

# Dreaming of World Peace

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*"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." (Matthew 5:9)*

*"And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."*

## **Our wobbling strides to a peaceful world**

In October 1962 the United States and the Soviet Union wobbled dangerously close towards a nuclear war caused by the Cuban Missile crisis. However, because of intelligent leadership the catastrophe was avoided.

The Soviet Union had placed missiles in Cuba after the United States had placed Jupiter missiles in Turkey and Italy. To resolve the crisis a secret pact was agreed in which the Soviet Union removed their missiles from Cuba and the United States quietly from Turkey and Italy months later.

Being a secret pact many in the West thought the Americans won the confrontation through an unrelenting display of power and the threat of nuclear escalation. To the contrary a nuclear war was prevented because of compromise on both sides. It was possible because both President John F. Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchev in good faith were able to negotiate with each. This good faith is reflected in a letter Mrs Jacqueline Kennedy wrote to Chairman Nikita Khrushchev on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1963. It was one of her last nights in the White House after the assassination of her husband. It's inspiring, it's elegant, it's moving, especially in its idea of big men and little men and the consequences of leadership thereof.

In her letter Mrs Kennedy explains that the reason for her message to him was because her husband cared much about peace, and his relation with Chairman Khrushchev was central to this care in his mind. In her words, “He used to quote your words in some of his speeches, “in the next war the survivors will envy the dead.”” “You and he were adversaries, but you were allied in a determination that the world should not be blown up. You respected each other and could deal with each other. The danger which troubled my husband was that war might be started not so much by the big men as by the little ones. While big men know the needs for self-control and restraint—little men are sometimes moved more by fear and pride. If only in the future the big men can continue to make the little ones sit down and talk, before they start to fight.” She concluded her letter, “I know that President Johnson will continue the policy in which my husband so deeply believed—a policy of control and restraint—and he will need your help.”

President Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchev though political adversaries were ‘big men’ united in preserving peace which prevented a nuclear war.



*It is imperative on all citizens of the world, in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Europe; and international organisations to demand immediate peace negotiations and condemn the enormous danger to the survival of the planet posed by the Ukraine war, says Bishop Trevor Mwamba*

### **Leadership at the service of peace: Lessons from President John F. Kennedy**

Sixty-one years later, 2023, with the Russian and Ukraine war raging on the world is wobbling dangerously close towards a nuclear war. As citizens of the world, we cannot allow this to happen we need to take a leaf of the past and the intelligent leadership required to prevent a nuclear catastrophe where “the survivors will envy the dead.”

Our times now desperately need the big men or statespersons with self-control and restraint which epitomised President John F. Kennedy and Chairman Nikita Khrushchev’s relationship. The world needs to be rescued from the ‘little men’ driven by fear and prejudice who can easily plunge humanity into a nuclear catastrophe. It was nine months after the Cuban Missile Crisis, President John F. Kennedy delivered the ‘Peace Speech’ at the American University in June 1963. It’s a timeless, it’s wise, and helpful to end the Ukraine war and other conflicts. Then as now the world finds itself in a very dangerous place from which it must extricate itself.

President Kennedy was an avid student and reader of history. He had read a recently published book by the American historian Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* detailing the miscalculations and misunderstandings that led to the First World War. He learned how great powers slipped into a catastrophic World War. This made sense for the story unfolding in

October 1962, and also changed the ending because President Kennedy understood history well. Crucially, He discerned those leaders “must avert those confrontations which bring an adversary to a choice of either a humiliating retreat or a nuclear war.” He applied the lesson to the Cuban missile crisis preventing the world plunging into a nuclear war and annihilation.

President Kennedy’s ‘Peace Speech’ sparkles with wisdom distilled in the crucible of preventing a nuclear war – a life transforming moment. He begins with a quote from John Masefield’s tribute to English universities, “There are few earthly things more beautiful than a university.” John Masefield admired the splendid beauty of universities, because a university was a place where those who hated ignorance could strive to know, and those who perceived truth could strive to make others see. President Kennedy chose a topic in his words, “on which ignorance too often abounds and the truth is too rarely perceived yet it is the most important topic on earth: world peace.”

What did he mean by peace? It was not a “*Pax Americana* enforced on the world by American weapons of war.” It was a, “genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, the kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women not merely peace in our time but peace for all time.” In 1963 the urgent call for, “peace for all time” was forced by the production of nuclear weapons as the new face of war. President Kennedy was prescient in realising the new face of war as insane. He surmised, “Mankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to mankind.”

