



OXFORD CND

NEWSLETTER

March/April 2021



The Integrated Defence Review

Eleven months ago, the Prime Minister announced an 'Integrated Review' of foreign policy, defence, security and international development, to 're-examine the UK's priorities and objectives.' The publication of the review has repeatedly been delayed, and with each passing day it becomes more so. The latest postponement signals unacceptable drift on this vital undertaking.

The government has repeatedly put the cart before the horse, taking major decisions on issues central to the review. In July, it announced the merger of the Foreign Office and the Department for International Development. The decision was announced without regard to the Integrated Review's unpublished findings.

In November, it announced the additional £16.5bn of funding for defence. Such a major commitment should have been informed by the findings of the Integrated Review and calibrated with other international priorities.

Just days later, the government announced its intention to abandon its statutory commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of gross national income on overseas aid.

The government should publish it without further delay. Then let's have a full and frank discussion in both Houses about its findings, and how to make the UK a real force for good in the world.

Oxford Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

Making exceptions

It is over a year since I flew back from Hong Kong, where masks were being worn from day one of the pandemic and airport restrictions were under way, into a Britain where masks were dismissed as useless and there was not the slightest health check at Heathrow. Other failures to learn from foreign experiences followed, and many of us put this down to the national tendency of British exceptionalism. It is a characteristic from which we suffer badly – witness the belief that British imperialism was beneficial unlike other imperialisms, or that Britain won the Second World War single-handedly. But it is more general than that. It helps explain the reluctance of the whole of the rich, mainly “North”, world to take the climate crisis as seriously as we should – until it hit us in the face. Indeed, regarding oneself as exceptional or immune from consequences that affect others appears to be a fairly basic human characteristic. Nevertheless, it is particularly pronounced in the way it is deployed by military and political elites, and nowhere is this more true than in the attitude of the nuclear weapons states (NWS) to possession of nuclear weapons, and their opposition to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

This phenomenon of “nuclear exceptionalism” has been there from the very first atom bomb onwards, but it is now highlighted in three important areas by the challenge that the TPNW presents to orthodox NWS doctrine -- a challenge that they regard as a threat. First, the Treaty exposes more vividly than ever the basic claim to exceptionalism, that our nuclear weapons are defensive and threaten no one but that in the hands of *others* they are potentially weapons of aggression. This claim is a bit fuzzy at the edge: the Permanent Five (P5) on the whole accept the reality of mutual possession, arguing that their nuclear weapons were legitimated by the provision of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which recognised, as a matter of fact, that they were nuclear weapons power. (Recognition, of course, was not the same thing as approval). India and Pakistan are half-

acknowledged as NWS in P5 thinking; Israel is admitted *sotto voce*; North Korea is outside and so would be Iran or anyone else. The doctrine of nuclear deterrence makes possession essential for a few but not for all the others – the 180 non-nuclear states across the world.

The new treaty has now brought a second form of nuclear exceptionalism more vividly to light. This is that although nuclear weapons form part of the trinity of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) along with chemical and biological weapons, they should be treated differently. The Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993 bans the possession

as well as use of such weapons; the earlier Biological Weapons Convention of 1972 did the same. In both cases the international community recognised that previous bans on use under the 1925 Geneva Protocol were not sufficient without a

ban on possession. British and US hypocrisy on this issue is particularly marked: both countries invaded Iraq in 2003 on the pretext that Saddam Hussein possessed or would shortly possess nuclear as well as other WMD. Again, there is no logical reason why today the possession of nuclear weapons, unlike the others, should be regarded as legal.

A third area of nuclear exceptionalism concerns the failure to realistically plan for their abolition. Governments plan ahead, wisely or otherwise, for every other policy area from health to the economy. But although the NWS pay lip service to the goal of nuclear disarmament, they offer no path on how to get there. This is highlighted in the British doctrine that we may call the “50-year rule”, first advanced by Tony Blair to justify Trident renewal, according to which we cannot tell what may happen in half a century’s time and so must retain our nuclear capability. A similar attitude can be detected among the military elites of all the NWS.

