



**The UK's National Defence Needs  
and International Nuclear  
Disarmament Responsibilities**

Volume I • Final report and recommendations

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Nuclear Education Trust (NET) is an independent charity whose purpose is to inform and educate the public regarding nuclear weapons-related issues through making grant awards and commissioning its own research. It is non-party political and does not advocate any one specific approach on nuclear disarmament issues.

NET is extremely grateful for the input of all contributors and it has sought to reflect the range of views expressed in this report. It is also indebted to Steve Barwick in particular, and Connect Communications in general, who managed the project and have compiled this final report.

Photos on front page – from top

- Conference on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Opens in New York; <http://www.ips.org/TV/wsf/npt-meet-draws-thousands-of-anti-nukes-activists/> (Credit: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe)
- First artist's impression of the submarines due to replace the Vanguard-class boats which carry Trident missiles. (Credit: BAE Systems)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This survey and inquiry grew out of the consensus which emerged following the launch of the 2012 NET report *The Trident Alternatives Review and the Future of Barrow*. The starting point for any public debate on nuclear weapons generally, and the successor to Trident in particular, must focus on what the real future defence/security needs of the UK are, as well as its international nuclear disarmament responsibilities.

A number of current and past Defence Secretaries and Ministers, academics, think tanks, campaign groups and other stakeholders all made a contribution to the survey and inquiry. NET is extremely grateful for their input and has sought to reflect the full range of views expressed in this report. However, the final report, including the “consensus” conclusions and recommendations, are those of the Nuclear Education Trust alone.

### 1. THE UK'S NATIONAL DEFENCE NEEDS

There was unanimity that the list of priority risks included in ‘A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy’ (2010) were useful. However, there were also a range of criticisms, including:

- the list of priority risks takes “account of both likelihood and impact” which obscures rather than illuminates by conflating these two distinct aspects;
- that some risks were too high (nuclear or other mainland attack); or too low (bacteriological); or not mentioned (climate change and financial services); or not foreseen (Arab Spring);
- the analysis had been somewhat rushed and had started with some assumptions e.g., Trident replacement, so had not led logically to procurement decisions.

***“For now and [for the] foreseeable future there is no nuclear threat to UK.”***

**Rt Hon Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP  
former Defence and Foreign Secretary**

There was a consensus that the independence of UK defence policy formulation to meet UK defence needs was an extremely important principle. However there was no consensus about whether, in practice, the UK has always made independent choices regarding the interventions it has taken part in since the end of the Cold War, and whether the UK really has an independent nuclear deterrent or indeed requires one. All contributors supported working through the UN whenever possible.

***“The most effective way to deal with current and future threats is to improve the structure and effectiveness of the United Nations to seek more peaceful ways to deal with national and international conflicts.”***

**Sean Morris  
Secretary of Nuclear Free Local Authorities**

There was an agreed lack of any foreseeable risk of nuclear or conventional attack or indeed nuclear blackmail and therefore no current military role for the UK's nuclear weapons. Some respondents argued that despite their lack of usefulness now they are essential for insuring against any “future nation-on-nation threat.” A range of questions were raised including:

- whether the current operational policy of Continuous At-Sea Deterrence (CASD) is required at all;
- whether possession of nuclear weapons in fact contributes to some of the risks that they seek to mitigate;
- the extent to which the world – and in particular Russia – has changed since the end of the Cold War.

***“None of the 2010 National Security Strategy threat scenarios would be averted by the UK having nuclear weapons, and some could be exacerbated.”***

**Dr Rebecca Johnson  
Acronym Institute for Disarmament and Diplomacy**

#### “CONSENSUS” CONCLUSIONS

- There is no evidence of any state-on-state nuclear threat to the UK's security at the current time or in the foreseeable future.
- When the Strategic Defence and Security Review is conducted in 2015 the Tier One, Two and Three list of risks should be redrafted and divided into two dimensions – likelihood and impact – which should be consulted on widely.
- The UK must make its own choice about the nature of the security threats it faces now, and potentially in the future, as well as the means by which it wants to provide for its security and the priority it gives to addressing each threat.
- The UK should aspire to work with other countries to mitigate threats, whenever possible through the United Nations.
- The relevance of keeping nuclear weapons vis-à-vis current and foreseeable future UK security threats is either non-existent or negligible.

## 2. INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

All respondents supported the overall UK defence policy of moving towards a nuclear-free world as envisaged in the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Some saw this as possible by 2050, dependent upon "political will and nations working together". Others were less positive about progress stating that the Non-Proliferation Treaty is now at a "crossroads".

***"Is a nuclear-free world possible? Probably not by 2030 but possibly by 2050. I can envisage a situation where the capacity to rebuild a nuclear weapon remains but the situation of not doing so is monitored to ensure compliance."***

Admiral Lord Alan West, former Defence Minister

All respondents supported the concept of multilateralism although there were clear differences of view about what that meant for Britain. Many felt that America and Russia should take action next as befitting countries with the largest stockpiles. However, many also said that other action could, and should, be taken now by Britain and the other nuclear weapons states, especially given what was generally felt to be a more conducive international environment for nuclear disarmament. Also it was pointed out that since the end of the Cold War the UK has taken unilateral action and this should no longer be seen as pejorative.

***"The UK could break the red line of CASD. To take that step would send an enormous signal and also make sense: we would no longer be protecting ourselves from something that does not exist."***

Lord Des Browne, former Defence Secretary

Reconciling the UK's strategic security needs and its international responsibilities was straightforward for some who felt the UK, in a post-Empire and post-Cold War age, should reassess its role as a global power. Others acknowledged that although they felt the UK is safer with nuclear weapons, nuclear weapons create "existential" risks within the world. The question of whether we have a minimal deterrent, with 40 active warheads which "*is still more than could ever be required even given Moscow's anti-ballistic missile system*" was also raised.

***"This paradox – better for us to keep but also better if none existed – cannot be squared."***

Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP  
Defence Select Committee Chair

### "CONSENSUS" CONCLUSIONS

- Getting to a world without nuclear weapons IS possible.
- The Non-Proliferation Treaty has been a qualified success but process now urgently needs reinvigorating as the Treaty is at a "tipping point" or "crossroads".
- Nuclear weapons represent a twentieth-century failure – they are the Cold War's unfinished business and it is this generation that should resolve these issues. The conditions to make progress have never been better.
- For those who conclude the UK should retain nuclear weapons, there is still a debate to be had about whether what the UK currently possesses – or is planning to build – constitutes a "minimal" deterrent in the 21st century.

## 3. NEXT STEPS TOWARDS DISARMAMENT

A number of respondents would prefer a single step by which nuclear disarmament was achieved, for example through a Nuclear Weapons Convention which would make nuclear weapons illegal – like chemical weapons. The example of Syria, which saw in effect the court of worldwide opinion re-state that chemical weapons were unacceptable in terms of legality and humanitarian impact, was for some an important precedent in this respect. However, most expected that in fact there will be a series of steps.

***"I do not think you will convince the security establishment, the media and Parliament to transition in one step to a completely non-nuclear policy. However I do think we could get there in steps."***

Sir Nick Harvey MP, former Defence Minister

It is clear that trust is essential to making progress on disarmament. However the critical issue is political will – and that may depend on a number of other factors including public pressure for change and financial austerity informing prioritisation. Lord Browne was particularly vocal on the issue of the need for the "Cold War generation" to accept responsibility for resolving the unfinished business of nuclear weapons and that the conditions for doing so have never been better. Many said the UK had a huge responsibility to ensure progress and not be self-limiting.

***“Remove the paranoia from all three political parties that [the UK Government] cannot step outside the pro nuclear “consensus.”***

Jeremy Corbyn MP, Parliamentary CND

A considerable number of specific first steps towards disarmament were suggested. Many of these echo the Non-Proliferation Treaty's own 13-paragraph disarmament plan of action which called for both unilateral and multilateral initiatives. These included at the international level: NATO adopting a no first-use policy and/or inviting Russia to become a member; removing US and other tactical nuclear weapons from Europe; and developing a Middle East Nuclear-Free Zone. At the national level there were calls for: the separation of the UK's warheads from missiles; the abandonment of CASD; and scrapping the replacement of Trident.

***“A majority of the world is covered by binding state-level agreements regards nuclear-free zones. This is a massively important initiative with global strategic significance. However, unfortunately it has been denigrated, marginalised and ignored by the main 5 nuclear weapons states.”***

Dr Kate Hudson, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

There was a clear consensus that there is a huge role for both the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Authority if and when disarmament takes place. However, there are perceived accountability and effectiveness problems. Some pointed out the UN and the IAEA are both controlled by the states which possess nuclear weapons and have the power of veto within the Security Council. There has been a longstanding debate about reform of the UN with a number of suggestions made over the years. Both organisations also need more resources and authority, but after Syria – and the consequent awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons – there were hopes that this may be forthcoming.

***“They [UN & IAEA] are key, they have to be the honest brokers in the process. There is a discussion to be had about the shape of the UN going forward though.”***

Alison Seabeck MP, Shadow Defence Minister

#### **“CONSENSUS” CONCLUSIONS**

- It is absolutely critical that momentum towards disarmament continues as there is currently a danger of stalling. The UK government is in a position to play a crucial role in ensuring that momentum returns, but this will require political will.
- There are many steps – small and large, national and international, unilateral and multilateral – that could be taken to progress nuclear disarmament.
- USA and Russia must reduce their still vast arsenals but that does not mean that other nuclear weapons states have no part to play in encouraging this, taking part in disarmament negotiations and acting independently.
- United Nations and IAEA reform, including improved accountability and resourcing, is urgently required.

#### **4. WIDER POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS**

Respondents were asked to what extent the cost of replacement and maintenance of nuclear weapons should be factors in any decision? Views ranged from those such as General Sir Mike Jackson who believed that cost was a ‘red herring’, to those who contended that it could take up as much as 30% of the defence equipment budget and so should be a serious factor, certainly in relation to the decision to be taken on a successor to Trident.