War made no sense in an age when great powers could maintain large and relatively invulnerable nuclear forces and refuse to surrender without resort to those forces. It made no sense in an age when a single nuclear weapon (then) contained almost ten times the explosive force delivered by all the allied air forces in the Second World War. It made no sense in an age when the deadly poisons produced by a nuclear exchange could be carried by wind and water, soil and seed to the far corners of the globe and to generations yet unborn. It made no sense then and it makes no sense today. It was consequently insane to expend billions of dollars every year on weapons stockpiled only for destruction and never creation. This was not the only, much less the most efficient, means of assuring peace.

“Only peace,” President Kennedy discerned was, “the necessary rational end of rational men,” but, “the pursuit of peace is not as dramatic as the pursuit of war and frequently the words of the pursuer fall on deaf ears. But we have no more urgent task.”

When President Kennedy delivered his speech, peace was challenged by the prejudiced attitude of leaders towards the Soviet Union. Many thought it was useless to speak of world peace or world law or world disarmament and that it would be useless until the leaders of the Soviet Union adopted a more enlightened attitude. President Kennedy an exceptional and visionary leader challenged this prejudiced attitude. His hope was that both the Soviet Union and United States would change by re-examining their attitudes.

George Bernard Shaw once said, “There are those that look at things the way they are, and ask why? I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?” President Kennedy dreamed of America’s relationship with the Soviet Union that never were and asked why not? Accordingly, his Peace Speech signalled a major paradigm shift in cold war relationships.



*We advocate for Ubuntuism<sup>1</sup> in our pursuit for World peace and the end to the Ukraine war. Only when we see each other in the I – Thou relationship shall peace flourish in our lives and world, says Bishop Trevor Mwamba*

#### **Re-examine our own attitude: The four areas**

Kennedy’s innovative thinking challenged Americans to re-examine their attitude towards the Soviet Union by proposing a path to genuine peace. He eloquently said: “... I believe that we must re-examine our own attitude as individuals and as a nation for our attitude is as essential as theirs. Every graduate of this school, every thoughtful citizen who despairs of war and wishes to bring peace, should begin by looking inward by examining his own attitude toward the possibilities of peace, toward the Soviet Union, toward the course of the cold war and toward freedom and peace here at home.” This inward looking, he suggested echoed the Greek author Plutarch who said, “What we achieve inwardly will change outer reality.”

The formula for a good life is simple. To create a world of love we must be love within. To create a world of justice we must be just within. To create a world of peace we must be peace within.

President Kennedy saw that the path to peace required Americans to re-examine their attitude in four areas: first, peace itself; second, the Soviet Union; third, the Cold War; fourth, peace and freedom in the United States. Musing on these four areas President Kennedy explained them:

First, peace itself: he called on Americans to re-examine their attitude. He felt too many Americans thought peace was impossible and unreal which was a dangerous and defeatist belief. This led to the conclusion that war was inevitable and humankind doomed gripped by forces he could not control.

To Kennedy such a view was unacceptable. He rightly perceived that our problems were human created and therefore could be solved by people. There was no problem of human destiny which was beyond humanity’s capability to solve. Human reasoning and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable and President Kennedy believed the nuclear threat was solvable.

He told Americans to focus on a practical and attainable peace “based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions on a series of concrete actions and effective agreements which are in the interest of all concerned.” He sagaciously discerned genuine peace as collective, global and international because, “There is no single, simple key to this peace no grand or magic formula to be adopted by one or two powers. Genuine peace must be the product of many nations, the sum of many acts. It must be dynamic, not static, changing to meet the challenge of each new generation.”

For peace is a process a way of solving problems. Such peace embraces the dynamics of quarrels and conflicting interests, as there are within families and nations. “World peace, like community peace, does not require that each man love his neighbour it requires only that they live together in mutual tolerance, submitting their disputes to a just and peaceful settlement.” Kennedy grasped that, “history teaches us that enmities between nations, as between individuals, do not last forever. However, fixed our likes and dislikes may seem, the tide of time and events will often bring surprising changes in the relations between nations and neighbours.”

The quest for peace is continual so perseverance must be unflagging. Peace is not impracticable, and war is not inevitable. President Kennedy understood, “By defining our goal more clearly, by making it seem more manageable and less remote, we can help all peoples to see it, to draw hope from it, and to move irresistibly toward it.”