These three areas, and the lack of logic behind them, offer clear targets for the global movement against nuclear weapons. The exceptional unity among the P5 in opposing the new Treaty is not a sign of strength but of weakness. ■

John Gittings



Drones and the Defence Review: More intervention, less security

During March, the government will publish its long-awaited Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. While it will likely focus on strategy and overarching themes rather than detailed specifics (a Defence White Paper is expected soon after to flesh out equipment plans), it is already clear that funding of new military technology like drones is seen as key for the UK's 'involvement in the world'.

During his statement to the House of Commons on defence spending in November, Johnson again and again returned to the government's commitment to, as he put it, 'the new technologies of war'.

"Our new investment [is] to be focused on the technologies that will revolutionise warfare, forging our military assets into a single network designed to overcome the enemy. A soldier in hostile territory will be alerted to a distant ambush by sensors on satellites or drones, instantly transmitting a warning, using artificial intelligence to devise the optimal response and offering an array of options, from summoning an airstrike to ordering a swarm attack by drones, or paralysing the enemy with cyber-weapons."

And Johnson isn't the only one talking up the UK's commitment to emerging military technology. Defence Secretary Ben Wallace suggested last summer that 90% of the RAF's aircraft will be unmanned drones by 2040, insisting that the Army would have to give up tanks in order to have more drones and other modern equipment. General Sir Nick Carter, Chief of the Defence Staff, told Sky News on Remembrance Sunday that the British army of the 2030s could include large numbers of autonomous or remotely controlled machines while leaks to The Times indicated that the size of the British army could be cut by 10,000 as part of 'an increased focus on unmanned drones and vehicles along with enhanced technological capabilities.'

While the direction of travel is increasingly clear, what does it indicate about how the government sees the UK's role in the world that we are investing so heavily in these systems? A clue is seen by looking at the man appointed by Johnson to oversee the review - his foreign policy advisor, John Bew. Bew is very much an advocate of using both soft power and military force to secure 'British interests.'

Bew was scornful of parliament's refusal to support air strikes against Assad in Syria in 2013 saying that the failure to "send a message to Assad" was "a grave blow to Britain's prestige in the world." By stark contrast, four years later Bew hailed Trump's airstrike on Syria, saying that "the firing of 59 Tomahawk missiles at a military installation is a limited and carefully calibrated use of force".

However, as a realist, Bew understands that the UK is no longer the military imperial power it once was:

"When it comes to military affairs, our usefulness to our allies does not quite fit our self-image. Our much-vaunted counterinsurgency techniques – about which we often lectured the Americans during the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan – took a battering in Basra and Helmand Province. Ironically, it is in the murkier elements of warcraft – special forces operations and intelligence – that we often excel."

Here we see the roots of what is coming out of the review. Bew views the 'murkier elements of warcraft' – special forces and intelligence gathering as something on which the UK can build a new international reputation, enable it to have a say in global affairs, and to engage in interventions when necessary. The days of the UK keeping large numbers of troops to enable expeditionary warfare are at an end. Instead, the government is heavily funding drones and other military technology to enable intervention without political cost. Armed drones like Britain's Reaper and the soon-to be acquired 'Protector' enable the UK to be permanently deployed. New drone projects like 'Mosquito' and swarming drones are about overcoming defences, in essence, first strike weapons.

When published, the Integrated Review will no doubt contain fine phrases and soothing words insisting that the UK is committed to upholding international rules and promising peace, prosperity and security. The reality, as Ben Wallace was happy to tell Sky New recently, is that British forces will now be "more forward-deployed" and "prepared for persistent global engagement and constant campaigning." ■

Chris Cole
Drone Wars UK

Obituary – David Platt



The Reverend William David Platt, known as David, was born on 18th January, 1931, in North London. His mother took David and his sister to live in Edinburgh after they were bombed in the 2nd World War, and David went to the Royal Edinburgh High School, where he developed a love of English Literature.