***“The deployment of any defence system must always take account of the balance between costs, necessity and effectiveness.”***

Rt Hon Sir Menzies Campbell MP, former Liberal Democrat Foreign Affairs spokesperson

Most respondents were sympathetic to the idea that the impact of potential job losses should be mitigated but were clear decisions should be taken on foreign policy and security grounds only. It was also pointed out that “pound for pound, spending on nuclear weapons is one of the least cost effective ways of generating jobs” and that diversification and regeneration are possible.

***“There is a need for a clear industrial strategy with defence diversification as an element of this.”***

Paul Nowak, TUC

Public opinion is a crucial factor in decisions regarding defence and disarmament but many felt it was uninformed and somewhat restricted. Some pointed out that “civil society has already played an important role in raising awareness of nuclear dangers and developing national and international arguments and initiatives for creating more secure futures without nuclear weapons.” Others argued that the debate had become trapped in the Cold War rhetoric of the 1980s and the public must understand the diminishing nuclear threat that now exists.

***“What is striking is that at key moments, 1945 when we attained nuclear capability, 1963 when we got the Polaris deal and in 2006 when the decision to upgrade Trident was taken, there was comparatively little debate about what were momentous issues.”***

**Professor Michael Clarke**  
Royal United Services Institute

#### “CONSENSUS” CONCLUSIONS

- Britain’s nuclear weapons should be subject to same cost-effectiveness test and public scrutiny that all public expenditure has to be subject to.
- As NET’s *Trident Alternatives Review and the Future of Barrow* report pointed out, for small fractions of the expenditure spent on nuclear weapons, alternative employment is possible for those working in nuclear weapons related industries (in the order of £100 million per 1,000 jobs).
- Wider and more informed public debate on nuclear weapons – and especially whether they do or do not contribute to UK’s security – is required but multilateral versus unilateral nature of debate is anachronistic, inaccurate and unhelpful.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The next Strategic Defence and Security Review, which formally begins after the next General Election, should take a more rigorous needs-based approach, reflecting more clearly and separately on both the likelihood and the impact of risks to the UK’s security, as well as its foreign policy requirements and responsibilities.
2. UK Government should focus on utilising its world diplomatic skills, rather than its world military reach, to reduce its security threats and promote disarmament including:
  - attending international conferences on nuclear weapons, such as that hosted by the Mexican Government in February 2014;
  - helping secure definitive progress at P5 meeting in China;
  - by publicly supporting a Nuclear Weapons Convention;
  - by taking further independent action as appropriate.
3. Having signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the UK Government should seek an independent legal opinion on whether the proposed modernisation of its Trident nuclear weapons delivery system is outside its legal obligations.
4. There should be a much deeper and wider public and parliamentary debate about whether to retain and modernise UK nuclear weapons in current circumstance of no external threat and given:
  - the risks they themselves create (of proliferation and accident);
  - their expense (at a time of austerity and prioritisation);
  - the fact the majority of the UK’s European neighbours and NATO allies have concluded that they do not need to possess nuclear weapons to guarantee their security;
  - the alternative approaches that might be taken towards reducing any possible future nuclear threat (e.g. diplomacy, conflict prevention, and trade).
5. The UK’s defence procurement decisions, including the Main Gate decision regards the successor to Trident currently planned for 2016, can only – and must – follow on from the conclusions to the next Defence and Security Review.

## SCOPE OF SURVEY AND INQUIRY

The Nuclear Education Trust (NET) is an independent charity<sup>1</sup> whose remit is to inform and educate the public regarding nuclear weapons-related issues through making grant awards and commissioning its own research. It is non-party political and does not advocate any one specific approach on nuclear disarmament issues. Its last report *The Trident Alternatives Review and the Future of Barrow*<sup>2</sup> was launched last year in the House of Commons with MPs and Peers from all parties in attendance.

The survey and inquiry grew out of the consensus that emerged out of the 2012 Barrow report where it was pointed out by Lord Browne that the world in general is on a “disarmament curve” since the end of the Cold War – see Table 1 overleaf for current nuclear stockpiles and ‘retired warheads’ – and that further specific information and consideration is therefore required on two key issues:

1. What are the real future defence/security needs of the UK?
2. What are the UK's international nuclear disarmament responsibilities?

These two questions must be the starting points to any public debate on nuclear weapons generally and the successor to Trident in particular. Form must follow function – in other words military procurement decisions should follow from a rigorous analysis of security needs and disarmament responsibilities and there should be no assumption that any one particular weapons system is an absolute given.

NET canvassed opinion on the current National Security Strategy and is publicising its findings in line with the recent statement by the Chair of the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, which called “*for a public debate and cross-party discussion on the UK's place in the world and our national [security] priorities before we get embroiled in the next General Election campaign.*”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Please see [www.nucleareducationtrust.org](http://www.nucleareducationtrust.org)

<sup>2</sup> Please see [www.nucleareducationtrust.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=77&Itemid=76](http://www.nucleareducationtrust.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=77&Itemid=76)

<sup>3</sup> See [www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/joint-select/national-security-strategy/news/govt-response-2nd-report-201213/](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/joint-select/national-security-strategy/news/govt-response-2nd-report-201213/)

It also follows the Defence Select Committee report *Towards the Next Defence and Security Review: Part 1*<sup>4</sup> which concluded that the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review was “*governed by the overriding objective of reducing the UK's budget deficit*” and that it was “*difficult to divine any other genuinely strategic vision.*”

In total, twenty interviews and submissions were made by current and past Defence Secretaries and Ministers, academics, think tanks, campaign groups and other stakeholders. Interviews took place – and written submissions were received – over the period September to December 2013. These have been compiled into Volume II which is available at the Nuclear Education Trust's website.<sup>5</sup>

A number of relevant and very significant international defence and disarmament developments took place during this time including the aftermath of the vote in Parliament in August not to make a military intervention in Syria and an interim agreement on Iran's nuclear programme in late November.

This survey and inquiry hopes to inform public debate at an extremely important time: just days before the conference on humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons in Mexico and months before the meeting of the P5 – the five main nuclear states – in China. It is also only a year before the UK formally embarks on its next Strategic Defence and Security Review in 2015. Meanwhile the destructive power of nuclear weapons has not diminished – for an illustrative reminder see Appendix I.

This final report seeks not only to reflect differences of opinion but also to identify where there is some degree of consensus. However it should be noted this final report, including the “consensus” conclusions informed by respondent's views, and the five recommendations are those of the Nuclear Education Trust alone.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmdfence/197/19702.htm> published 6th January 2014

<sup>5</sup> Please see [www.nucleareducationtrust.org](http://www.nucleareducationtrust.org)

TABLE 1: ESTIMATED WORLDWIDE NUCLEAR WARHEADS 2013 <sup>6</sup>

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>DEPLOYED WARHEADS<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>STOCKPILED WARHEADS</b>	<b>RETIRED WARHEADS</b>	<b>TOTAL INVENTORY</b>
United States	2,150 <sup>b</sup>	4,650	~3,000	~7,700
Russia	1,800	4,480	~4,000	~8,500
United Kingdom	160 <sup>c</sup>	225	-	225
France	290 <sup>d</sup>	300	-	300
China	-	250	few	250
India	-	110	-	110
Pakistan	-	120	-	120
Israel	-	80	-	80
North Korea	-	n/a	-	n/a
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>~4,400</b>	<b>~10,200</b>	<b>~7,000</b>	<b>~17,200</b>

<sup>a</sup> Deployed warheads are defined as warheads that are on missiles or at bases with operational launchers.

<sup>b</sup> This includes nearly 200 non-strategic bombs deployed in Europe.

<sup>c</sup> Of these 160 "operationally available" warheads, 48 are normally deployed on one nuclear submarine at sea.

<sup>d</sup> Of these, one or two submarines with about 80 warheads are normally deployed at sea.

<sup>6</sup> Reprinted, with permission, from the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists: Global nuclear weapons inventories, 1945-2013 Hans M. Kristensen and Robert S. Norris published by SAGE September 2013

## RESPONSES, “CONSENSUS” CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### PART 1 THE UK'S NATIONAL DEFENCE NEEDS

#### Question 1.1

**Do you agree with the Tier One etc. classification of priority risks in the Coalition's National Security Strategy?**

*A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: the National Security Strategy* was published in 2010, the same year that the Coalition was formed. There was unanimity that the list of priority risks it included on page 27 – see Appendix II – was a useful exercise although it also attracted a number of comments from respondents, summed up here:

***“Can be helpful although reality is [its] classifications turned out to be wrong. In no way was Arab Spring predicted and moreover some threats, e.g. energy security, too low.”***  
Anonymous, Broadsheet foreign affairs correspondent

A major criticism was that while the list of priority risks takes “account of both likelihood and impact”, it conflates these two distinct aspects. For example in the Government's document “an attack on the UK or its Overseas Territories by another state or proxy using chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) weapons” is the first risk in Tier Two (defined as the next highest priorities after those in Tier One which are described as “of the highest priority for national UK security”) or fifth overall. However there was consensus that a state-on-state attack is not at all likely.

***“For now and the foreseeable future [there is] no nuclear threat to the UK.”***  
Rt Hon Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP  
former Defence and Foreign Secretary

Rear Admiral Gower – on behalf of the Government – echoed this sentiment, although he put it a little differently: “there is clearly now a reduced salience for nuclear weapons in UK strategy.” A number of contributors did however point out that it is not possible to know the future and a threat could emerge in the long term. Some of these supported retaining some deterrent capacity. For further discussion on this issue please see commentary on Question 3.

For many this conflation of likelihood and impact obscures rather than illuminates and is therefore not wholly helpful in terms of prioritising procurement and other defence decisions. As Professor Michael Clarke of the Royal United Services Institute said “we (RUSI) told the MOD when they were consulting about it that people would not understand”.