Secondly, was the need for Americans to re-examine their attitude towards the Soviet Union.

Propaganda distorts people’s perceptions and feelings about others or nations. During the cold war the Soviet Union’s propaganda of the United States created a big gulf between fact and fiction between the two countries and vice-versa. President Kennedy saw this “as a warning to the American people not to fall into the same trap as the Soviets, not to see only a distorted and desperate view of the other side, not to see conflict as inevitable, accommodation as impossible, and communication as nothing more than an exchange of threats.” He acknowledged that, “No government or social system is so evil that its people must be considered as lacking in virtue.” Americans, found communism profoundly repugnant a negation of personal freedom and dignity. So, he urged Americans to see the better angels in Russians; by hailing them for their many achievements in science and space, in economic and industrial growth, in culture and in acts of courage.

He extolled the many traits the peoples of the two countries had in common, none as stronger than their mutual abhorrence of war. They had never been at war with each other. He stressed how no nation in the history of battle ever suffered more than the Soviet Union suffered in the course of the Second World War losing at least 20 million lives. He warned that if war broke out it was the two countries which would be the primary targets. The ironic but accurate fact was that the two strongest powers would also be the most in danger of devastation.

As both devoted massive sums of money to weapons that could have been better used to combating ignorance, poverty, and disease. Both countries were caught up in a vicious and dangerous cycle in which suspicion on one side bred suspicion on the other, and new weapons beget counter weapons. Accordingly, both the United States and its allies, and the Soviet Union

and its allies, had a mutually deep interest in a just and genuine peace and in halting the arms race.

Despite their differences President Kennedy believed that attention had to be directed at the common interests and the means by which differences could be resolved. He wisely counselled: "And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

Thirdly, was for Americans to re-examine their attitude toward the Cold War.

The Cold War era was a very dangerous time for the world. The hostility of the Cold War made it imperative for nations to persevere in the search for peace in the hope that constructive changes could bring within reach solutions which seemed beyond them. International Affairs had to be conducted in such a way that it was in the interest of conflicting nations or blocs to agree on a genuine peace. Above all, the approach in reaching just solutions was to avert those confrontations which could bring an adversary to a choice of either a humiliating retreat or a nuclear war. President Kennedy cautioned, "To adopt that kind of course in the nuclear age would be evidence only of the bankruptcy of our policy or of a collective death-wish for the world."

To President Kennedy in the quest for peace the United Nations was the ideal channel for peace in the world. So, he sought passionately to strengthen the United Nations, to help it resolve its financial problems, "to make it a more effective instrument for peace, to develop it into a genuine world security system, a system capable of resolving disputes on the basis of law, of ensuring the security of the large and the small, and of creating conditions under which arms can finally be abolished." He believed if all nations refrained from interfering in the self-determination of others, peace could be much more assured. Kennedy's vision was for a new effort to achieve world law, a new context for world discussions; indeed, then an increased understanding between the Soviets and America which could only be realised by increased understanding requiring increased contact and communication.

Accordingly, President Kennedy proposed the establishment of a hotline between Moscow and Washington, to avoid on each side the dangerous delays, misunderstandings, and misreading's of the other's actions which could occur at a time of crisis. Another objective was the complete disarmament designed in stages, whilst permitting parallel political developments to build the new institutions of peace which would take the place of arms.

The fourth and final focus was for Americans to re-examine their attitude toward peace and freedom in America. For the quality and spirit of American society he contended had to justify and support their efforts abroad. Profoundly, Americans had to live up to the age-old faith that peace and freedom walk together. For in too many Americans cities the peace was not secure as the freedom was incomplete.

To President Kennedy all this was not unrelated to world peace. "When a man's ways please the Lord," the Scriptures tell us, "he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Is not peace, in the last analysis, basically a matter of human rights the right to live out our lives

without fear of devastation the right to breathe air as nature provided it the right of future generations to a healthy existence?””



*The Ukraine war is a clear and present danger to the world of a nuclear catastrophe, says Bishop Trevor Mwamba, pictured here with the late Kenneth Kaunda first President of Zambia (1964-1991).*

*‘The safeguarding of national interests also meant safeguarding human interests and the elimination of war and arms was in the interest of both.’*

Moreover, President Kennedy who had fought in World War Two was unequivocal that the United States would never start a war. He was of the generation of Americans that had more than enough of war and hate and oppression. His vision was anchored in a world of peace where the weak are safe and the strong are just. He was driven by hope. “We are not helpless before that task or hopeless of its success. Confident and unafraid, we labor on not toward a strategy of annihilation but toward a strategy of peace.”