He went on to read English at Durham at 17 for a year, but after a stint of Military Service in the Royal Marines, David went back to Durham to read Theology. He was also an organ scholar. He trained as a priest at Mirfield and went on to a curacy at St John's Bethnal Green.

He met his wife Gill whilst she was conducting the choir at St Katharine's Stepney – where her father, the well-known progressive Socialist priest, St John Beverly Groser, was vicar, and to whom David looked up to immensely. David and Gill were married in 1958, and David went on to another curacy in Pinner, and then to St Katharine's, Hammersmith, as Parish Priest, where he protested the closure of Butterwick House, a hostel for vulnerable men, which was unfortunately closed.

His next Parish was All Saints' Woodham, where he was a much loved Parish Priest for 16 years until 1988, creating a practical, outward-facing ministry and, with Gill, a high quality of music in worship. In order to be able to commit to his work as co-director of Christian CND, David then took on a chaplaincy at St Mary's Convent Wantage. During this time, he was arrested as part of a peaceful protest at Faslane and held for 24 hours in a cell. He believed passionately in the immorality of nuclear weapons and continued his non-violent activism well into his retirement.

He took a house for duty position at St Andrew's, East Hagbourne in his later years and once again became part of the community as priest and also as a well-known regular contributor to the folk night in the local pub. David and Gill moved to Oxford in 2002, where David assisted on a voluntary basis at St Michael and All Angels in Marston, and continued his work with Christian CND as well as more locally with Oxford CND and Abingdon Peace Group, and his participation in Multi-Faith community dialogue. He cared for his wife until her death in 2007. David died in his sleep of complications due to a previous stroke on 4th February 2021. He was a much-loved Parish Priest, Father, and Grandfather, and is survived by his 4 children and his grandchildren. ■

R. Platt

Obituary – David Platt



As an Anglican priest David was a member of the establishment, as an active peace campaigner he was anything but. (My little sketch, done during a portrait class with David as a sitter, embraces those two sides of him.) He combined a deep spirituality with unfaltering activism as a member of CANA (Clergy Against Nuclear Weapons).

It was in this capacity that he, along with the other two Davids (David Partridge and David Paterson) regularly offered me a lift to Aldermaston on one of the 4 Sundays in Advent especially allotted to CANA.

I remember David's wide-brimmed hat, his cassock trailing the ground, his slow steps in the cold, his strong voice as he read from the printed order of service and led in the songs. I used to fasten my banner at the fence (FEED THE WORLD AND NOT THE WAR MACHINE) and regularly felt that this vigil was the *one* Christmas service that mattered. On the way home we would stop at some pub warming up and feeling happy. David, who had discovered the *haiku* as his favourite poetic form, on one occasion encapsulated the experience in the 5,7,5 scheme as follows:

***This hat in my car
broken rifle, German words
The banners? Not missed***

I responded in kind when the question arose in my church (the URC) whether to invite David to preach.

***Anglo Catholic?
Our own liturgy so slim
Dare we ask the priest?***

In the event he shared the pulpit with a visiting young American trainee minister in the manner of a dialogue on how they each came to love the Prince of Peace.

When the new technology of armed drones appeared on the horizon David and I both travelled to London to attend a workshop on this new threat. The list of things we needed to campaign on and pray for became longer. David's commitment never waned.

***Another birthday
Growing years meet growing tasks
Retire? Strange thought***

I find it difficult to imagine David on Zoom. Digital life is totally 2nd hand and David was very much 1st hand. In his ups and in his downs. That is why we loved him. After retiring he found a spiritual home in the Anglican church St Michael' and All Angels in Marston.

Now that we are living through spells of lockdown forbidding gatherings of any kind it strikes me as a blessing that St Michael's arranged for a huge celebratory party for David a few years ago. Parishioners and folk from CND filled that church to overflowing.

It was a sort of early way of saying good-bye and thanking David for his life amongst us. ■

Annette Bygott

Happy Thoughts of Revd. William David Platt

So many of us have been affected on and since February 4th 2021 on hearing of the death earlier that day of the Revd. William David Platt. David didn't die until 35 days after his 90th birthday. He would have liked that!

