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I want to thank Kate for the opportunity to join and learn from this year’s conference. In each of our countries, we have disastrous leaders in power. But, with its imperial power, its arsenals, and its disregard of the rule of law, and with a man described by his secretary of state as a “fucking moron” at the helm of power, Trump and his coterie are far and away the most dangerous.

Another difference is that you have Jeremy Corbyn. Would that we in the U.S. had such a far sighted moral figure leading the opposition and on the verge of taking power. Instead, we have credible reports of a "suicide pact" between Defense Secretary Mattis, Treasury Secretary Mnuchin, and Secretary of State Tillerson, and possibly Chief of Staff Kelly in which all would quit the Administration if the president fired any one of them.[[1]](#endnote-1)

I want to acknowledge my debt to CND over and above this belt buckle that I’ve worn since I became a Vietnam War draft resister. In the mid-1970s, Peggy Duff, formerly CND’s first general secretary, took me under her wing, exposing me to people, ideas and political forces that informed my life’s journey. CND gave me the privilege of meeting and learning from Bruce Kent, Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn. And Kate and Dave Webb have been important partners in the Peace and Planet network’s mobilizations and conferences over the past decade.

Kate has asked me to speak about Trump and the Ban Treaty.

With Trump the U.S. is rapidly becoming a rogue state, a nuclear armed banana republic, a plutocracy led by cruel white supremacists. Nearly every day we are assaulted by Trump and company’s racist actions and policy pronouncements, and by new outrages by the fascist forces they have unleashed. What passed for our democracy is besieged daily by their lies and by attacks on free speech, the press, and truth in the Orwellian tradition of totalitarians. The rule law and what remains of our social safety net are being undermined. We have daily manifestations of the President’s ignorance, his and his family’s conflicts of interest, and new revelations from investigations into his and his campaign’s ties to Russian oligarchs and Russian interventions into the fabric of our political system.

The problem isn’t limited to Trump. It is systemic and a legacy of slavery, racism and violence that endure in our national culture and strictures of our constitution, as well as in the neoliberal restructuring of our society.[[2]](#endnote-2) We see these in the rise of extreme right wing oligarchs like the Kochs, Sheldon Adleson, and the Mercer family who have funded the right-wing white supremacist institutions and the Tea Party which are now the dominant forces in the Republican Party. They have bought local, state, Congressional and Presidential elections.[[3]](#endnote-3) More, as David Remnick described our crisis, Republican and business leaders, as well as “a raft of White House advisers …cannot fail to see the chaos, the incompetence, and the potential illegality… and yet they go on supporting, excusing, and deflecting attention from the President’s behavior in order to protect their own ambitions and fortunes.”[[4]](#endnote-4)

In the wake of the Nazi holocaust we called such people “good Germans.” Now, even with the rise of the AFD, Germany is a more democratic society than the U.S. And is if our situation wasn’t bad enough, Steve Bannon is preparing right-wing racist fanatics to challenge every Republic senator who will be standing for reelection next year.

Trump’s war of words with Kim Jung-un and his rejection of diplomacy have created a Cuban Missile Crisis in slow motion. Last week, the fool who sits in the White House oval office upped the ante with Pyongyang and the dangers we all face with his declaration that “only one thing will work” by which he was signalling the military option. We also learned that back in July he pressed his military advisers for a ten-fold increase in the size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. And as he decertifies what he terms the worst international agreement in U.S. history, the nuclear deal with Iran, we face the ironic situation of hoping that the Republican Congress will not impose new sanctions on Iran, and that the junta of generals around Trump can prevent his impulsiveness, ignorance and need to dominate from pitching the world into still more catastrophic wars. Gail Collins spoke for many in the *New York Times* when she wrote that Defense Secretary Mattis is seen “as a man standing between our president and Armageddon”.

Among the consequences of this unique Trump--military alliance is the Pentagon’s new ability to wage wars across the Global South essentially free from presidential oversight. U.S. military spending is about to increase by $55 billion – more than Britain’s total military budget and two-thirds of Russia’s. $1.2 trillion is to be spent upgrading the U.S. nuclear arsenal and its delivery systems – including the first-strike long-range stand off cruise missile targeted primarily against China and the first strike W-76 warhead.