***“We need to distinguish between the likelihood of a threat on the one hand and the potential gravity of a threat on the other – a nuclear threat does not seem likely right now but if there were to be such a threat this could threaten our existence.”***

General Sir Mike Jackson  
former Chief of General Staff

An alternative – and probably more useful – presentation of the threats to be identified as part of the next National Security Strategy (NSS), would be to give an assessment of its general likelihood and an assessment of its general impact – ideally with a brief rationale for the ratings which have been given for each factor.

If the list of priority risks were to be disaggregated into their two dimensions – one of likelihood and one of impact – then it seems extremely likely that the risk of a nuclear attack would be towards the very bottom in terms of likelihood and almost certainly at the very top in terms of impact.

Clearly different policy conclusions may be drawn from these two results – first the low likelihood would question the need for maintaining a ‘deterrent’ and second, the high impact, would impel the search for a future which does not contain such a major, indeed existential, threat.

The second major criticism made concerned a number of more imminent threats which were not referenced or not given sufficient attention:

- climate change which is not specifically mentioned but undisputedly has defence related consequences such as exacerbation of illegal migration (Paul Ingram);
- bacteriological warfare which is referenced but only alongside nuclear and chemical which it was felt did not ensure it received sufficient attention as a growing threat (Lord Alan West);
- a serious crisis in the financial services sector, with governments unable or unwilling to co-ordinate their responses effectively (Rt Hon Nick Brown).

The third main point to be gleaned from the twenty responses to this question is that this analysis, while helpful, should more clearly lead to policy and procurement decisions. Some, for example Sean Morris on behalf of Nuclear Free Local Authorities highlighted the contrast in funds spent “on the UK’s nuclear weapons policy in comparison to the work combatting international terrorism” (the UK’s highest priority risk according to the register).

**“The NSS’s analysis did not inform and link to nuclear weapons policy – with a lower level of threat meaning a reduction in expenditure. The UK in fact maintains a Cold War level of spending and posture.”**

Dr Kate Hudson, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

The fourth area of commentary was whether the risks identified were best met by a military or defence/security response.

This was echoed in the contribution of Jeremy Corbyn MP who pointed out that most conflicts in the world are a result of one or more of the following: resources, inequality and nationalism. Lord West said that a national security strategy “should set out how the whole of Government – not just MOD but also Treasury, FCO, even DfE – should be involved in agreeing our national interests and in how to work towards securing them.”

Fifth, it was pointed out that the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) had looked at the issue with a number of preconditions including a presumption regarding Trident renewal or an alternative system with a final decision deferred to 2016. However Professor Clarke said Britain had to “indicate a willingness” to put its nuclear weapons into the scope of any discussion about future security strategy.

As the MoD stated, “nuclear deterrent decisions have to be taken with decades in mind.” However, the government of the day must take stock of both necessary financial constraints and the range of their international responsibilities. It therefore should not be assumed that Trident needs to be replaced.

Finally it was suggested by a number of contributors that the Strategy had been somewhat rushed following the General Election in May 2010. For example General Sir Mike Jackson said: “The last Defence Review was done in rather a hurry and there needs to be rigorous planning, something Britain has traditionally not been very good at”.

**“It is important to have a fully thought-through SDSR in 2015. The last one was beset by a number of issues and was too hastily thought-through.”**

Alison Seabeck MP, Shadow Defence Minister

When this exercise is conducted again, formally starting in 2015 after the next General Election, a more considered and open approach should be adopted. Sir Mike Jackson called for Britain to produce a “grand strategy” which takes account of all its strategic security needs.

#### Question 1.2

**How far should UK policies of defence or intervention be dependent on those of the USA and NATO?**

There was a consensus that the independence of UK defence policy formulation with regards to meeting its own defence needs was an extremely important principle. As Sir Menzies Campbell MP stated: “as a sovereign country it is necessary for us to determine our own priorities and our own objectives.” There was also consensus that in terms of defence policy implementation, international collaboration was almost always a pre-requisite.

**“We are not wholly dependent on NATO or the USA but it is becoming increasingly difficult to act alone.”**

Alison Seabeck MP, Shadow Defence Minister

However there was less agreement about whether in practice the UK has really made independent choices regarding the interventions it has taken part in since the end of the Cold War and whether the UK in reality has an independent nuclear deterrent or indeed requires one.

A number of people made positive comments regarding the USA and NATO, stating for example that NATO has secured peace in Western Europe since the end of the Second World War and helped win the Cold War. James Arbuthnot MP, Chair of the Defence Select Committee said: “NATO is the cornerstone of our defence.”

Regards the USA, General Sir Mike Jackson said that “we may be the junior partner in the ‘special relationship’ but it is often to our political advantage to align our policy. Strategically our interests coincide more often than not. Our view of the world overlaps to a very considerable extent with the USA.”

Others however made more negative comments, believing for example that since the end of the Cold War NATO’s purpose has largely been lost and its reinvented role as ‘world policeman’ has not been helpful or in the interests of the UK: drawing it into many conflicts which it may otherwise have not needed to participate in. As Jeremy Corbyn MP remarked “the UK is completely dependent on NATO” and it “has become a cipher for intervention by western states.”

***“NATO has proved incapable of evolving to meet today’s threats – not surprising as it was formed during Cold War for very different reasons. Best way for it to evolve would be for Russia to be invited to join.”***

Paul Ingram, Executive Director of BASIC

Rear Admiral John Gower on behalf of the Defence Secretary, claimed that *“the UK remains one of the very few countries able to deploy and sustain a credible sized force, together with its air and maritime enablers, almost anywhere in the world.”* However analysis of the nine military conflicts the UK has been actively involved in since the end of the Cold War shows just two where the USA were not directly involved - Northern Ireland and Sierra Leone.

**TABLE 2: MAJOR INTERVENTIONS/WARS INVOLVING UK SINCE 1990<sup>7</sup>**

Northern Ireland	pre-1990 – 1998
Gulf War	1990 – 1991
Bosnian War	1992 – 1996
Operation Desert Fox	1998
Kosovo War	1999
Sierra Leone Civil War	2000
War in Afghanistan	2001 – present
Iraq War and Iraqi insurgency	2003 – 2009
Libyan Civil War	2011

Others made a number of nuanced points. It was for example pointed out that the USA’s attitude towards NATO is shifting as its orientation has moved, following the end of the Cold War, from the western arena to the eastern hemisphere. It is becoming less America’s alliance and more the creature of the 28 countries in membership.

For Professor Michael Clarke it was clear however that NATO is not an agile alliance *“but it gives a golf bag of capabilities”*. However he went on to say: *“by default it is more powerful than the EU because it is a more structured and coherent entity.”*

***“Alliances can have unpredictable consequences and conflicts have a habit of leading from one thing to another – as Syria might have done. I do accept that one of the dangers of existing nuclear weapons is that they may – in the heat and hate of war – be considered usable by certain nations in a tactical or battlefield way when nothing should be further from reality. Nuclear weapons are not designed as war-fighting weapons.”***

Admiral Lord Alan West, former Defence Minister

Meanwhile Dr Dan Plesch stated that *“there is no such thing as an independent deterrent. Macmillan fulfilled his responsibilities in removing them. We have ‘rent-a-rockets’ as Dennis Healey once said.”* He went on to warn:

***“History suggests that deterrence can only be a short term period not a long-term sustainable state of affairs. The problem of deterrence is that it always fails. Deterrence is a concept that should be sent to a psychiatrist.”***

Dr Dan Plesch, SOAS

However it was pointed out that the UK does not start out as a nuclear free country and that given it does possess them, and is a member of NATO, there ensures a number of obligations.

***“In this respect we are in a different position to a country like Denmark which has never had nuclear weapons. If we stop contributing what would US decision-makers and public make of that? Why would US maintain its contributions to European Defence?”***

Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP  
former Defence and Foreign Secretary

He concluded that *“there can be no guarantee that the USA will continue to support NATO”* and so *“it may not be there in 30 to 40 years’ time.”*

Whilst there was consensus that the UK does need to work internationally to respond to the threats it faces, many said that the UK should seek to work more with the UN as well as across the EU. Syria was often referenced as a case study in how things could go differently to military intervention. Following the vote in Parliament a different alliance, including US and Russia, emerged regarding chemical weapon decommissioning.

***“The most effective way to deal with current and future threats is to improve the structure and effectiveness of the United Nations to seek more peaceful ways to deal with national and international conflicts.”***

Sean Morris  
Secretary of Nuclear Free Local Authorities

<sup>7</sup> Nuclear Education Trust’s own list with thanks to Professor Dave Webb

**Question 1.3**

**What role, if any, would UK nuclear weapons have with regards to current and future threats as well as long-term responsibilities?**

Given the agreed lack of any foreseeable risk of nuclear or conventional attack, or indeed nuclear blackmail, there is clearly no current military role for the UK's nuclear weapons (see Table 3).

**“None of the 2010 National Security Strategy threat scenarios would be averted by the UK having nuclear weapons, and some could be exacerbated.”**

Dr Rebecca Johnson, Acronym Institute for Disarmament and Diplomacy

In fact as Rear Admiral John Gower pointed out *“British nuclear weapons have, for now almost twenty years, been de-targeted and placed on several days’ notice to fire”*.<sup>8</sup> This, as was pointed out, reinforces the fact that they serve no immediate military purpose and that maintaining one submarine on patrol 24-hours a day is largely symbolic.

It also raises a number of questions. First whether the current operational policy of CASD is required at all. Sir Nick Harvey, for example, made clear the Liberal Democrats’ *“proposal is to come off nuclear patrol but retain the capability, and make sure future submarines are multi-purpose.”* Second, it raises the question of whether possession of nuclear weapons in fact contributes to some of the risks that they seek to mitigate.

**“Eric Schlosser’s recent book ‘Command and Control’ makes it clear that there are significant risks from an accident involving nuclear weapons and during the Cold War we came close to nuclear war more than once. Nuclear weapons also act as a driver for proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The risks of the UK possessing nuclear weapons far outweigh any benefits there may be.”**

Peter Burt, Nuclear Information Service

Of course many of the respondents did argue that despite their lack of usefulness now they are essential for insuring against any *“future nation on nation threat”* – with the MOD stating *“the UK’s nuclear deterrent remains in place to serve as the ultimate means to deter the most extreme threats.”* Lord West also pointed out that the policy adopted before the Second World War, which sought to only focus on threats envisaged in the next ten years, had been shown to be mistaken.

