ukraine War to an end – especially those in Germany and Italy. In the U.S. we have been pressing for diplomacy since before the Russian invasion, and we are now campaigning in coordination with the IPB's Peace Summit planned for early June.

My talk will be in three parts. I'll begin with information and analysis that may be familiar to you, though maybe controversial for some. Then I'll turn to a chilling report about how dangerous the Ukraine and new Cold Wars have become. And I will close with suggestions about possible actions we can take to stop the killing in Ukraine and to begin rebuilding a Common Security European architecture and suggest ways to prevent the existential cataclysms of possible nuclear war and the climate emergency.

1 The Ukraine War is about far more than Ukraine. It's not simply a criminal Russian war of aggression, which of course it is. But as the recent U.S. National Security Strategy informs us, "The post-Cold War era is definitely over, and competition is underway between the major powers to shape what comes next." The war, its devastations and nuclear threats, and its catastrophic climate fallout are major elements of the collapse of the bi-polar

world disorder, the birthing of a new multi-polar order, and the resulting global competition for power and privilege. In the U.S., many of us understand the U.S.-Russian and the U.S.-China Cold Wars as classic reincarnations of the Thucydides Trap, the inevitable tensions between rising and declining powers which over history have two often climaxed in catastrophic wars, twice in the 20th century. Such a climax is not inevitable. It can be avoided with pressure from below by our social movements and by Common Security diplomacy, the vision, and elements of which we must play the lead in creating..

It is no secret that the U.S. near-term priority in Ukraine War is not simply to block Russian aggression, but to weaken Russia for the longer-term. In Europe, Asia and the Global South, the Biden Administration is working to reinforce the four generation old Bretton Woods/NATO systems by resisting what it perceives to be Russia's immediate, and China's longer-term threats to the so-called "rules based" order. A just rules base order is something to aspire to, but we also need to remember that on the subject of rules, Russia is not the only gross violator. Recall U.S. wars to maintain its empire, among them, the Indochina, Afghanistan and Iraq invasions, Washington's support for Israeli apartheid, and the subversion of governments across the planet. Biden and company understand that the U.S. cannot enforce its hegemony unilaterally, hence the priority given to integrating their allies' military, economic and technological power to resist China's long term and Russia's near-term challenges to their primacy.

Midst Russian and Ukrainian offenses and counter offensives, we face the danger of horizontal or vertical proliferation – miscalculations that could

bring NATO forces more deeply into the war or lead Russia to resort to nuclear weapons should it come to believe that the existence of the Russian state is in jeopardy, something Putin has already declared. In the Baltic and Black Seas, as well as in the Asia-Pacific, with provocative military shows of force, an accident, incident, miscalculation could easily trigger escalation, even to nuclear confrontation and war.

Putin's indefensible invasion is a gross violation of the U.N. Charter and international humanitarian law. Almost always, more than a single factor precipitates a war. In the Russian case, the invasion was designed 1) to offset increasing Russian strategic vulnerabilities resulting from NATO expansion to its borders, 2) to pursue Russia's historic imperial ambitions, and 3) to reinforce the standing of Moscow's ruling elite. All has not gone well for Putin, or for the Ukrainian and Russian peoples, not to mention the worldwide economic and food insecurity fallout from the war. Ominously, the Euro - Atlantic Common Security architecture, begun in the 1990s with the Paris Charter has collapsed. So too, beginning with the U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty twenty-years ago, the limited but hard won Arms Control system now has been relegated to the dustbin of history.

The Biden Administration's National Security Strategy is clear about its primary commitments. While Biden and company have made the Ukraine War their own and NATO's, their first priority is to contain and "out compete" China, which is seen as "peer competitor" believed to be the greatest challenge to U.S. hegemony, while secondarily "constraining Russia." The Strategy updates Obama's pivot to Asia and Trump's protectionist trade policies, while

insisting that the U.S. maintain its “unmatched” military – including nuclear, AI, and space - war fighting capabilities.

For the near term, the Biden Strategy warns that “Russia now poses an immediate and persistent threat to international peace and stability.” Just as Germany bore principal responsibility for igniting the First World War, Putin bears principal responsibility for the Ukraine War. Yet, there is sufficient moral ambiguity to go around. Few remember the 1990s European Common Security commitments: the Paris Charter, the NATO-Russia Founding Framework, and the 1999 OSCE memorandum. They enshrined the commitment that no nation would seek to augment its security at the expense of another, a commitment that was first shattered by NATO expansion a generation ago.