The Church of England have temporarily lost an active, deeply spiritual priest and simultaneously CND have also lost a lifelong, tirelessly devoted and vibrant supporter.

And so many of us have also, temporarily, lost a lovely friend... and a good guy!

On Sunday March 3rd 2010, I became n of them. From that time until the end of October 2011, David and I met frequentlr, sometimes surrounded by Church friends at St. Michael's, Marston, sometimes with CND friends, sometimes just the two of us.

David positively loved driving his Renault Clio anywhere: it took us to various Oxfordshire venues to eat out (my treat!). I was privileged to hear and appreciate the human stories of his life; I heard that, as the youngest sibling, when unhappy, he'd curled up and wanted to sleep with the dog in its basket. Years later, as a young

curate, he'd fallen in love with a certain Gill's back as he watched her conducting and told his colleagues – 'That's the girl I'm going to marry'.

And he did. Gill's thanksgiving memorial service at East Hagbourne bore testament to Gill's, his, and their four children's musical talents.

David appreciated being taken to Sunday lunch out, after church, by our daughter Heather, graham and their family. On another family outing, our son Roger, Sarah plus 3 took David and I to a Creation Theatre play performed in Blackwell's Norrington Room here in Oxford. David got on splendidly with all generations.

On reflection, I do realise that it was a unique and amazing experience for two – then 80 year olds...a man and a woman to be able to meet together and give each other that emotional support they each so much valued after the comparative early demise of their own much loved married partners – David's Gill and for me, Terry.

David has enriched so many lives. May he now rest in peace with our thanks and love. ■

Dorothy Denny



Peace campaigners remember Revd. David Platt as a strong churchman and a peace and anti-nuclear campaigner of long-standing. He was a powerful speaker and preacher, sure, reasoned, clear, but welcoming, human and embracing at the same time.

David attended many meetings at Abingdon Peace Group and also shared his experience, humour and support with Oxford CND and Oxfordshire Peace Campaign. He was the key base person for the Oxfordshire and Reading group that blockaded Faslane in 2007, keeping track of where campaigners were detained in police cells, and coordinating that demonstration. He brought with him a young parishioner who really benefited from his mentoring. He was a speaker at the march and rallies at the USAF Croughton base, an inspiring figure in his black cassock. He was at the unveiling of the Bonn Square Peace Plaque, sat next to Bruce Kent, and is remembered for his singing there and at many other events.

David blessed the Peace Garden created by Robert and Jackie of Les Bicyclettes, and invited the Oxford CND stall and banners into peace and joint faith events at St. Michaels in Marston. His wide range of interests included reading and publishing poetry, and he was a singer and musician, a friend, a campaigner, a mentor, and he will be missed by so many. ■

Nigel Day

UK overseas bases

Britain's military has a permanent presence at 145 base sites in 42 countries or territories around the world, research by Declassified UK has found.

Britain's armed forces have a far more extensive base network than ever presented by the Ministry of Defence. New research by Declassified reveals the extent of this global military presence for the first time. The findings come after Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced an extra £16-billion would be spent on the UK military over the next four years – a 10% increase.



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

The size of this global military presence is far larger than previously thought and is likely to mean that the UK has the second largest military network in the world, after the United States.

It is the first time the true size of this network has been revealed.

The UK's base sites include 60 it manages itself in addition to 85 facilities run by its allies where the UK has a significant presence.

These appear to fit the description of what General Mark Carleton-Smith, Britain's Chief of the General Staff, recently termed as "lily pads" – sites which the UK has easy access to as and when required.

Overseas military bases of the United Kingdom enable the British armed forces to conduct expeditionary warfare. Bases tend to be located in or near areas of strategic or diplomatic importance, often used for the build-up or resupply of military forces.

