

Nuclear escalation – Britain's role

The past two years have seen a sharp escalation in global tension and an increase in nuclear dangers. At the same time the world faces a series of interlocking crises, largely triggered by our unsustainable and unjust economic system: the climate emergency, pandemics, the cost of living crisis, water shortages, a crisis of agricultural production, population movement and displacement. The ongoing war in Ukraine is exacerbating not only the nuclear danger but many other crises.

The scale of global problems necessitates global cooperation, prioritising people's needs, abolishing nuclear weapons and underpinned by a common security approach to resolving conflicts. While there is increasing recognition of this necessity, particularly in the global south, Britain has chosen to opt for a militarist expansionary approach, a 'global Britain' based on threat and force rather than collective problem solving and peaceful even development.

This is particularly marked in the nuclear weapons sphere. On top of the ongoing replacement of the Trident nuclear weapons system, we have seen the nuclear arsenal increase, the expansion of the nuclear use policy, the withdrawal of transparency, the adoption of the AUKUS agreement, and most recently the return of US/NATO nuclear weapons to RAF/USAF Lakenheath in Suffolk. All this is compounded by NATO's hostile orientation to China, and Britain's adoption of the same US-driven policy.

Conference recognises that the threat of nuclear war has significantly increased and that Britain's role has been wholly negative and escalatory.

Conference agrees to:

1. Raise awareness of the increasing risks and the reasons for them, and mobilise society against war and nuclear weapons.
2. Advance the case for an alternative vision of global society – just, peaceful and sustainable – based on a common security approach.
3. Campaign against British government policy on Trident, AUKUS and at RAF/USAF Lakenheath.
4. Campaign to overturn trade union policies that support military expansion, Trident, AUKUS, and USAF activities at RAF Lakenheath.
5. Strengthen and extend civil society alliances against war and nuclear weapons, both nationally and internationally.

RAF Lakenheath and the F35

Conference notes that:

- F35-A jet fighter aircraft arrived at Lakenheath during December, 2021.
- Lakenheath is an integral part of a European US/NATO nuclear weapons base network.
- Lakenheath's nuclear weapons store has been upgraded, implying that US nuclear weapons are returning to Britain.
- Lakenheath is building a new 'campus', with six F35-A flight simulators for pilot training.
- The new F35-As will operate alongside the F15-E fighter aircraft that have previously been based at Lakenheath.
- The new US B61 Mod 12 nuclear guided missiles have been specifically designed to be launched from F-35s. The B61-12s are potentially satellite guidable to within 30 metres of a command bunker target, so may 'only' need a yield of 50 kilotons (three and a third times that of the Hiroshima bomb) to destroy a bunker.
- The F-35/B61-12 combination runs the risk of appearing more potentially 'usable' for a first strike against a nuclear-armed nation.
- F35 deployment could lead to an incident that could spark off a nuclear holocaust that could destroy all human life.
- The F35s are also designed to deliver cluster bombs banned under the Cluster Munitions Convention (2008) that the US, unlike the UK, have not signed. Lakenheath is nominally an RAF base, making the UK potentially liable.
- The F35s are also very fuel intensive, and the jet fuel used by the F35 is, by far, the single largest category of energy consumed by the US government and its Defense Department.
- So, the F35/B61 combination poses two threats to all human life (and to that of many other species).

Conference resolves to:

- Strengthen links between peace and anti-nuclear activists and anti-climate change activists, and, where necessary, to raise awareness among climate activists of the importance of opposition to the F35s.
- To establish contacts with US campaigns against the F35s, such as the strongly anti-pollution based campaign against the US National Guard F35 training base at Burlington, Vermont.
- To increase the scale and frequency of demonstrations and support for other actions at RAF Lakenheath.

New Cold War

Conference notes that:

1. In the last year the world has become an extremely dangerous place with the war in Ukraine vastly escalating the risks of nuclear confrontation as NATO and Russia edge towards direct confrontation;
2. The US pursues an aggressive nuclear first use policy; Russia states it will use nuclear weapons if faced with an existential threat; the breakdown of the INF treaty in 2019 has been profoundly destabilising; nuclear weapons systems are proliferating in Europe; and AUKUS expansion is stoking the Pacific arms race;
3. US foreign policy pits ‘democracies against autocracies’ using the Ukraine crisis to create a Cold War-style ‘bloc confrontation’, dividing governments just as they urgently need to pull together to avert further humanitarian disasters from climate change, the continuing pandemic and now threats to energy and food security;
4. Not only has the UK government obstructed Ukraine-Russia peace negotiations, it is sending nuclear submarines to Australia and considering a ‘NATO-style international cooperation’ against China’ seen as the UK’s biggest long-term threat.
5. In these circumstances, CND welcomes the renewed attention to common and indivisible security; noting:
 1. the IPB, International Trade Union Confederation and Olof Palme International Centre report, carrying forward the 1982 Palme Commission’s opposition to the nuclear arms race, maintaining: ‘States can no longer seek security at each other’s expense; it can be obtained only through cooperative undertakings’.
 2. China’s Global Security Initiative’s opposition to ‘the pursuit of one’s own security at the cost of others’ security’.