With the current Trident programme due to become obsolete by the late 2020s, he argued that the replacement needs to be planned for now. Similarly the MoD, in acknowledging that no state currently has the capability or intent to pose a threat to the territorial integrity of the UK, went on to point out that *“both capability and intent can change, sometimes in a matter of years.”*

**“The current decision horizon is 2060. In that time we simply cannot rule out the risk either that a major direct nuclear threat to the UK’s vital interest will re-emerge or that new states will emerge that possess a more limited nuclear capability, but one [which] could pose a grave threat to our vital interests.”**

Rear Admiral John Gower,  
for Secretary of State for Defence

There were two types of responses to these arguments.

**“For current threats there is no relevance. But for future threats? Well it is the ‘mere uncertainty’ argument. It’s utterly fallacious – if you told the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the Treasury should fund 20 hospitals just in case there was a pandemic he would laugh at you. Why should this argument be any more creditable when it comes to nuclear weapons?”**

Professor Michael Clarke  
Royal United Services Institute

Second, as Lord Browne pointed out, this generalisation regarding a future threat actually refers to Russia, which is the only nation with the potential means and any possible intent. He went on to say:

**“The world is now so different from when nuclear weapons were invented – hundreds of thousands of Russians live around the globe. They have enormous reach – not just owning football teams and newspapers but also there are joint business ventures. There is also a dress and culture in Moscow which shows that country’s people are on a journey which will not be stopped.”**

Lord Des Browne, former Defence Secretary

<sup>8</sup> The only country that maintains real 24/7 readiness to launch a nuclear weapon is the USA. China keeps its limited stockpile of weapons separate from their means of launch.

TABLE 3: WHAT THREATS MIGHT THE UK'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS DETER?<sup>9</sup>

POSSESSOR OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS (OR ASPIRANT)	PERCEIVED POTENTIAL THREAT	LIKELIHOOD – NOW AND IN FIFTY YEARS' TIME	DO UK'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS DETER?
Russia	Blackmail or actual invasion	Very low – Russia more occupied with internal reform and relations with states neighbouring its borders. Western European interests more economic and trade-based than military.	Insignificant given the large USA nuclear arsenal.
China	Blackmail or actual invasion	Negligible – no evidence that aiming to be military (rather than economic) superpower with global reach or ambitions regards annexing other countries.	Irrelevant
India	Nuclear conflict with Pakistan could damage environment	Some evidence that tensions are reducing and no evidence that nuclear weapons are being drawn into wider Arab e.g. Sunni/Shia conflicts or into relations with western nations generally.	Irrelevant
Pakistan	Nuclear conflict with India could damage environment	As above.	Irrelevant
Israel*	Nuclear conflict with Middle East country	Arguably most unstable part of the world – with elements in Iran and Egypt wanting nuclear weapons and using Israel possession as evidence for building own nuclear capabilities. However, the UK has long supported Israel and viewed the nation as an ally in the Middle East.	Irrelevant
Terrorism	Blackmail	There is a risk of a terrorist organisation getting sufficient nuclear material for an improvised dirty bomb.	Irrelevant – terrorists are unlikely to be deterred by threat of retaliation.
Emerging/ potential nuclear states	Atmospheric explosion	North Korea's military concerns are clearly limited to its geographical location and immediate neighbours.	Irrelevant regards dynamics of conflict and insignificant if USA were to get involved.
	Nuclear conflict with Middle East Country	If Iran were to threaten Israel then certainly America would be dragged into conflict and possibly UK too.	

\*Israel is universally considered to be a nuclear state but has never formally admitted to having a nuclear capacity and has not conclusively conducted a nuclear test.

For some the main benefit of retaining nuclear weapons is that it allows us to be part of international debate and exercise positive leverage. One respondent, whose contribution was anonymous, said this about nuclear weapons: *“in the current way that warfare is conducted they are no use at all except that they create an aura of military prowess.”*

***“Our nuclear weapons perform various roles. Main one is to send a message that we are determined to retaliate if someone attacks us – although not sure how effective that message is. Second chief role is to send a message that we are a strong power and therefore to be taken seriously in all types of international negotiations.”***

Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP  
Defence Select Committee Chair

However many argued that remaining a strategic power does not depend on maintaining the status quo: for example, the UK could separate missiles from warheads, as in China. Others went further.

***“I don’t subscribe to the view that retention of a nuclear deterrent is essential to remain a permanent member of the UN Security Council.”***

Rt Hon Sir Menzies Campbell MP, former Liberal Democrat Foreign Affairs spokesperson

<sup>9</sup> Table compiled by NET drawing on information provided in interviews.

Others pointed out that Britain's membership of the 'nuclear club' was historically less to do with leverage and more to do with status. As Paul Ingram stated: "*Britain acquired nuclear weapons principally because the Labour Foreign Secretary felt humiliated by the Americans... and later, as has been evidenced by the Oxford Research Group in 1980s, a principal reason for retaining nuclear weapons was to have parity with France.*"

Any benefits of nuclear possession – and of course there are some who claim there are none – do have to be set against the fact that inevitably they make the UK a target (in the way that other NATO and non-NATO countries without nuclear weapons are not a target e.g. Norway and Mexico).

***"None of the threats identified in Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 invites the use, independently and unilaterally, of UK nuclear weapons. I cannot envisage any situation where the UK would be left without allies and reliant on independently using a strategic nuclear weapon. There are arguments about "international standing" and Britain's "top ticket at the table" but I don't think they are strong enough to justify the present policy."***

Rt Hon Nick Brown MP, former Chief Whip

### "CONSENSUS" CONCLUSIONS

- There is no evidence of any state-on-state nuclear threat to the UK's security at the current time or in the foreseeable future.
- When the Strategic Defence and Security Review is conducted in 2015 the Tier One, Two and Three list of risks should be redrafted and divided into two dimensions – likelihood and impact – which should be consulted on widely.
- The UK must make its own choice about the nature of the security threats it faces now, and potentially in the future, as well as the means by which it wants to provide for its security and the priority it gives to addressing each threat.
- The UK should aspire to work with other countries to mitigate threats, whenever possible through the United Nations.
- The relevance of keeping nuclear weapons vis-à-vis current and foreseeable UK security threats is either non-existent or negligible.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The next Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), which formally begins in 2015, should take a more rigorous needs-based approach reflecting more clearly and separately on both the likelihood and the impact of the risks to the UK's security, as well as its foreign policy requirements and responsibilities.

The UK's defence procurement decisions, including the Main Gate decision regarding the successor to Trident currently planned for 2016, can only – and must – follow on from the conclusions to the next SDSR.

**PART 2 • INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Question 2.1**

**Do you agree with overall defence policy which moves towards a nuclear-free world as envisaged in the Non-Proliferation Treaty? (Do you think this will happen by 2050, 3000, ever?)**

All respondents supported this policy with some, such as Lord West saying it would be possible by 2050 but that this would be dependent upon, to quote Peter Burt, *“political will and nations working together”*.

***“Is a nuclear-free world possible? – probably not by 2030 but possibly by 2050. I can envisage a situation where the capacity to rebuild a nuclear weapon remains but the situation of not doing so is monitored to ensure compliance.”***

**Admiral Lord Alan West, former Defence Minister**

However, others spoke of existing uncertainties and instabilities which had prevented progress. James Arbuthnot MP was categorical in stating that as long as there continued to be tensions between India and Pakistan, within the Middle East and between North and South Korea, it would not be possible to achieve a nuclear-free world. In his view, at present, this was a *“wish rather than a realistic hope”*.

Others suggested that the final stages of disarmament - reaching global zero - will be difficult. These included Sir Malcolm Rifkind who said: *“in fact moving to total abolition would be the more difficult stage - when a country only has a few then cheating is a major problem.”*

**TABLE 4: COUNTRIES THAT HAVE FOREGONE NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND/OR NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAMMES <sup>10</sup>**

South Africa	South Africa dismantled all its nuclear weapons and associated programs in the early 1990s.
Brazil	Brazil had a nuclear weapons program which ended after 1970.
Ukraine	Inherited Nuclear Weapons, but now Non-Nuclear Weapons State Party to the NPT.
Belarus	Inherited Nuclear Weapons, but now Non-Nuclear Weapons State Party to the NPT.
Kazakhstan	Inherited Nuclear Weapons, but now Non-Nuclear Weapons State Party to the NPT.
Argentina	Argentina regularly denies it had a nuclear weapons program, although it admits that it conducted unsafeguarded uranium enrichment and reprocessing.
Libya	Libya began seeking nuclear weapons after 1970. It abandoned its efforts and began dismantling its nuclear weapons program in December 2003.
Taiwan	In the 1980s Taiwan moved to establish a secret plutonium separation capability but the research reactor was shutdown in 1988.
South Korea	South Korea had a nuclear weapons program which ended after 1970. In 2004, South Korea disclosed that it had secretly conducted a plutonium-based nuclear experiment in 1982 and a uranium enrichment project in 2000.

But Lord Browne reminded us that in the 1960s it was widely predicted that there would be as many as 40 nuclear-armed states and now there are nine. He contended that *“the NPT is an extremely valuable, near-universal treaty that has prevented proliferation, but it remains a priority that signatories live up to their obligations.”*

The Treaty came into force in 1970 and in 1995 was extended indefinitely. More countries have adhered to the NPT than any other arms limitation and disarmament agreement, a testament to the Treaty’s significance. A total of 190 states have joined the Treaty, though North Korea, which acceded to the NPT in 1985 but never came into compliance, announced its withdrawal in 2003. Four UN member states have never joined the NPT: India, Israel, Pakistan and South Sudan.