2. Then to more chilling analyses. For the past year and a half, most unexpectedly, I have been the one U.S. peace movement leader invited to listen in on confidential Track II discussions involving current and former senior European, Russian and U.S. governmental advisors, military officials, and diplomats. These are men, and a much smaller number of women, who have not only helped to shape and implement their governments’ policies. Over the years some have engaged in negotiations with one another. Within their countries, most are seen as patriots, even as we might think of more than a few of them are at least partly responsible or apologists for policies we condemn. While deeply committed to what they perceive as their respective governments’ interests, one thing they have in common is recognition of the need to prevent a U.S./NATO Russian nuclear war.

These discussions have gone through three phases: First seeking diplomatic openings to prevent a Russian invasion of Ukraine. Next they focused on the growing dangers that have followed the collapse of the six decades-old arms control architecture and how security stability could be restored after the war. Most recently they have focused on the consequences and continuing dangers of Russia's self-inflicted and massive strategic Ukrainian disaster and of NATO's related planning for the future.

I am prohibited from quoting or making individual attributions, but I can summarize and paraphrase elements of a recent session's very disturbing points of discussion. This is an increasingly dangerous period for all of us, and as a consequence there were but a few hopeful contributions.

- Russians observed that as a consequence of the war, Moscow has not been so isolated since the 1850s, when it was at war with unified Western allies and Turkey in the Crimean War and faced threats from the British fleet from the Baltic Sea. Now, even after drawing its forces from the Russian far east and the Kola Peninsula, Moscow has not been able to establish conventional military supremacy in the war with Ukraine. Moscow also sees NATO deployments in Poland as a real, not theoretical, threat. More, for Russia "de-escalation" means defeat. These realities, plus NATO's expansion, have dictated Russia's increased dependency on its nuclear arsenal – both tactical and strategic, a chilling reality.
- There was reference to the "line of contact," something I associate with the dangerous military and nuclear confrontation between India and

Pakistan. During the Cold War, the European line of contact was the Fulda Gap in Germany. While it will not be solidified until the end of the Ukraine War, the line of contact now extends along Russia's western border from Eastern Europe to the Baltics and the eastern frontiers of Scandinavia.

- The July NATO summit in Vilnius will be among the most consequential in Alliance's history. This will include a focus on geopolitical decisions designed to contain Russia and China and increasing NATO's military strength, especially in Eastern Europe and the Baltics. To increase its conventional military capabilities along Russia's border, the Alliance is expected to quadruple its forces along this broad front to four to five thousand **permanently** deployed NATO forces in each of these nations. There will be so-called advances in NATO's nuclear planning, and a deepening commitment to 2% of GDP for military spending. European members of NATO are already deeply involved in joint military and provocative military "exercises" in Taiwanese and South China/West Philippine Sea waters, and these commitments will be increased.
- Over the longer-term, the NATO plan is to build up Ukraine's military making it interoperable with NATO forces. U.S. speakers and at least one well-placed European speaker expressed the likelihood of Ukraine becoming a NATO member within five years. They argued that after the war, NATO membership could prevent Ukraine from taking aggressive military actions against Russia, and it was observed that an Article 5

NATO guarantee would be cheaper for Washington than providing an endless supply of weapons. With or without NATO membership, there is the possibility or probability of Washington adopting a law analogous to the Taiwan Relations Act for Ukraine – which would commit the U.S. to Ukraine’s defense.

- Europeans responded that their countries would block NATO membership, and that moving toward Ukrainian membership would create a crisis within NATO. Russians fear that a Ukrainian tail would wag the US/NATO dog, and that Ukrainian NATO membership would inevitably result in a Russian-NATO war that would likely go nuclear.
- Expectations are that following Turkey’s May 14 election, and lubricated by promises of more advanced U.S. weapons and the passage on June 1 of a Swedish anti-terrorism law designed to placate Turkey, Sweden could become an Alliance member in time for the Vilnius summit.
- With Finland’s accession to NATO, Alliance’s forces are now 93 miles from St. Petersburg. Think about that. In addition to the enormously costly stalemate in Ukraine, the Baltic Sea is now a “NATO Lake”, including its air space. This builds pressure on Kaliningrad and continental Russia and will result in Moscow building up its forces in Northwest Russia. Moscow may also respond by making Moldova and Georgia increasingly dangerous flashpoints.
- Looking to the near-term future, we continue to face the possibility or likelihood of an indeterminately long Ukrainian war of attrition.