Phil Miller is a staff reporter for Declassified UK, an investigative journalism organisation that covers the UK's role in the world. The full article can be found – <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-11-24-revealed-the-uk-militarys-overseas-base-network-involves-145-sites-in-42-countries/>

Dreadnought submarines

Announcement raises new questions as to whether UK's current ageing fleet can be relied on Britain's £31bn plus £10bn reserve replacement for its ageing Trident nuclear submarines has been delayed by another year owing the pandemic, raising fresh questions about whether the UK can rely on the existing fleet.

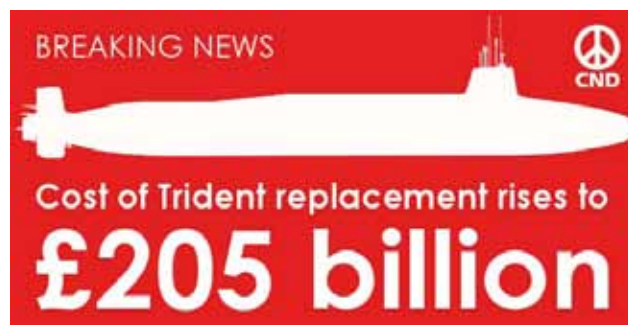
Official documents released at the end of last year quietly confirmed that the current phase of the Dreadnought programme had been put back to March 2022, although the update was not highlighted and it was only spotted by a pressure group.

An annual update on nuclear replacement, released to MPs before Christmas, said that "recognising the high levels of uncertainty caused by the pandemic" and its impact on supply chains, "delivery phase 2 will continue until March 2022".

It did not say that this amounted to a one-year delay to the sprawling programme. This was

spotted by David Cullen, of the Nuclear Information Service, who recalled a promise made a year earlier to conclude the work in March 2021.

"Covid is going to be with us for a while, and nobody will be surprised if there are other delays to Dreadnought," Cullen said, arguing that the relative secrecy suggested "this isn't the behaviour of a department that is confident it can deliver on its promises". ■



Doomsday Clock

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists was founded in 1945, by Albert Einstein and University of Chicago scientist who worked on the first atomic weapons. Two years later, they created the Doomsday Clock, as a way of using the amount of time to midnight, or annihilation, as a way of discussing the danger humanity found itself in.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, which organises the clock, said that it was leaving the time at 100 seconds to midnight. That time was announced last year, and was the first time it had been closer than two minutes to midnight ever before.

The decision was made largely in the context of the coronavirus outbreak, the scientists said. It noted that the pandemic had not only killed and sickened vast numbers of people, but also “revealed just how unprepared and unwilling countries and the international system are to handle global emergencies properly”. It also pointed to ongoing threats, including climate change and the development of new and even more dangerous nuclear weapons systems.

And it made reference to a threat that has become an increasing part of the scientists’

warning: the danger of online misinformation. It noted that Covid-19 served as a “wake-up call” in that respect, too, and also pointed to the way false conspiracy theories had led to the events at the US Capitol earlier in January. “In 2020, online lying literally killed,” the scientists wrote in their announcement.

But it also noted that there were many glimmers of hope found in 2020. While it said that the negative developments “in the nuclear, climate change, and disinformation arenas might justify moving the clock closer to midnight”, it had made the decision to keep the time the same in the context of other positive developments, the Bulletin said.

“Because these developments have not yet yielded substantive progress toward a safer world, they are not sufficient to move the Clock away from midnight,” the scientists wrote. “But they are positive and do weigh against the profound dangers of institutional decay, science denialism, aggressive nuclear postures, and disinformation campaigns discussed in our 2020 statement.” ■

Nuclear warhead convoy mid-Covid lockdown

A nuclear warhead convoy passed through Britain between the 14th and 21st January, while the country was in lockdown.

It was carrying Trident nuclear missile warheads – assembled at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield near Reading, and travelled to the Royal Naval Armaments Depot at Coulport adjacent to the Clyde Submarine Base at Faslane, and then returned to AWE Burghfield. It passed Oxford southbound in the evening of Thursday 21st January, monitored by Oxford CND nukewatchers.