One respondent, Paul Ingram, representing BASIC, argued for the likelihood of a nuclear-free world by 2050 for three reasons: there is a greater realisation that nuclear weapons are too dangerous and have lost much of their deterrent effect; any residual deterrence effect will very likely be replaced by new technologies; and, state-on-state weapons with mass strategic impact look *“increasingly obsolete”* in a progressively globalised world.

***“Nuclear weapons are so twentieth century! Relevant perhaps for a world wherein one Great Power seeks to take over another, like WW2, but not a world we live in today.”***

**Paul Ingram, BASIC**

The MoD in its submission arguably made the same – or at least a very similar – point when it stated that there was *“clearly now a reduced salience”* for nuclear weapons in the UK’s strategic security thinking.

<sup>10</sup> Table compiled with information from Institute for Science and International Security //isis-online.org/nuclear-weapons-programs/

The former Defence Minister Sir Nick Harvey, however, called it “*profoundly depressing*” that there has not been greater progress since 1968 but said that Britain was now at a “*crossroads*”. The NPT has undoubtedly led to greater non-proliferation but a tipping point was now close to being reached and one must either move forward to advocate further cuts and disavowals of nuclear weapons or risk more countries seeking to join the ‘nuclear club’.

Conflicts and regional instability have prevented progress but they can also be viewed as imperatives to action and respondents pointed out that there was precedent for countries achieving complete nuclear disarmament (see Table 5). Dr Plesch echoed the concerns of many respondents when he said that a lack of progress on nuclear disarmament was stifling progress on disarmament more generally throughout the world.

Nonetheless, there was no doubt that the Non-Proliferation Treaty has been a good initiative and it has produced results, ensuring some countries gave up the nuclear option.

**TABLE 5: THE QUIET UNILATERALISTS - INDEPENDENT NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT SINCE THE END OF THE COLD WAR**

WHEN	WHAT	MINISTER OF DEFENCE / DEFENCE SECRETARY	FOREIGN SECRETARY
1991	Last US cruise missiles leave Britain.	Tom King (Conservative)	Douglas Hurd (Conservative)
1992	British Army returns its arsenal of US nuclear artillery shells to the US authorities.	Malcolm Rifkind (Conservative)	Douglas Hurd
1994	Trident missiles officially ‘detargeted’.	Malcolm Rifkind	Douglas Hurd
1995	Statement of Defence Estimates says UK stockpile now reduced to 300 (from peak of 450 in the late 1970s).	Malcolm Rifkind	Douglas Hurd
1996	UK signs the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.	Michael Portillo (Conservative)	Malcolm Rifkind
1998	WE-177 free-fall nuclear weapons decommissioned and UK moves to single delivery system (submarine).	George Robertson (Labour)	Robin Cook (Labour)
1998	UK Government announces reduction of Trident warheads per submarine to 48.	George Robertson	Robin Cook
2008	Final US nuclear weapons removed from USAF/RAF Lakenheath, ending US nuclear presence in the United Kingdom	Des Browne (Labour)	David Miliband (Labour)
2010	Strategic Defence and Security Review takes place, which includes a commitment not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states in compliance with NPT and further reduction of Trident warheads per submarine to 40.	Liam Fox (Conservative)	William Hague (Conservative)
2020	Operationally available stockpile of nuclear weapons will reduce from fewer than 160 to no more than 120 as well as total stockpile to reduce to 180.	Liam Fox (announced in 2010)	William Hague

**“Looking back, getting a Test-Ban Treaty and the Non-Proliferation Treaty and then an Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty was, historically, an incredible achievement.”**

Jeremy Corbyn MP, Parliamentary CND

While some saw cause to be optimistic, others were not.

**“What is ultimately required is for confidence measures and a different approach from the USA and Russia but in fact I am more pessimistic than in the years immediately following the Cold War. Now I carry an emergency space blanket and water filter with me everywhere I go.”**

Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP  
Chair of Defence Select Committee

A number of contributors pointed out that nine nuclear weapons states could become more unless there is progress in the short to medium term. Not only are there strong impulses within Iran towards ownership of a nuclear weapon, Saudi Arabia and Egypt were mentioned by contributors as having some interest in developing a nuclear weapon capacity.

Paul Ingram of BASIC pointed to the fact that the number of states outside the Treaty has slowly increased, significant non-proliferation challenges are arising and many states lack faith in the nuclear weapons states' intention to disarm. As the next conference in 2015 approaches, a crossroads or tipping point is perceived by many.

### Question 2.2

**Do you agree that Britain needs to take an active part in the multilateral process of nuclear disarmament?**

Unsurprisingly, given their support for the NPT, all respondents supported the concept of multilateralism although there were clear differences of view about what that meant for Britain with some arguing that it was the turn of other countries to make the next move.

Many felt that America and Russia could take action as befitting countries with the largest stockpiles of nuclear weapons although it was agreed that the last twenty years had seen a significant reduction in the arsenals of both powers. Sir Malcolm Rifkind spoke fervently of a need for trust and co-operation between these nations as well as a concerted "*massive political will*" to endure in order to further reduce stockpiles.

However, many also said that other action could – and should – be taken by Britain now as well, especially given what was generally felt to be a more conducive international environment for nuclear disarmament.

***"The UK could break the red line of CASD. To take that step would send an enormous signal and also make sense: we would no longer be protecting ourselves from something that does not exist."***

Lord Des Browne, former Defence Secretary

This initiative was supported by Sir Nick Harvey and indeed the Liberal Democrat party which adopted a non-CASD policy during their Autumn conference. He argued that Britain moving to a non-CASD position would "*send a powerful message to others*". Paul Ingram further pointed out that since there was no "*24/7 threat*" it was unnecessary to have continuous patrols.<sup>11</sup>

Others – of course – went further. The TUC cited its policy that calls for "*the scrapping of Trident*" and the use of a proportion of the money saved on diversification.

<sup>11</sup> Also see 'UK could afford to cut Trident submarines, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25968141](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25968141)

***"Britain has got rid of some obsolete weapons but it has kept the gold standard version, which is what Trident is. Yes we are reducing the number of warheads but it's still 180 too many!"***

Dr Kate Hudson, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

According to the NFLA's submission, the Coalition Government's progress in promoting multilateral nuclear disarmament over the last three years has been "*reasonable but not eye-catching*". The MoD was certainly more reticent in advocating grounds for disarmament in their submission, holding that it should only take place if it "*promoted international stability*" and did not "*diminish any nation's security*".

However, the MoD also noted that Britain's nuclear arsenal was "*almost certainly*" the smallest of the five states recognised as nuclear powers under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and moreover that these weapons had been de-targeted and placed on several days' notice to fire for almost twenty years.

***"The UK took advantage of the end of the Cold War to commence the steady reduction of its nuclear forces... It must be recognised however, that unilateral action alone will only get us so far towards our goal of a world without nuclear weapons."***

Rear Admiral John Gower,  
on behalf of the Defence Secretary

These were good examples of the "*forward leaning*" policy which Peter Burt said Britain had held for a number of years and had included independent action. Sir Malcolm Rifkind said Britain should be given more credit for de facto unilateral actions – see Table 5 – arguing: "*there was little recognition for these unilateral actions either domestically or internationally*." He was also sceptical about their impact on disarmament more widely: "France has actually expanded its arsenal and so too has China."

However Lord Browne argued that some of the UK's disarmament actions had been taken for "*strategic selfish reasons*" because weapons that were decommissioned were incapable of being used and actually unsafe. Others pointed out that these initiatives were not presented as contributions to disarmament.

However we simply don't know how these actions impacted on countries which turned their back on nuclear weapons such as the Ukraine. But, as Lord Browne went on to ask: "*The big question is, how was any of this multilateralist? None – entirely unilateralist. So why is unilateralist such a pejorative word?*"

Many who felt Britain is well placed to take an active role and indeed lead multilateral disarmament negotiations saw some growing reluctance to do so in recent years. Professor Clarke spoke about Britain's reputation for diplomacy which would hold it in good stead when advocating for the disarmament process, but both Lord Browne and Peter Burt criticised Britain for not participating in the 2013 Oslo conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. Peter Burt said this had "badly damaged" the credibility of the UK's claims to be a leader on nuclear disarmament issues.

There were however encouraging examples from Sir Nick Harvey and the MoD of Britain contributing towards building the "*right environment for nuclear disarmament*". They both cited Britain's work with Norway on the verification of warhead dismantlement as an example of its good intent.

The British Government also established the P5 group of nuclear weapons states and has promoted disarmament through this forum – which has been largely welcomed. However, as Peter Burt pointed out, the UK's involvement of late has resulted in a "*loss of momentum*" towards disarmament as the UK has moderated its behaviour to match those of other P5 members: working through the P5 cannot become Britain's only activity in the multilateral process.

### **Question 2.3**

#### **How should the UK plan to meet its strategic security needs and its international responsibilities?**

Admiral Gower, on behalf of the Defence Secretary, pointed out that "*The UK remains one of the very few countries able to deploy and sustain a credible force, together with its air and maritime enablers, almost anywhere in the world.*" It was clear however that many respondents felt the UK, in a post-Empire and post-Cold War age, should reassess its role as a global power and stop feeling it needed to be, in the words of Dr Hudson, "*a global policeperson or lieutenant to US interests*".

An obvious contradiction emerged for some respondents who contended that the UK should keep nuclear weapons for its own security and yet also recognised the inherent risks nuclear weapons posed within the world. Nuclear states speak of nuclear weapons in terms of security, deterrence and insurance but at the same time warn of the dangers of other countries possessing them.

***"This paradox – better for us to keep but also better if none existed – cannot be squared. However whilst it's true the risks are high, in fact our possession of nuclear weapons means we keep our powerful voice, which can be a force for good."***

**Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP,  
Defence Select Committee Chair**

However other respondents such as Sir Menzies Campbell and Paul Nowak argued that the UK's ability to be a force for good, was not governed by its retention of Trident.

***"There are countries that are major economic powers without being nuclear powers."***

**Paul Nowak, TUC**

Others put the argument about Trident another way.