Conference resolves to continue working with Stop the War Coalition, trade unions and other peace/anti-war movements in the UK and internationally to:

1. Build support for a ceasefire and peace negotiations in Ukraine;
2. Build opposition to AUKUS and NATO expansion in the Pacific;
3. Develop the common security agenda for a new European and global security order, with particular emphasis on nuclear disarmament and the principle of indivisibility;
4. Continue campaigning to oppose the Cold War-style confrontation against China, emphasising the necessity of international cooperation to promote arms control and tackle the issues of climate, health and economic security.

Global NATO

With a New Security Concept adopted at its Summit in June, NATO has gone global. Identifying Russia as the greatest direct threat, it also claims China to be a ‘systemic challenge’ so opening a new era of confrontation and militarisation across the world.

The No to NATO statement on the Summit highlights:

- the false picture of NATO as an organisation of a so-called democratic versus an authoritarian world, which is used to legitimise its militaristic and confrontational course;
- its claim to be working towards disarmament and arms control whilst expanding its Rapid Reaction Force on a massive scale;
- the destabilising impact of the arms sales of member states which account for two thirds of the global total
- its continued commitment to nuclear weapons as an essential part of its military strategy, refusing to comply with the obligations of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and rejecting the TPNW.

The No to NATO statement following the Summit:

- condemns NATO expansion with the inclusion of Finland and Sweden, which was accompanied by support for Turkey’s war policy against the Kurds;
- notes also the strengthening of ties with partners in the Indo Pacific, risking a dangerous ratcheting up of tensions which can lead into an unprecedented arms race in the region; and calls on social movements such as trade unions; environmental movements; women’s, youth, anti-racist organisations to:
 - i. “resist the militarisation of our societies that can only come at the expense of social welfare, public services, the environment and human rights”
 - ii. “work together for a different security order based on dialogue, cooperation, disarmament, common and human security...so preserve the planet from threats and challenges posed by nuclear weapons, climate change and poverty”

CND Conference endorses the No to NATO statement and pledges to disseminate it across social movements to promote discussion about, and commitment to, a common security approach.

Nuclear Dump in Cumbria

Conference notes that:

1. West Cumbria and the Irish Sea are already contaminated by the presence of vast quantities of untreated nuclear waste in Sellafield and the surrounding area, including 140 tonnes of plutonium.
2. Previous attempts to develop underground nuclear waste facilities in Cumbria in 1997 and 2013 were abandoned, in the wake of evidence that the area is unsuitable for such a facility because of its geological characteristics.
3. Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) and its collaborators are currently ‘investigating’ three ‘search areas’, and an area off-shore in Copeland and Allerdale, as potential locations for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF), which would become the repository of Britain’s radioactive waste, including waste from both existing and future nuclear weapons systems and nuclear
4. There is growing opposition to the prospect of such a ‘repository’ in Cumbria from local groups, including Radiation Free Lakeland and Millom and District
5. More than 50,000 people have signed a petition saying “that seismic testing of the Irish Sea for a deep nuclear dump is not acceptable.”
6. The radioactivity of some of the nuclear waste will not wane for many tens of thousands of years, while a GDF is, over such a long period of time, likely to leak radiation at some point.

Conference resolves that CND should:

1. Reaffirm its opposition to attempts to develop a so-called GDF for nuclear waste in Cumbria.
2. Call on local groups and affiliated organisations to actively support national and local opposition to such a facility.
3. Review relevant briefing papers and other materials to ensure that they include up-to-date information regarding GDF and nuclear waste.

Muslim Community

Conference notes that:

Religious faiths are an important part of life in the UK. CND currently has links with a number of faith-based organisations, including one Specialist Section, Christian CND, which is steadily growing in size and influence and whose role is (a) to take CND's messages appropriately to the churches and (b) to bring distinctively Christian perspectives to the wider disarmament movement.

