

“Prospects for Nuclear Disarmament”

**Fifth Simons Symposium
on Weapons of Mass Destruction
and Their Elimination**

**62nd Pugwash Conference on Science & World Affairs,
*Confronting New Nuclear Dangers***

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***Jennifer Allen Simons, C.M., Ph.D., LL.D.
President,
The Simons Foundation***

I appreciate, very much, the opportunity to introduce the Fifth Simons Symposium on Nuclear Disarmament. I would like to add my welcome to those who have come before me; and congratulate the organizers of this 62nd Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs. And I would particularly like to thank Chairman Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and the Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for their contributions and support of the Pugwash Conference.

This is my first visit to Kazakhstan. But, in the Spring of 1991 when, in Canada, we learned of Kazakhstan's decision to close the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, I travelled to Moscow with a Canadian Delegation to encourage the Soviet Union to reconsider its plan to shift testing to the unstable island of Novaya Zelma in the Arctic – an issue of great concern to Canada – and to *end all testing*.

Since then, Kazakhstan has become an independent country, returned its nuclear weapons to Russia, rid the country of more than half a ton of Highly Enriched Uranium, secured its nuclear facilities, and become a global leader in nuclear disarmament.

Kazakhstan has paid an enormous, catastrophic price for its disastrous experience as a Soviet testing site for nuclear weapons. And I extend my sympathy **for** the hundreds of thousands of Kazakh citizens who have died, **and to** those, still alive who suffer from the devastating effects of the nuclear tests; **and to** the future generations who - because of the altered genetic code - will continue to be subjected to these heart-breaking consequences.

I applaud President Nazarbayev for his vision – for the wisdom of his decision to the reject the standing of a nuclear power; and instead for his country to become a global leader in nuclear disarmament “working tirelessly to encourage other countries” to eliminate their weapons; and engaging in numerous other actions focused on a nuclear weapon free world. President Nazarbayev, himself, deserves his recently announced prize because of Kazakhstan's major “contribution to nuclear disarmament and global security.”

Another leader in nuclear disarmament is my good friend and colleague, Jayantha Dhanapala - who is responsible for the establishment of the Simons Symposium on Nuclear Disarmament at Pugwash Conferences – and I want to express my regret, Jayantha, that your ten-year term as President of Pugwash Conferences has come to an end.

As Chair of the 1995 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Review Conference, Jayantha Dhanapala masterfully secured the Conference's success in the adoption of the indefinite extension of the Treaty; in which the nuclear-weapon states *reaffirm* their commitment- to quote from the Treaty - *to pursue in good faith negotiations on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament*. The fulfillment of which required *the determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons*.¹

¹ Quoted in George Perkovich, *The Nuclear Ban Treaty: What would Follow?*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 31 May, 2017

I first met Jayantha Dhanapala when he was United Nations Under-Secretary for Disarmament Affairs. In that position, he was an exceedingly forceful proponent of the third pillar of the NPT – the fulfilment by the nuclear weapons states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. I was impressed by his strong principled stand against the nuclear weapons states’ concept *and still current pursuit* of managed and controlled proliferation – its failure manifested in the acquisition of nuclear weapons by India, Pakistan and Israel; in the covert operations of Iraq, Syria and Libya; and in the current threat posed by North Korea. As a former U.S. Ambassador said at a recent conference, “we have never succeeded in stopping a nuclear aspirant country.”²

Jayantha, please accept my deep appreciation and thanks for all you have done, and – I am sure – will continue to do.

I do hope that you will carry on as a potent voice for nuclear disarmament because, in your strong words of criticism and your principled stand against managed and controlled proliferation, you expressed the truth - *the root cause* - of the dangerous situation, in which we find ourselves today,

The Symposium topic, *Prospects for Nuclear Disarmament*, comes at a time when the situation does not look at all promising. As the Global Zero Nuclear Crisis Group points out, the risks of a nuclear exchange, or a nuclear war, are unacceptably high with current potential catastrophic flash points between India and Pakistan; the United States and Russia; NATO and Russia; and in the Korean Peninsula – which is causing us so much anxiety – even fear – today.

It is very clear that the nuclear weapons states have no intention of disarming. On the contrary, they have repudiated the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty; with the United States, France and the United Kingdom issuing a joint statement denouncing the Treaty – and I quote – “We do not intend to sign, ratify or ever become party to it.”³

Every nuclear weapons state is modernizing, creating new capabilities for its arsenals, and financially planning for their retention far into the future. As well, every nuclear weapon state in Asia is building up its arsenal.

So the question becomes what will it take for them to eliminate their nuclear weapons? It is becoming increasingly clear that it will probably take a nuclear detonation, or a nuclear war with its catastrophic consequences, for them to disarm and destroy their weapons - that is, if they are still around!

The current greatest danger is the acceptance of North Korea as a nuclear weapons state because it will reward withdrawal from the NPT, and encourage other NPT-allowed nuclear-capable states in further proliferation. Most importantly, it *entrenches failed policy and practice*, and jeopardizes the safety and security of the world.