The “strategy of peace” was the vision of a man of wisdom, a peacemaker, a big man. In 2023 and beyond the “strategy of peace” not annihilation is what the world desperately needs in leaders of vision, wisdom, peacemakers, big men and women, in resolving the war in Ukraine and other conflicts of our time. The reality of our world is that it is multipolar not unipolar. The geopolitical and economic ambitions premised on a unipolar world and dominated by one super-power, ideology, creed, race, or hemisphere is untenable. As Kennedy said in his address in Berkeley at the University of California on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1962. “We must reject over-simplified theories of international life—the theory that American power is unlimited, or that the American mission is to remake the world in the American image. We must seize the vision of a free and diverse world – and shape our policies to speed progress toward a more flexible world order...” He continued, “No one can doubt that the wave of the future is not the conquest of the world by a single dogmatic creed but the liberation of the diverse energies of free nations and free men. No one can doubt that cooperation in the pursuit of knowledge must lead to freedom of the mind and freedom of the soul.”

The zeitgeist of our time is a ‘more flexible world’ that is a pluralistic world not monolithic. And the multipolar world will thrive by eradicating the vestiges of exploitation and dominance, them and us; and vigorously promote reconciliation in mutual forgiveness and cooperation.

## The Need for Peace and Freedom to walk hand in hand

The war in Ukraine is rooted in the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent expansion of NATO. Law Professor Alfred de Zayas at the Geneva School of Diplomacy and former UN Independent Expert on International Order 2012-18; wrote in a recent article, *The United Nations Promise of Peace – Also in Ukraine*, and argued: “the expansion was condemned by US Diplomat George F. Kennan, the father of the “containment” doctrine.” In a critical essay that appeared in the New York Times on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1997, Kennan had warned “expanding NATO would be the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era.”

George F. Kennan was not alone in warning against NATO expansion; the last US ambassador to the Soviet Union, Jack Matlock, Prof John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago, Prof Richard Falk of Princeton, Prof. Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University, Prof. Francis Boyle of Illinois, Prof. Dan Kovalik of Pittsburgh, and even former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, all expressed their concern over provocations that could lead to a nuclear confrontation.

The Ukraine war is a clear and present danger to the world of a nuclear catastrophe. Significantly, Russia and Ukraine are cognisant of this and why negotiations toward a ceasefire commenced on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022. By April, an agreement regarding a tentative interim deal was reached between Russia and Ukraine, according to an article in Foreign Affairs.

However, the Ukrainian media outlet – *Ukrainska Pravda* – reported that then Prime Minister Boris Johnson arrived in Kyiv on April 9<sup>th</sup> with the West’s position that even if Ukraine signed agreements with the Kremlin, the West was not ready to do so. Accordingly, President Zelensky withdrew from the interim negotiations.

This refusal to negotiate has prolonged the war in which Ukraine is being devastated, to quote Professor Jeffrey Sachs, “ironically in the name of saving Ukraine.” The prolongation of the war is a crime against peace; a crime against humanity, for the peace and security of the entire planet is at stake, in the growing danger of a nuclear confrontation. Trust as a necessary condition of diplomatic relations has been betrayed condemning all of us to an unstable, dangerous world, our security, our futures, our desire for a stable, peaceable world order.

President Kennedy in the fears and prejudices of the Cold War called for America and the Soviet Union to re-examine their attitudes to each other. The way to genuine peace in the Ukraine war and the recovery of trust calls for the United States, NATO, Russia, and Ukraine, to re-examine their attitudes to each other. This is the only path to peace which the distinguished Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs of Columbia University has echoed. Writing in his blog ‘Common Dreams’ of 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2022, he called for a change of American foreign policy arguing, American and the world need economic recovery, diplomacy, and peace. France’s President Emmanuel Macron as early as 2019, also argued that it was time for Europe to re-examine its attitude to Russia, in his words to “rethink ... our relationship with Russia” because “pushing Russia away from Europe is a profound strategic error.”

Rethinking calls for a paradigm shift, which President Kennedy’s demonstrated in his Peace Speech sixty years ago. The context in Europe calls for reimagining the existing relationships towards creating a new Europe that embraces Russia. Ultimately, all wars end in negotiations. In

the 21st Century the madness of war should be a thing of the past. What should motivate us is the wisdom that puts primacy on dialogue and intelligent solutions to preserve peace and prevent wars.