***"Trident replacement violates the clear commitment in the 2010 NPT Review Conference for 'all states... to make special efforts to establish the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons'."***

**Dr Rebecca Johnson, The Acronym Institute for  
Diplomacy and Disarmament**

In its submission, the MoD called Trident the "*ultimate guarantee of national security*". It said that this deterrent "*helps (has helped) prevent major war*" and contributes to the "*security backdrop*" that allows the UK to maintain its global reach. However the one anonymous contributor stated that the UK's independent weapons "*actually offer no value added above and beyond the protection afforded to us by USA's nuclear weapons.*"

The 'insurance argument' is obviously still persuasive for some but others questioned whether 'insurance' is the right word given that if nuclear weapons were ever used, given their long term impacts including the potential for a nuclear winter, there would never be a 'claim' and certainly no return to the situation before their use. The more crucial question therefore is do nuclear weapons deter? If so, is there any other way of defusing the threat one wishes to deter, and if so, why does the UK have them?

On a more practical level, Paul Ingram pointed out that even Russia does not possess the capacity for Continuous At-Sea Deterrence and China maintains a *“far smaller nuclear arsenal with weapons separate from delivery systems”*.

Various practical security solutions were therefore offered by respondents in the place of Trident and many urged the Government to focus their financially constrained resources elsewhere. For example, Sir Nick Harvey said they should concentrate on combating Tier One threats instead and highlighted the paucity of marine and spyware capabilities available to mitigate them. He said the UK would be *“better equipped”* if it were not spending so much on nuclear weapons.

Others such as Professor Clarke focused on diplomatic endeavours which the Government could pursue. He called on them to become more engaged with regional issues in the Gulf States and in the Middle East and cited emerging evidence about the effectiveness of sanctions in places like Iran in halting greater proliferation. Respondents such as Professor Clarke hailed the UK's positive diplomatic record but also warned that this was in danger of stalling given the UK's failure to attend the Oslo conference on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons last year.

Others raised the question of whether the UK does in fact employ a policy of minimum deterrence. Why, for example, is a planned future stockpile of 160 minimal when we know the destructive power of just one?

***“There is a question whether we have a minimal deterrent which is now claimed by the Government. Even if you only count the active warheads - those ready to be fired, which is approximately 40 - this is still more than could ever be required even given Moscow's anti-ballistic missile system.”***

Paul Ingram, BASIC

#### “CONSENSUS” CONCLUSIONS

- Getting to a world without nuclear weapons IS possible.
- The Non-Proliferation Treaty has been a qualified success but process now urgently needs reinvigorating as the Treaty is at a “tipping point” or “crossroads”.
- Nuclear weapons represent a twentieth-century failure – they are the Cold War's unfinished business and it is this generation that should resolve these issues. The conditions to make progress have never been better.
- For those who conclude the UK should retain nuclear weapons, there is still a debate to be had about whether what the UK currently possesses – or is planning to build – constitutes a “minimal “deterrent in the 21st century.

#### RECOMMENDATION

The UK Government should focus on utilising its world diplomatic skills, rather than its world military reach, to reduce its security threats and promote disarmament including:

- attending international conferences on nuclear weapons, such as that hosted by the Mexican Government in February 2014;
- helping secure definitive progress at P5 meeting in China;
- by publicly supporting a Nuclear Weapons Convention;
- by taking further independent action as appropriate.

### PART 3 NEXT STEPS TOWARDS DISARMAMENT

#### Question 3.1

In meeting disarmament responsibilities would this be a single step from the current system to non-nuclear status or would there be interim steps?

A number of respondents – including Rt Hon Nick Brown MP who said: *“I favour a single step approach but would not oppose interim steps in a journey towards the same outcome”* – would prefer a single step but most expected that in fact there will be a series of steps.

***“I do not think you will convince the security establishment, the media and Parliament to transition in one step to a completely non-nuclear policy. However I do think we could get there in steps.”***

Sir Nick Harvey MP, former Defence Minister

However a number of people did advocate the promotion of a Nuclear Weapons Convention which would make nuclear weapons illegal – like chemical weapons. The example of Syria, which saw in effect the court of worldwide opinion re-state that chemical weapons were unacceptable in terms of legality and humanitarian impact, was for some an important precedent in this respect.

But as Paul Nowak, TUC, pointed out, there can be some advantages to interim steps: *“long -term planning and investment is required and a broader [subsequent] industrial strategy needs to be factored in.”*

The dangers of an overly-incrementalist approach were also raised. Peter Burt, of Nuclear Information Service, pointed out that after many years of trying these small steps *“have not got us where we want or need to be.”* He suggested that what is required is *“a global commitment that the use of nuclear weapons would be treated as a crime against humanity of the worst kind.”*

Many first steps were suggested, however, respondents from across the political spectrum saw the USA and Russia as the main focus for progress. Their nuclear weapons arsenals far exceed any imaginable military use.

***“There is no reason why both the US and Russia could not reduce their arsenals to 1,000 weapons each and in particular get rid of short range weapons – both battlefield and tactical.”***

Admiral Lord Alan West  
former Defence Minister

***“If there was trust and co-operation as well as massive political will (for which there is some evidence from Obama), it is feasible USA and Russia could get to 500 –1,000 on each side. Still enough for deterrence.”***

Rt Hon Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP  
former Defence and Foreign Secretary

However it should be noted that Russia believes any next negotiation should include other countries as well as itself and USA.

Others pointed out some of the obstacles to further détente between the two biggest superpowers including: *“some basic disagreements regards the US missile defence shield which Russia fears is aimed at them and not at Iran as is claimed.”* They went on: *“Russia also has weaker conventional forces and therefore tends to overcompensate by possession of nuclear weapons.”* (Anonymous broadsheet foreign correspondent)

A number of contributors explicitly raised the issue of the risk of proliferation and the need to take action to ensure that those in countries such as Iran and North Korea – as well as India, Pakistan and Israel – who are campaigning against nuclear weapons are strengthened. For some, this increased the necessity for the UK to continue to take independent steps, which would have global impact.

#### Question 3.2

**What conditions would need to prevail for Britain – or others – to have the confidence to take any of these steps and how could the British Government operate to help bring about these conditions?**

It is clear that trust, and the confidence it engenders, are essential to making progress on disarmament. However, as was also pointed out, the critical issue is political will – and that may depend on a number of other factors, including public pressure for change, financial austerity informing prioritisation and the willingness to accept responsibility for resolving the issue of nuclear weapons.

***“If we replace Trident like-for-like, on basis that we may need it in 50 years’ time, then the next generation will be faced with the same challenging decisions we face. We are the Cold War generation and nuclear weapons are a Cold War problem: we should take responsibility for resolving it and not put that responsibility on our children or children’s children.”***

Lord Des Browne, former Defence Secretary

Trust and confidence between the main superpowers is not perceived to be particularly good – relations between USA and Russia have cooled somewhat since the start of the 1990s when there was a post-Cold War disarmament 'bounce'. Some pointed out that a major turning point was the withdrawal by the US in 2002<sup>12</sup> from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, prior to the installation of various parts of ABM hardware in Poland, Bulgaria and Romania, leaving Russia feeling threatened.

***“There is a case for removal of remaining tactical nuclear weapons – still based near the Polish border.”***

**Rt Hon Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP  
former Defence and Foreign Secretary**

Most recently the joint efforts at decommissioning Syria's chemical weapons have been helpful. In fact there is a positive context for making progress on disarmament as Professor Michael Clarke of RUSI noted: *“We have never been safer than in this present era, where all threats that challenge are intangible ones like globalisation and cyber-terrorism.”* This was echoed by Lord Browne:

***“The positive conditions for moving towards nuclear disarmament now include:***

- ***No threat***
- ***Political leadership that aspires to it***
- ***We now have greater understanding of limits of military force***
- ***We face a huge challenge in public spending***
- ***We have a decision to make – in 2016”***

**Lord Des Browne, former Defence Secretary**

One impediment to progress that was cited was the lack of public and parliamentary debate on this issue. As Jeremy Corbyn MP said, we need to remove *“the paranoia from all three political parties that one cannot step outside of the pro-nuclear consensus.”*

The UK has a huge responsibility to ensure progress. From those who support the retention of nuclear weapons to those who do not, one message was clear: the UK should exert diplomatic pressure to ensure disarmament continues.

***“Is there anything to stop Britain being an active proponent of disarmament? In a changed economic world, it is hard to justify having so much money tied up in weaponry we may never use.”***

**Paul Nowak, TUC**

### **Question 3.3**

**What might interim steps look like? Specify the positives and negatives of different steps? (Are humanitarian disarmament, unacceptable harm and Nuclear-Free Zones useful terms)**

Many of steps echo the Non-Proliferation Treaty's 13 paragraph disarmament plan of action adopted in 2000 (see Appendix III) which called for both unilateral and multilateral initiatives as well as action at the Conference on Disarmament. It also looked for an *“unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon states to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament to which all states parties are committed under Article VI.”*

The conference on humanitarian disarmament in Oslo led to 125 states supporting a joint statement which aims to put the humanitarian effect of nuclear weapons at the centre of public debate and at the Non-Proliferation Treaty Conference in 2015. A further humanitarian consequences conference is planned for February 2014.

Such initiatives were often welcomed.

***“It is a mistake to draw a distinction between a “chess” and a “go” approach, you need to do both. You need to have a mutually complementary strategy, for example, you need to change policy but a humanitarian approach is also necessary to create a norm for disarmament.”***

**Dr Dan Plesch, SOAS**

Steps towards the establishment of a Middle East Nuclear-Free Zone begun in the 1960s led to a joint declaration by Egypt and Iran in 1974 which resulted in a General Assembly resolution (broadened in 1990 to cover weapons of mass destruction). Such a zone would strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), would help to promote global nuclear disarmament and would also help the Middle East peace process as a substantial confidence-building measure. Its importance was referenced by a number of contributors, given the consensus regarding the global ramifications of instability in that region.