² Kathleen Stephens, former American Ambassador to Seoul, quoted in *U.S. Opens Door to Talks With North Korea, While Flexing Military Muscle*, David Sanger, NYTimes, August 2, 2017

³ quoted in Richard Falk, *Challenging Nuclearism: The Nuclear Ban Treaty Assessed*, July 14, 2017

It is imperative that North Korea end its nuclear and missile tests and *denuclearize*. The global community must not accept North Korea as a nuclear weapons state – not even as a member of the **non-NPT** outlier club: **Israel** whose weapons were probably an incentive for the programmes in Iraq, Iran and Libya; **India and Pakistan** – their weak command and control systems “vulnerability to human error, system malfunction, cyber” and terrorist attacks, pose an immense danger to the world community.⁴

To encourage North Korea to denuclearize, and in an endeavour to prevent both President Trump and Mr. Kim Jong-un from blundering into war, I call upon President Nazarbayev, and the Government of Kazakhstan, to host and to lead a renewal of the former 6-party talks between North Korea, South Korea, Russia, China, Japan and the United States.

As precedent is Kazakhstan’s immense contribution to the success of the Iran negotiations. Kazakhstan and North Korea already share a connection. Kazakhstan was deeply engaged in the negotiations for the nuclear weapons ban treaty. And it is noteworthy that North Korea was the only state with nuclear weapons to vote in favour of negotiating this Treaty.

Kazakhstan is a model which North Korea would do well to follow. The goals of the Kazakhstan and North Korea are similar – economic growth, investment, trade, international recognition and security. The chosen paths, though, are completely different with Kazakhstan choosing to be rid of its nuclear weapons and to be a responsible and respected member of the world community.

Mr. Kim, on the other hand, believes that North Korea can only be secure enough to focus on economic growth if North Korea has a nuclear deterrent,⁵ and is said to be modelling itself on China’s path to the P-5 - the simultaneous pursuit of nuclear weapons and economic development.

Kazakhstan’s economy has benefited substantially over the past decade. And as a nuclear-free member of good standing in the global community, with a strong and growing economy, Kazakhstan can demonstrate to North Korea that its nuclear and missile tests act against its own interest because of the consequent multilateral economic sanctions and pariah status.

North Korea is not the only current impediment to nuclear disarmament.

The world has undergone a huge tectonic shift of changing demographics – mass migration - the consequences of war and climate change; runaway capitalism creating extremes of poverty and wealth; the extraordinary rise of the information technology,

⁴ Ramesh Thakur *Asia-Pacific and Global Nuclear Orders in the Second Nuclear Age*. APLN/CNND Policy Brief No.21, July 2016

⁵ *Meet Kim Jong-un, a Moody Young Man With a Nuclear Arsenal* by Choe Sang-Hun August, 10, 2017, New York Times

affecting employment and livelihoods; and weaponized for disinformation warfare - a potent combination, giving rise to right-wing extremism, to xenophobia, to nationalism, unilateralism, and to an angry electorate desperate for change, who, in the United Kingdom, voted to leave the European Union; and in the United States, elected Donald Trump as President.

As a consequence, we are facing a kaleidoscope of changing alliances: the decline of the United States as a world leader, the emergence of China as a superpower, a resurgent and aggressive Russia, the loss of the United Kingdom as a member of the European Union, illiberal democracies in the NATO countries of Poland, Hungary and Turkey.

So what does this mean for nuclear disarmament?

Since 1946 the United States has been responsible for the majority of nuclear disarmament initiatives – though not always taking the last step – for example, to eliminate its weapons, the ratification of the CTBT, its withdrawal from the ABM Treaty.

President Trump with his isolationist stance, his repudiation of alliances and treaties, is making it clear that the United States is loathe to take - or has lost - its former leadership role in the world. And the United States, under President Trump, is considered by Former CIA and National Security Agency Director, General Michael Hayden to be “the most disruptive force in the world today.”⁶

The United States is considered to no longer be a trusted partner in international alliances. World leaders, including allies and defence allies are “re-evaluating their relationships with the United States.”⁷ Unease and lack of trust in President Trump is provoking calls in South Korea and Japan for their own nuclear weapons.

President Trump’s reluctant affirmation of Article 5 has created uncertainty among NATO partners about the reliance of American security assurances which President Trump has called into question.”⁸ This creates a potential fracture of the NATO Alliance.

The uncertainty of President Trump’s intentions, a resurgent, aggressive Russia, and the United Kingdom’s decision to leave the European Union, has strengthened the resolve of the European Union to establish its own Defence Alliance with, perhaps, France as the only European nuclear power.