To trend this noble path to genuine peace in resolving crises and wars through negotiations we need a positive shift in relationships among the world's most important decision-makers and intelligent leadership from big men and women not little men and women driven by fear and prejudice. We should also keep always in mind Kennedy's perception of peace as collective, global and international. It is imperative on all citizens of the world, in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Europe; through, for example, international organisations like the African Union, European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Organization of American States, and United Nations; to demand for immediate peace negotiations and condemn the enormous danger to the survival of the planet posed by the Ukraine war.

### **World peace ultimately is about relationships.**

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. explained succinctly in a speech in 1964, "We must learn to live together as brothers and sisters or we will perish together as fools."

The wisdom of President Kennedy's Peace Speech is likewise relational. It echoes Martin Buber; the brilliant philosopher of the last century when he termed the 'I -Thou' relationship. All his teachings were summed up in this sentence, "All real living is meeting." By meeting, he meant opening ourselves, not hiding behind a rigid code or ritual or tradition. It means relating to God, people, and nature with your whole being, this is the I – Thou relationship. Such relationship is a genuine meeting, a give and take, that engages our hearts totally this is what makes us human; an engagement of hearts.

The I – Thou relationship is the spirit of what we call in Africa *Ubuntu*. Ubuntu is the reverence of our common humanity – I am because of you and you are because of me. And without each other we cannot be. In Ubuntu listening to each other is very important in consensual decision making.



*What should motivate us is the wisdom that puts primacy on dialogue and intelligent solutions to preserve peace and prevent wars, says Bishop Trevor Mwamba who leads The United National Independence Party – the oldest political party in Zambia*

### **The Long Walk to Freedom ... and Peace: The dream of all and sundry**

President Mandela in his memoir *Long Walk to Freedom* elucidates this. He developed an enormous capacity to listen to others. He was a royal and born in the tradition of collectivity, which prized the art of listening and demanded of everyone the respect for rituals of

consultation and dialogue. Great leaders spent more time listening than talking. When in prison he taught himself to listen intently to the voices of the enemy. He engaged at levels beyond pragmatism or courtesy with the prison warders. He chose to be interested in their lives. That interest is the spirit of Ubuntu, the I – Thou relationship.

The opposite to all this is what Buber posited as the 'I – It' relation. This is not a genuine meeting it implies treating God, people, and nature, as things or objects to be used. It's to think of God, people, and nature as objects, subjects, things, not on the same level as oneself. It's an arrogant belief that people and things exist for one's own benefit. This is not Ubuntu.

We advocate for Ubuntuism in our pursuit for World peace and the end to the Ukraine war. Only when we see each other in the I – Thou relationship shall peace flourish in our lives and world.

This peace we talk about is also profoundly rooted in the Christmas Peace ancient yet new which ennobles and elevates humanity to the I – God relationship. It is God's on Peace on Earth we realize in the I-Thou relationship. A message the world desperately needs to hear now more than ever. So, we pray for ourselves and the world to be enfolded by peace and strengthened to spread good will to others.

This concept inspired President Kennedy to be a peacemaker and his address to General Assembly of the United Nations in September 1961 is still pertinent today: "Every man, woman and child lives under a nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident or miscalculation or by madness. The weapons of war must be abolished before they abolish us."

In the war in Ukraine a "nuclear sword of Damocles" is hanging over our world. It is imperative for us as citizens of the world to stop it and save our planet from slipping into a catastrophic nuclear war by 'accident or miscalculation or by madness'.

Let us as citizens of the world rededicate ourselves to peace and building a world of multilateralism and mutual respect among nations and peoples.

Trevor Mwamba

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<sup>i</sup> **Ubuntu** is a traditional African concept. The word *ubuntu* comes from the Zulu and Xhosa languages, and can be roughly translated as "humanity towards others." *Ubuntu* embodies all those virtues that maintain harmony and the spirit of sharing among the members of society. It implies an appreciation of beliefs, and a constant awareness that an individual's actions today are a reflection on the past, and will have far-reaching consequences for the future. A person with *ubuntu* knows his or her place in the universe and is consequently able to interact gracefully with other individuals. One aspect of *ubuntu* is that, at all times, the individual effectively represents the people from among whom he or she comes, and therefore tries to behave according to the highest standards and exhibit the virtues upheld by his or her society.