Like many Eastern Europeans during the Cold War, humor helps to keep our spirits alive. Congressman Lieu has a bill in Congress to require the presence of a psychiatrist in the White House. And, children like my neighbor ask why Trump is like a Halloween pumpkin: They are both orange, hollow and seedy inside, and must be thrown out in November.

The good news is that there is resistance. Polls tell us that most U.S. Americans don’t trust Trump. Millions demonstrated in the Women’s and Scientists marches. The Republican campaign to remove health care for millions was defeated. More than half a million people signed a petition supporting legislation to prevent the president from initiating a nuclear war on his own authority. Remarkably, a New York Times editorial this week also endorsed the legislation. Hundreds of professional football players “took the knee” to protest police violence and Trump’s racism, and late night TV humorously deconstructs the Trump administration’s hypocrisies, lies, threats and stupidities.

Turning to nuclear weapons and the Ban Treaty, recall that a year ago Trump didn’t know what the nuclear triad was and suggested that Japan and South Korea should become nuclear powers. He asked why we can’t use nuclear weapons, threatened to use them against “terrorists,” (which in Trump’s mind today would likely include Kim Jung-un) and said “I can’t take anything off the table.”[[5]](#endnote-5) In his first conversation with Vladimir Putin, before labeling the New START treaty a “bad deal”, he had to ask his advisors what it was.[[6]](#endnote-6) Since then, he has pledged to “greatly strengthen and expand” the U.S. nuclear arsenal,[[7]](#endnote-7) called for a nuclear arms race, and launched a Nuclear Policy Review targeted against Russia, China, North Korea and Iran, while Congressional forces press for deployment of land-based nuclear armed cruise missiles in Europe that would sink the INF Treaty.

Compounding these dangers Trump has sent nuclear capable B-1 bombers to conduct simulated nuclear attacks over Korea and humiliated his Secretary of State by tweeting that pursuing diplomacy with North Korea is “a waste of time.” This, when it is clear that the “Freeze for Freeze” diplomatic option provides the path back from the nuclear brink. In the South China Sea, with the increased tempo of U.S. so-called “freedom of navigation” naval exercises, as well as others in Black and Baltic Seas, Trump and the Pentagon have increased the danger that unintended incidents or miscalculations could escalate beyond control.

Midst it all, we have the Ban Treaty. As we see with the announcement that ICAN will receive the Nobel Peace Prize, the Treaty further stigmatizes nuclear weapons as it seeks to outlaw their use, threatened the use, development, testing, production, manufacture, acquisition, possession or stockpiling, transfer and deployment. Its greatest potential seems to be here in Europe,

I could be wrong, but my fear has been that, like the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the Ban Treaty will give us one more treaty that the nuclear powers refuse to respect. Unhappily, I see two trains are running in opposite directions. One races toward a nuclear weapons-free world. The other, with the additional fuel of North Korea’s nuclear arsenal, is burning unimaginable fortunes as it speeds toward nuclear Armageddon.

In addition to further stigmatizing nuclear weapons, the Ban Treaty’s most important contributions may be reminding people around the world who haven’t been paying attention of the imperative of nuclear weapons abolition, and the encouragement it gives to people and governments around the world who are working for a nuclear-free world.

But, the Treaty will be respected as international law by only those states that sign and ratify it. All the nuclear powers boycotted the ban treaty negotiations. The US, UK, France and Russia denounced it, falsely claiming that nuclear deterrence kept the peace for 70 years. (Ask the Vietnamese, Iraqis, Syrians, Yemenis, Congolese and so many others about that!) Led by the US, each of the nuclear powers is upgrading and/or expanding its nuclear arsenal. With NATO's expansion to Russia's borders, and with the West's nuclear weapons and conventional, high-tech and space weapons superiority, Moscow is upgrading its nuclear arsenal and other weapons systems.