⁶ Robin Wright, *Why is Donald Trump Still so Horribly Witless About the World*, The New Yorker, August 7th, 2017

⁷ German Chancellor, Angela Merkel saying that “*We Europeans must really take our fate into our own hands*,” and that “*Europe could no longer ‘completely depend’ on the US and the UK, following the election of President Trump and the triggering of Brexit.*”

Canada’s Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland has said in Parliament that “*Canada can no longer rely on Washington for global leadership.*” Australia’s Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, in March claimed *many regional partners were locked in a ‘strategic holding pattern’ waiting to see which direction Trump would go.*” (The Guardian Weekly, 30 June 2017; www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-40217085; Globe & Mail, June 5th, 2017.

⁸ NYTimes, *European Nuclear Weapons Program Would be Legal, German Review Finds*, Max Fisher, July 5, 2017

Rather than take the opportunity to rid itself of US tactical nuclear weapons on its soil and Russian tactical nuclear weapons at the borders, and requesting the US and Russia to remove them to storage in their home countries as advocated by Global Zero, Germany sought, and received legal advice, that it could “finance the British or French nuclear weapons programs in exchange for their protection... and “could legally base nuclear warheads on German soil.” It ascertained, also, that “The European Union could do the same if it changed its budgeting rules.”⁹ ¹⁰ This would surely weaken the NATO Alliance – at least with regard to its Nuclear Weapons Policy.

Another potential NATO fracture comes from Turkey which signed an Agreement with Russia to buy a Long Range Air and Missile Defence system – a system not compatible with current NATO missile defence systems. Moreover, Turkey refused to allow German lawmakers to visit troops at Turkey’s main NATO base. Germany, as a consequence, has withdrawn its troops from Turkey.

The predominant destabilizing force in relations between Russia and the United States and NATO is the US missile defence system which has its roots in the United States 2002 withdrawal from the US-Russia bilateral Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM). The US withdrawal has been said to be to the cause of Russia’s development and deployment of a ground-launched cruise missile – a violation of the (1987) Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

The United States - rather than stand down and/or eliminate its missile defence, has plans to escalate weapon buildup and counter with its own road-mobile ground-launched cruise missile. And the great spiral of weaponry continues - out of control - and at enormous potential human, social and economic cost.

The immediate future is bleak for nuclear disarmament. The brightest star on the horizon is the possibility of an election in the U.K. within the next six months, which a weakened Theresa May may lose. A newly-elected Labour government, with Jeremy Corbyn as Prime Minister would, he says, “be committed to remove nuclear weapons from the world.”¹¹ If he follows through, this would, in all likelihood destroy the U.S., France, UK trio, and perhaps motivate China and Russia – and maybe even India -to begin the disarmament process. It would also mean a radical change to NATO’s Nuclear Weapons policy.

Another light on the horizon is the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty. This *is* a necessary and long overdue first step to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Because the NPT was deliberately crafted to be vague on the issue of elimination, the Ban Treaty is an essential and welcome complement to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

⁹ *European Nuclear Weapons Program Would be Legal, German Review Finds*, Max Fisher, NYTimes, July 5th, 2017

¹⁰ *Fearing U.S. Withdrawal, Europe Considers Its Own Nuclear Deterrent*, Max Fisher, NYTimes, 6th March 2017

¹¹ *Jeremy Corbyn tells Trump and Kim to stop the 'war of rhetoric.'* He said any future Labour government would be committed to remove nuclear weapons from the world “The Guardian”, August 13, 2017

The major problem with the Ban Treaty is that it does not eliminate existing arsenals, nor does it eliminate or reduce the dangers that nuclear weapons pose today. It also lacks verification and transparency measures. But it *does* have provisions for nuclear weapons states to join with mandated terms for the timebound, verified elimination of their weapons and programmes.

I am hopeful that NATO member states which host U.S. weapons will be subjected to domestic pressure from civil society to sign the treaty. This will not undermine NATO but rather the NATO nuclear weapons policy.

We cannot count on the dangerously volatile Trump administration to further nuclear disarmament. With changing political and defence alliances, can we look for nuclear disarmament leadership from China and Russia?

Though, to date, nothing has occurred, China and Russia *have taken* a leadership role in the North Korea-US standoff with a joint proposal to bring the United States and North Korea to the table, and to set the terms of the negotiations.

And Russia's President Putin - who rejected President Obama's 2013 Berlin challenge to negotiate bilateral cuts of their arsenals to 1,000 – has turned the tables; and in a phone call to President Trump initiated talks with the United States on a range of disputes and proposed extending the 2010 New Start Treaty. This was summarily rejected by the U.S. President. However, every encouragement should be given to the U.S. Administration to ensure these discussions take place in order to defuse the tensions and return the United States and Russia to resume bilateral cuts of their nuclear weapons so that multilateral negotiations can begin.

As President Nazarbayev so rightly says, *“The path to release the planet from the threat of nuclear suicide is not easy It requires profound mental changes, new multilateral political decisions and a high level of trust in international relations.”*¹²

It is essential that we achieve this goal.

Thank you!

Jennifer Allen Simons

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¹² <http://kazakhstan.com/nazarbayev-calls-other-countries-to-follow-kazakhstans-nuclear-disarmament-model>