Zelensky's insistence on conceding not a centimeter of what was Ukrainian territory and his goal of shattering the Russian military with his Spring offensive is matched by Russia's inability to accept defeat. Ukraine's coming offensive contains enormous risks for both Kyiv and Moscow. If Kyiv fails to make significant gains, it could lead to reducing U.S. and NATO commitments for endless and costly supplies to Ukraine. This in turn will increase pressures on Ukraine to compromise and finally lead to renewed negotiations with Moscow.

- There is the possibility that as circumstances change, as in Norway, Finland and Sweden could accept the deployment of NATO forces in their countries. And, despite their denials, in time this could accept nuclear weapons.
- Even with its strong military, given Finland's size and small population, European nations will need to spend much more for its defense. It is an open question if Europeans will be willing to make this sacrifice. Moreover, there is a major outstanding question that could impact NATO unity: a definitive answer to the question of who destroyed the Nord Stream II pipeline.

3. . What then must be done?

Our work is cut out for us, especially in the United States. In addition to the broadly supported Biden goal of using the war to weaken Russia, there is also the legacy of Afghanistan. Biden's administration is reluctant to make a deal with Moscow over President Zelensky's head, much as Trump did with the Taliban. It appears that Xi, Lula, and their partners may be filling this

gap. That said, we understand that our most urgent priority must be pressing our governments for a ceasefire and negotiations to stop the killing and to end the Ukraine War before it escalates further.

In the run up to the Peace Summit in Vienna, the Peace in Ukraine coalition and 92 U.S. organizations have launched a signature campaign which will climax in the publication of our statement calling on Presidents Biden, Putin and Zelensky to end the war in a major publication widely read by policy makers in Washington. Our statement is simple and to the point:

“The war in Ukraine has taken tens of thousands of Ukrainian and Russian lives, uprooted millions, contaminated land, air, and water and worsened the climate crisis. The longer the war goes on, the greater the danger of spiraling escalation which can lead to a wider war, environmental devastation, and nuclear annihilation. The war diverts billions that could be addressing urgent human needs. Total military victory cannot be achieved by either Russia or Ukraine. It is time to support the calls by Pope Francis, United Nations Secretary-General Guterres, Presidents Lula de Silva of Brazil, Erdoğan of Turkey, Xi of China, and others for a ceasefire and a negotiated end to this calamitous war. Stop the killing, agree to a ceasefire, and begin negotiations!

In other initiatives, peace groups and Veterans For Peace have actively expressed solidarity with war resisters on all sides of the conflict, lobbied and challenged members of Congress, organized countless webinars, and with covid receding we are now holding public meetings, vigils, and demonstrations

are being held..

Either as part of trust building that encourages negotiations to end the war, or once the guns have fallen silent, it will be imperative to revive the 1980s concept of Common Security which provided the foundation for the INF Treaty sealing the end of the Cold War before the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Common Security served as the foundation of the European security architecture in the 1990s, including the Paris Charter, the NATO-Russia Founding Act, and the 1999 OSCE Memorandum. The 1982 Common Security Report led by Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, with deep engagements by European, U.S. and Soviet national security elites, defanged the spiraling and extremely dangerous U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms race with recognition of an ancient truth: “Security cannot be obtained unilaterally. Economically, politically, culturally, or importantly militarily – we live in an interdependent world and no nation can achieve security at the expense of another.”

Massive disarmament demonstrations of millions of people in Europe and around the world created the environment in which leading national security advisors from Georgi Arbatov in Moscow to Cyrus Vance in Washington could finally engage in thoughtful discussions about the causes of their nations’ respective insecurity and build the trust essential for creating win-win visions and agreements. Common Security is not sweet hugs and kisses, nor is it all that our peace movements urgently demand. But it is essential if we are to defuse the increasingly, spectacularly dangerous, great power tensions that are bringing us to the brink of nuclear and climate annihilation. At its core, it involves hardheaded exchanges about how ostensibly defensive military

buildups create fear in a rival, leading them to increase their military preparations, frightening the first party and driving spiraling arms races and conflict.