The second largest faith group in the UK is Islam: according to the 2011 census, nearly 5% of the population identified as Muslims. Although there is no 'Muslim CND' as such, CND has good links with the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), going back 20+ years. There is always scope to increase the number of Muslims involved in the anti-nuclear movement, and there may well be people within the existing CND movement who could share their practical experiences to support this.

Conference resolves to:

Request National CND to review and report before the 2023 AGM on CND's current relationship with Muslim organisations and key individuals and with its Muslim members, and any transferable experiences from the work of other sections of CND. The purpose is to establish whether there are further opportunities to encourage and support the involvement of British Muslims in the anti-nuclear movement.

Future Wars

Conference notes that:

1. In 2018 Yorkshire and London Regions of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament held an international conference on “Emerging Weapons Technologies”.
2. Since then, developments have moved on apace. There have been major unnerving developments in several important military areas, including nuclear weapons, space technology, missile defence, cyberwarfare, hypersonic weaponry, surveillance, artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomous robotic systems.
3. Some surveillance technologies are also being used to target campaigning groups and individuals, while others (such as microwave and sonar technologies) are being seen as possible methods of crowd control.
4. Many new technological developments are being tried and tested in war zones such as Ukraine, which become a showcase for arms developers.
5. All of the above make a large contribution to the huge military carbon boot print.
6. Many of these developments are not widely known about and the ethical, legal, and policy implications of employing these technologies need a much wider public debate.
7. The UK government views these emerging technologies (especially space technologies) as important developments for warfighting and is encouraging universities and companies such as Lockheed Martin to conduct research and development opportunities on them in the UK.
8. These future war technologies are a huge threat to international security and to our right to demonstrate and protest against government policy.

Conference resolves to:

9. Continue to support the Global Network’s “Keep Space for Peace” week in October.
10. Support the development of a joint project with Drone Wars UK to hold a conference on these issues this year.
11. Support the introduction of conference follow-up sessions with Drone Wars UK, to be held in major cities around the UK and organised with local campaigners to focus on local military establishments and academic and industrial contributions to future wars and weapons production.
12. Work with organisations like Demilitarise Education (dED) who work with students to research university involvement in the military and defence sector and populate the universities and arms database. This is to persuade universities to sign the Demilitarise Education Treaty.

Common Security

Conference notes that:

1. Future US nuclear rearmament at USAF Lakenheath and Trident Replacement of the Dreadnought fleet are flagrant breaches of UK treaty obligations. International trust in any future UK government will be a factor in a change to Common Security principles.
2. The departing words of ex-PM Boris Johnson were 'No.1 Stay close to America, stick up for Ukraine, stick up for freedom and democracy everywhere'
3. With the choice of Johnson's continuity candidate made in American style TV debates, the next leader of the Conservative Party and PM was selected by 0.3% of the electorate.
4. The authority of a new Conservative Government is in deficit to real democracy, the fraud established before a presumed general election in 2024.
6. Nuclear re-armament will open a moral sinkhole under all parties aspiring to government in future. So 2023 is a vital year to confront both Tory and Labour leaderships with the stark choice 'Nuclear Disarmament Not Nuclear War'

Conference resolves to:

Establish for members and our wider public the principles of the Common Security Report 2022 as a bridge to understanding, acceptance and implementation of The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons by any incoming UK government.

Emergency Resolution proposed by CND Council's Trade Union Advisory Group

Conference notes:

- 1.1 the intention of the GMB and Unite unions to overturn progressive policies for Peace at the Trades Union Congress, October 2022, and commit the labour movement to UK investments in fossil fuel extraction, nuclear power and military expansion for the next 30 years;
- 1.2 the commitment of the Labour Party Conference 2022 to support continued UK investment in nuclear weapons and nuclear power
- 1.3 the commitment of the new Truss government for increased military expenditure and reduction in expenditure on climate change mitigation
- 1.4 the growing scale of direct action with strikes and public protest at the cost-of-living crisis and climate inaction

Conference resolves:

- 2.1 to focus upon policy reversal in the industrial trade unions, in direct contact with union representatives at local and national level to achieve anti-nuclear resolutions;
- 2.2 to actively support picket lines and trade union strike events;
- 2.3 to seek commitments from union members and branches for anti-nuclear campaigning aimed at reversing pro-nuclear policies;
- 2.4 to encourage further branch, regional and national trade union affiliations to CND; and
- 2.5 to build direct action against nuclear weapons and nuclear power alongside climate activists