More, with increased Japanese and South Korean anxieties resulting from Pyongyang's nuclear threats and growing doubts about the reliability of the US "nuclear umbrella", there are mounting calls from sectors of their elites for their governments to become nuclear powers. We thus could be entering an era of nuclear weapons proliferation, not abolition.

Our future depends on how people and governments respond, and it dictates a global division of labor among nuclear weapons abolitionists.

Nations that negotiated the ban treaty obviously must sign and ratify it as quickly as possible. And they can do more. As Zia Mian reminded us, Article 12 requires states parties to make their treaty commitments “part of their political engagement with the nuclear weapon states.” They can dispatch delegations to encourage others to join the treaty, and they can initiate sanctions and boycotts to press the nuclear powers.”[[8]](#endnote-8) If they have such courage, it could prove to be the source of our greatest hope.

But winning nuclear weapons abolition still requires building mass movements within the nuclear weapons and "umbrella" states. These nations and our disarmament movements thus lie at the cutting edge of the struggle. The Ban Treaty certainly reinforces popular understanding of the righteousness of Jeremy Corbyn’s and CND’s commitments to a nuclear weapons free world. Imagine the global reverberations of a British decision not to fund Trident replacement.

And, across the channel, if just one or two NATO or other umbrella states are led by their people reject the strictures of their nuclear alliances, they could begin to unravel world's nuclear architecture and unleash a global disarmament dynamic.

And for those of us in the world's nuclear weapons states, the imperative of resistance remains, beginning with preventing war with North Korea and preserving the nuclear deal with Iran. It also includes steadfast education about the human costs, preparations for, and dangers of nuclear war that can be brought on by miscalculation and accident, as well as intentionally. We need to highlight the deceit and deficiencies of "deterrence," and teach about the forces that led to and won the ban treaty.

But good ideas and truth rarely prevail on their own. On the eve of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon taught that governments won’t give us a nuclear weapons-free world, that it requires popular pressure from below. And years ago, Frederick Douglass, the 19th century anti-slavery abolitionist taught that, "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will." We won't prevail without visible and challenging nonviolent actions and mobilized popular opinion.

Our best near-term hope may lie in Jeremy Corbyn and possible Scottish succession from what was once Great Britain. Jeremy has said he will not push the nuclear button, and the loss of the Faslane on the Scottish coast could leave London without a nuclear weapons base. What CND does will thus be critical for human survival and to our struggles in the other nuclear weapons and umbrella states.

Friends, I want to close by invoking the words of another Nobel Peace Laureate, Joseph Rotblat, the only Manhattan Project senior scientist who resigned because of his moral considerations. Years ago in Hiroshima he said that humanity faces a stark choice. We can either completely eliminate nuclear weapons, or we will see their global proliferation and the nuclear wars that will follow. Why? Because no nation will tolerate what it experiences as an unjust hierarchy of power, in this case nuclear terror.

Friends, we will make our road to a nuclear weapons free world by walking it. Through our actions, we can and must build on the ban treaty and make and take advantage of nuclear disarmament openings that we find and create. With vision, courage and steadfastness, we shall overcome!

1. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The Electoral College, which apportions votes for President by states was designed in part to ensure to protect the institution of slavery in the states in which it prevailed. The 2016 election was the fifth time in U.S. history when the presidential candidate who won the most votes was not elected president. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Jane Mayer. Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right, Anchor Books, New York, 2016; David Remnick. “Things Fall Apart”, *The New Yorker*, July 24, 2017 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.buzzfeed.com/johnhudson/tillerson?utm_term=.nyvLLGWxZ#.byvXXK19M> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Editorial. “The Finger on the Nuclear Button”, New York Times, February 6, 2017 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. # Presidential Memorandum on Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces, The White House, January 27, 2016, Presidential Memorandum on Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces; Reuters. “In call with Putin, Trump denounced Obama-era nuclear arms treaty”, February 9, 2017

   [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Anthony Capaccio. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-01-30/nuclear-strike-survival-for-russia-china-get-new-u-s-review [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Zia Mian. “After the nuclear weapons ban treaty: A new disarmament politics”, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 7 July, 2017 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)