Making progress in the Middle East will however be difficult as it has become the 'theatre' in which superpower interests and conflicts have increasingly been played out. Now with higher levels of fundamentalism and religious sectarianism than in the immediate aftermath of the end of the Cold War, insecurity and distrust have increased. With no sign that Israel will consider relinquishing the nuclear weapons it is widely believed to have, the only recent positive signs have been the agreements regarding Syria's chemical weapons decommissioning and Iran's civil nuclear programme.

<sup>12</sup> Russia subsequently also quit the Treaty

**“Steps to stabilise relationships in the Middle East will have to be an important stage in creating the stability needed for the nuclear-armed states to have the confidence to abandon their nuclear weapons.”**

Peter Burt, Nuclear Information Service

The dangers of failure to make progress in the Middle East – however difficult – were highlighted by a number of contributors, none more starkly than Lord West who said: *“without [some such progress], Iran will continue to work towards having a nuclear weapon and if they succeed Israel will attack or Saudi Arabia, Turkey and possibly other regional states will acquire weapons (from Pakistan) or both.”*

**“A majority of the world is covered by binding state level agreements regarding nuclear-free zones. This is a massively important initiative with global strategic significance. However, unfortunately it has been denigrated, marginalised and ignored by the main 5 nuclear weapons states.”**

Dr Kate Hudson, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

It is important to note that a number of the first steps suggested were ones that the UK could take. Diplomatic activity – in Mexico at the conference on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons and later in the year through the ‘P5 initiative’ – could potentially have very positive results. However as a number of respondents made clear, independent action is also essential.

TABLE 7: FIRST STEPS TO NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT<sup>13</sup>

PROPOSED STEPS (worldwide)	BY WHOM
Work within P5 for greater transparency, understanding and trust	Rear Admiral John Gower (MOD)
NATO adopt no first-use policy	Jeremy Corbyn MP
Invite Russia to join NATO	Paul Ingram
China (and all other current non-signatories) to ratify Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty	Peter Burt
Removing US tactical nuclear weapons near Polish border	Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP
Russia and USA to get rid of all short range weapons	Lord Alan West, Peter Burt
Develop a Middle East NFZ	Lord Des Browne, Lord Alan West, Paul Ingram
Promote an East Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone	Sean Morris
Adopt SCRAP (The Strategic Concept for the Removal of Arms and Proliferation)	Dr Dan Plesch
Push for nuclear weapons to be outlawed on humanitarian grounds	Paul Ingram, Peter Burt, Dr Rebecca Johnson
Encourage the P5 to engage in international discussions on humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons	Sean Morris
Implement NPT’s thirteen paragraph plan	Dr Rebecca Johnson
A Nuclear Weapons – or Weapons of Mass Destruction – Convention	Sir Menzies Campbell MP, Peter Burt, Dr Kate Hudson
Implement recommendations of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament	Peter Burt

PROPOSED STEPS (UK)	BY WHOM
UK abandon Continuous At-Sea Deterrence	Lord Des Browne, Sir Nick Harvey MP
Separation of all warheads and missiles	Sir Nick Harvey MP
UK scrapping replacement for Trident	Paul Nowak
UK renounce all nuclear weapons	Dr Kate Hudson
UK should push UN to lead debate/action	Prof Michael Clarke

<sup>13</sup> Table compiled by NET from contributions made by interviewees

In fact there is a risk, as Dr Johnson and others pointed out, that a decision to replace Trident is outside the letter and spirit of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Modernising the UK's nuclear weapons delivery system – which is in effect what the replacement for the Vanguard submarines is – may be in violation of the UK's obligations pursuant to signing the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the principle underpinning Article VI of the Treaty.

Others pointed out that without jeopardising its international standing, the UK could adopt some of the policies that are held by China, which has a similar stockpile of weapons: a no first-use declaration as well as the physical separation of warheads from their delivery systems.

***“A national decision by the UK to scrap and not replace Trident could shift the debate and kick-start a more wide ranging disarmament process.”***

**Dr Rebecca Johnson, Acronym Institute for Diplomacy and Disarmament**

#### Question 3.4

What role would you envisage the UN or other international agencies such as IAEA having in steps towards disarmament?

There was a clear consensus that there is a huge role for both these organisations if and when disarmament takes place. However, there are perceived accountability and effectiveness problems.

***“The UN is sadly not a very effective body but of course they must do what they can. The IAEA is doing a very good job and has proved the worth of its role but the difficulty is rogue states who would not allow themselves to be constrained by such bodies.”***

**General Sir Mike Jackson  
former Chief of General Staff**

The UN and the IAEA are seen by some as controlled by the P5 states which all possess nuclear weapons and all have the power of veto within the Security Council. There has been a longstanding debate about reform of the UN with a number of suggestions made over the years.

***“They [UN & IAEA] are key, they have to be the honest brokers in the process. There is a discussion to be had about the shape of the UN going forward though.”***

**Alison Seabeck MP, Shadow Defence Minister**

For some, the lack of reform is a positive hindrance to disarmament. Sean Morris on behalf of NFLA argued that *“the current illogical and unfair structure of the UN makes it extremely difficult to move disarmament polices beyond the interminably slow pace they are currently at.”* However, if made more democratic and therefore more responsive to its members, it could *“play a lead role in effective steps towards disarmament.”*

As Dr Rebecca Johnson pointed out, *“under the current NPT regime, the IAEA safeguards nuclear materials but lacks the legal powers and authority to verify weapons programmes.”* She suggests a legally constituted disarmament and verification institution to oversee and verify *“the achievement, and maintenance, of a nuclear-free world.”*

Both organisations need more resources and respect as well as reform but after Syria – and the consequent awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons – this may be forthcoming.

***“If you traded in a squadron of fighter jets and gave those resources to the IAEA, they could increase their power tenfold.”***

**Professor Michael Clarke, RUSI**

#### “CONSENSUS” CONCLUSIONS

- Absolutely critical that momentum towards disarmament continues as there is currently a danger of stalling. The UK Government is in a position to play a crucial role in ensuring that momentum returns but this will require political will.
- There are many steps – small and large, national and international, unilateral and multilateral – that could be taken to progress nuclear disarmament.
- USA and Russia must reduce their still vast arsenals but that does not mean that other nuclear weapons states have no part to play in encouraging this, taking part in disarmament negotiations and acting independently.
- United Nations and IAEA reform, including improved accountability and resourcing, is urgently required.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Having signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the UK Government should seek an independent legal opinion on whether the proposed modernisation of its Trident nuclear weapons delivery system is outside its legal obligations.

## PART 4 WIDER POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS

### Question 4.1

How far should the cost of replacement and maintenance of nuclear weapons be factors in any decision?

There was no unanimity in the way in which respondents answered this. Views ranged from those such as General Sir Mike Jackson who believed that cost was a 'red herring' to those who contended that it could take up as much as 30% of the defence equipment budget and so should be a serious factor, certainly in relation to the decision to be taken on a successor to Trident.

***“In a time of austerity the nuclear budget must be under far greater scrutiny. It is a sign of political and strategic strength to reassess priorities in the light of available resources and choose capabilities more relevant to tomorrow than legacy systems based upon the past.”***

Paul Ingram, BASIC

In Lord West's opinion, a large amount of the procurement budget would have to be given over to replacing Trident for some "six years" but over the lifetime of the project – up to 2060 – the £80 to £100 billion estimated lifetime cost is "low" when annualised.

Professor Michael Clarke predicted that although the budget was achievable over the lifetime of the successor to Trident, in 2020-2024 when spending on the successor will be at its highest there will be an "argument over shortfall for other defence equipment".

Arguably this debate regarding the impact of going ahead with the successor to Trident on other UK defence procurement has already begun.<sup>14</sup> As several respondents also pointed out, at a time when the Government is implementing an 'austerity programme' leading to reduced budgets for many public services, the nuclear budget must be under greater scrutiny than it has been previously. Indeed, Jeremy Corbyn MP pointed out that the cost of the successor is twice the cost of HS2 but the latter has attracted considerably more public and Parliamentary attention.

The Rt Hon Sir Menzies Campbell MP summed up the issue in this way:

***“The deployment of any defence system must always take account of the balance between costs, necessity and effectiveness.”***

Rt Hon Sir Menzies Campbell MP

In Nick Brown MP's view, when this balance was considered, Trident "fails the tests".

### Question 4.2

How far should jobs and employment be a factor in any decision on nuclear weapons?

Most respondents were sympathetic to the idea that the impact of potential job losses should be mitigated but felt that they should not be a factor in the decision-making process. Any decision should be taken on foreign policy and security grounds only.

Nick Brown MP and Paul Nowak amongst others advocated for interventionist economic strategies on the part of the Government.

***“There is a need for a clear industrial strategy with defence diversification as an element of this.”***

Paul Nowak, TUC

Respondents understood that the Main Gate decision was hugely significant for Barrow and the supply chain with, for example, Alison Seabek MP saying "it will be devastating to those communities, a government of any description would have to look at what they could do to support them." However, the NET report on Barrow had shown that jobs in other sectors could be created for workers displaced from the nuclear weapons industry at a fraction of the £100bn cost of replacing Trident (£100million per 1,000 alternative jobs).

All felt that it would be a mistake not to take forward nuclear disarmament on employment grounds and that ultimately it was a security question first and foremost. Professor Clarke put the inherent dilemma powerfully:

***“For the sake of 3,000 jobs, are we going to tell our children that we didn't stop the annihilation of another country?”***

Professor Michael Clarke, RUSI

<sup>14</sup> See for example 'Tory ex defence minister voices doubts over need for Trident replacement', The Guardian 15.12.13

Sean Morris on behalf of Nuclear Free Local Authorities pointed out: *“pound for pound, spending on nuclear weapons is one of the least cost-effective ways of generating jobs.”* Dr Rebecca Johnson also noted that too often *“defence jobs are treated as political footballs – sanctimoniously invoked to silence opposition to new military projects and sacrificed when expedient.”*

#### Question 4.3

**How far should public opinion be a factor in any decision on nuclear weapons?**

Respondents considered public opinion to be a crucial factor but many felt it was uninformed and somewhat restricted. Sean Morris for Nuclear Free Local Authorities pointed out: *“debate on the UK nuclear weapons programme has been limited and often coloured by government views and the views of political parties rather than an informed and objective discussion.”*

Others, such as Dr Rebecca Johnson, pointed out that *“civil society has already played an important role in raising awareness of nuclear dangers and developing national and international arguments and initiatives for creating more secure futures without nuclear weapons.”* But at crucial times there has been very little debate.