In the INF and post-Cold War Common Security negotiations, each side named what they most feared from the other. Negotiations followed to reduce or eliminate that threat without undermining the rival's security. In the 1980s this meant forgoing deployment of Soviet SS missiles that could destroy Europe and the deployment of U.S. Pershing and cruise missiles which could decapitate Soviet leadership eight minutes after being launched. Today, Common Security negotiations could begin with guarantees of Ukrainian sovereignty and major Russian withdrawals in exchange for that borderland nation becoming legally neutral.

Looking back, although it in no way excuses Russia's invasion of Ukraine, tragically, stupidly, President Clinton and his successors lost sight of the essential Common Security truth. With Cold War thinking and little regard for Russia's defining history of invasions from the West (think Napoleon, the Kaiser, and Hitler) they launched the 30 year campaign of NATO's expansion which has brought U.S. and European NATO forces to Russia's borders.

Just over a year ago, an alliance of the Olof Palme Center in Sweden, the International Peace Bureau in Berlin, and the International Trade Union Confederation with its 200 million members along with partners developed and issued their Common Security 2022 Report. The work of the project's steering committee was augmented by an advisory committee of former diplomats, political leaders, U.N. officials and scholars drawn from across

Europe, Russia, China, the United States, and the Global South. It focused on four main areas: Strengthening the global architecture; a new peace dividend via disarmament and development; revitalizing nuclear disarmament and arms control, and addressing new military technologies and outer space weapons.

That was in a more hopeful time, shortly before Russia's invasion of Ukraine crystallized new cold wars with Russia and China. It is in this context of increasingly dangerous great power confrontations that Track II dialogs have proceeded to exchange information, build trust and mutual understandings, and begin to identify mutually beneficial common security openings to prevent catastrophic wars.

Addressing both the Euro-Atlantic (inclusive of Russia) and the U.S.- East Asian military, economic and political confrontations the International Peace Bureau, the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security, and Peace MOMO in South Korea have launched a new common security project. We don't overestimate what our impact will be, but complementing critically important peace movement campaigning we can help identify ways forward that defuse the dangers of catastrophic wars, impact public opinion, and renew thinking about the promise and possibilities of Common Security.

What might some recommendations be? Here are several possibilities that I am sure can be improved upon by others:

- A neutral European nation, possibly Austria or Ireland, initiating an OSCE conference in 2025 to serve as a forum to begin recreating a Euro-Atlantic security architecture

- Promotion of people-to-people exchanges of musicians, scholars, students, community-based activists, and others
- Reaffirmations of the United Nations Charter
- Negotiation of a nuclear weapons-free zones in Central and Eastern Europe (inclusive of western Russia)
- Adoption of no first use doctrines by all nuclear weapons states
- Reinstatement of previous arms control agreements, negotiation of new multilateral nuclear disarmament agreements, and limitations on AI, and high tech weaponry
- Resumption of US/NATO – Russia and U.S.-China military-to-military communication and exchanges
- Development of a new paradigm to replace “One country, two systems,” that would protect Taiwanese democracy while providing for peaceful reunification with China.
- Respect for the International Court of Arbitrations ruling on sovereignty claims for the South China Sea and completion of multinational negotiations for a Code of Conduct for the Sea
- Multilateral negotiations to replace the 1953 Korean Armistice with a peace agreement, a Northeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free-Zone, and reductions of military forces on the Korean Peninsula

With the United Nations being an institution of 193 governments led by the original five nuclear powers, my expectations for what it can achieve are limited. That said, I want to close with a quotation by then U.N. General Secretary Ban Ki-Moon to an international peace conference on the eve of the 2010 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference. Governments, he said, will not deliver us peace or disarmament. That can only come with pressure from below. Whether it is winning a ceasefire and negotiations for Ukraine, preventing great power or other wars, and

creating a new Common Security order, or winning progress for disarmament and the climate crisis, it is up to us and our movements to build that pressure from below and to ensure that our governments provide us with real security.