All citizens had been told to stay inside and not to travel more than a few miles from their local area, so this came as a surprise to many. The convoy travelled despite restrictions and health services being stretched. There are serious questions about the Ministry of Defence’s risk assessments if these convoys are allowed to travel during challenging weather and

while we are in the grip of a deadly pandemic.

In early December, there was a Covid outbreak at the nuclear submarine base at Faslane, which substantially increased case numbers in the area.

Nukewatch UK tracked the convoys journey. The website said: “Severe weather warnings for snow and ice and a full-blown pandemic and still the Ministry of Defence sends a convoy of nuclear warheads out to travel on our roads.”

Meanwhile, the Trident Ploughshares group has suggested that the coming into force on 22nd January of the Treaty of the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) could mean that a future independent Scotland would ratify the treaty and get rid of nuclear weapons.

“Why wait for an independent Scotland as a TPNW ratifying state to expel the UK nuclear weapons with no feasible relocation?” ■

NUKEWATCH

TPNW in force

Oxford City Council agreed overwhelmingly a resolution in January 2020 to encourage the UK government to take action on nuclear weapons by backing the multilateral UN Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Oxford City joined hundreds of towns and cities and 122 nations who voted in favour of banning nuclear weapons.

Now 51 nations' parliaments have ratified the treaty and the treaty entered into force on Friday 22nd January 2021. It makes nuclear weapons illegal in the countries that sign the treaty and will outlaw nuclear weapons. The UK government refused to participate and is one of nine countries that have nuclear weapons. Almost 200 countries do not.

It is important to appreciate that this Treaty

is unique, as it is focused on the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. The new treaty will make it illegal under international law to develop, test, produce, manufacture, acquire, possess, stockpile, transfer, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons. It also makes it illegal to assist or encourage anyone to engage in these activities.

Freedom of Information requests have revealed that Oxford University has accepted funding and worked with the UK Atomic Weapons Establishments who design and produce UK nuclear warheads. The entry in to force of the treaty gives the University and the Government the opportunity to engage in the global nuclear disarmament process to give us all a world without nuclear weapons. ■



Diary



MONTHLY ALL YEAR: USAF Croughton main gate Quaker meeting 2-3pm (fourth Saturday of the month). Contact: **Elisabeth Salisbury – 01865 515163.**

March

Wednesday 3rd – Faringdon Peace Group Zoom meeting – Kate Hudson – 7.30pm.

Saturday 13th – Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp Zoom – Margaret – 01865 248357

Tuesday 16th – Abingdon Peace Group Zoom meeting, 8.00pm.

Thursday 25th – Oxfordshire Peace Campaign Zoom meeting 2.30pm.

April

Wednesday 7th – Faringdon Peace Group Zoom meeting – Fabian Hamilton 7.30pm

Saturday 10th – Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp – Margaret – 01865 248357

Saturday 10th – CND Council meeting

Tuesday 20th – Abingdon Peace Group Zoom meeting, 8.00pm.

Best list of news items, webinars etc:

https://www.cndsalisbury.org.uk/news_items

Latest News

Labour



Labour's commitment to maintaining the UK's nuclear weapons is 'non-negotiable', the party's shadow defence minister, John Healey, said in a speech on Friday 26th February at the Royal United Service Institute thinktank.

In a speech that implicitly acknowledges the perception by some within Labour that Corbyn's public doubts over nuclear weapons and NATO helped damage the party's reputation with certain voters, Healey also stressed the party's commitment to the North Atlantic alliance, and to maintaining a viable UK defence industry.

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Make cheques for 2021 payable to Oxford CND and send to: Membership, 22 Downside Road, Oxford, OX3 8HP.

If we scrapped our nuclear weapons we could cancel tuition fees for four million students.



Oxford CND Newsletter by email

Some members already receive the Oxford CND newsletter only by email. If you would also like to receive it only by email, contact: oxfordcnd@phoncoop.coop

Oxford Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

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Please send letters and items to:
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No later than **Thursday 22nd April 2021**