***“What is striking is that at key moments, 1945 when we attained nuclear capability, 1963 when we got Polaris and in 2006 when the decision to upgrade Trident was taken, there was comparatively little debate about what were momentous issues.”***

Professor Michael Clarke, RUSI

Jeremy Corbyn MP argued that the debate had become trapped in the Cold War rhetoric of the 1980s and that the public must understand the diminishing nuclear threat that now exists.

As we have already noted Lord Browne called it *“unhelpful”* that complex issues have been simplified into a binary narrative to be for or against Trident renewal and to consider unilateralism a pejorative term. In reality, he said, these issues were more nuanced and putting forward this ‘black or white’ perception of nuclear disarmament was only decreasing our capacity to deal effectively with it.

***“To some extent this is an elite debate and an extremely complicated issue. My instinct is that the public are moving more and more towards getting rid of nuclear weapons but that may be in line with generally being averse to war/conflicts.”***

Anonymous, Broadsheet foreign affairs correspondent

As Paul Ingram has said:<sup>15</sup> *“public opinion remains deeply divided on nuclear weapons and choices around Trident replacement.”* He went on however to point out *“the indeterminacy of public opinion gives all three main Westminster parties political space to rethink UK nuclear weapons policy.”*

***“The Government must be honest with the public... it is [for example] nonsense to say that Britain has its place on the UN Security Council because of its nuclear weapons.”***

Dr Dan Plesch

Peter Burt also pointed out *“public opinion is easily manipulated... so far we have not had a rational debate... and there are powerful players who intend to keep it that way.”*

All contributors agreed, however, that the public must have a greater understanding of nuclear weapons and, for several respondents, the time is ripe for that public debate.

***“There must be a public debate and the time for it is now; this is a golden opportunity for politicians to inform the public about nuclear weapons.”***

Sir Nick Harvey

All also agreed that public opinion must be a factor with, for example, Sir Menzies Campbell MP pointing out that ultimately *“democracies like the UK are governed by public opinion”*. As Malcolm Rifkind asserted, the real question for the public to decide is *“do nuclear weapons contribute to our security or not?”* However some believe that humanitarian and legal considerations should also apply.

***“Nuclear weapons are indiscriminate in nature and massive in their impact – their use which would cause millions of deaths, almost all civilians, is not only abhorrent but immoral and illegal.”***

Kate Hudson, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

<sup>15</sup> Paul Ingram and Dr Nick Ritche: Trident in UK politics and public opinion', published by BASIC July 2013

**“CONSENSUS” CONCLUSIONS**

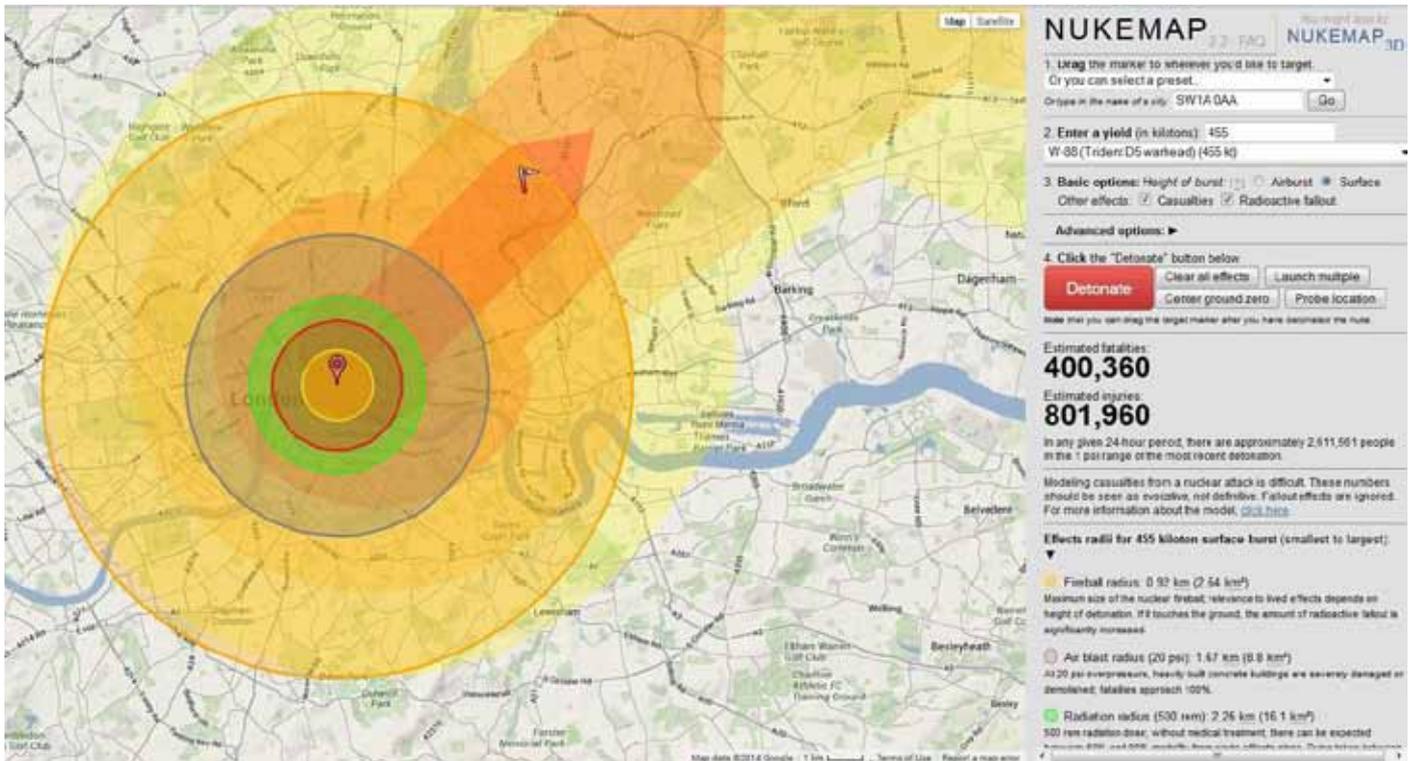
- Britain's nuclear weapons should be subject to same cost-effectiveness test and public scrutiny that all public expenditure has to be subject to.
- As NET's 'Trident Alternatives Review and the Future of Barrow' report pointed out, for small fractions of the expenditure spent on nuclear weapons, economic regeneration for all those working on nuclear weapons-related industries including alternative employment is possible (in the order of £100 million per 1,000 jobs).
- Wider and more informed public debate on nuclear weapons – and especially whether they do or do not contribute to UK's security – is required, but multilateral versus unilateral nature of debate is anachronistic, inaccurate and unhelpful.

**RECOMMENDATION**

There should be a much deeper and wider public and parliamentary debate about whether to retain and modernise UK nuclear weapons in current circumstance of no external threat and given:

- the risks they themselves create (of proliferation and accident);
- their expense (at a time of austerity and prioritisation);
- the fact the majority of the UK's European neighbours and NATO allies have concluded that they do not need to possess nuclear weapons to guarantee their security;
- the alternative approaches that might be taken towards reducing any possible future nuclear threat (e.g. diplomacy, conflict prevention, and trade).

# APPENDIX I AN ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE OF THE DESTRUCTIVENESS OF AN “AVERAGE” NUCLEAR WEAPON



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## APPENDIX II PRIORITY RISKS<sup>16</sup>

### IDENTIFIED IN THE GOVERNMENT'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

**Tier One:** The National Security Council considered the following groups of risks to be those of highest priority for UK national security looking ahead, taking account of both likelihood and impact.

- International terrorism affecting the UK or its interests, including a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attack by terrorists; and/or a significant increase in the levels of terrorism relating to Northern Ireland.
- Hostile attacks upon UK cyber space by other states and large scale cyber-crime.
- A major accident or natural hazard which requires a national response, such as severe coastal flooding affecting three or more regions of the UK, or an influenza pandemic.
- An international military crisis between states, drawing in the UK, and its allies as well as other states and non-state actors.

**Tier Two:** The National Security Council considered the following groups of risks to be the next highest priority looking ahead, taking account of both likelihood and impact.

- An attack on the UK or its Overseas Territories by another state or proxy using chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) weapons.
- Risk of major instability, insurgency or civil war overseas which creates an environment that terrorists can exploit to threaten the UK.
- A significant increase in the level of organised crime affecting the UK.
- Severe disruption to information received, transmitted or collected by satellites, possibly as the result of a deliberate attack by another state.

**Tier Three:** The National Security Council considered the following groups of risks to be the next highest priority after taking account of both likelihood and impact.

- A large scale conventional military attack on the UK by another state (not involving the use of CBRN weapons) resulting in fatalities and damage to infrastructure within the UK.
- A significant increase in the level of terrorists, organised criminals, illegal immigrants and illicit goods trying to cross the UK border to enter the UK.
- Disruption to oil or gas supplies to the UK, or price instability, as a result of war, accident, major political upheaval or deliberate manipulation of supply by producers.
- A major release of radioactive material from a civil nuclear site within the UK which affects one or more regions.
- A conventional attack by a state on another NATO or EU member to which the UK would have to respond.
- An attack on a UK overseas territory as the result of a sovereignty dispute or a wider regional conflict.
- Short to medium term disruption to international supplies of resources (e.g. food, minerals) essential to the UK.

<sup>16</sup> See page 27 of 'A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: the National Security Strategy' 2010

## APPENDIX III

### THE FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE 2000 NPT REVIEW CONFERENCE – 13 STEPS TO DISARMAMENT

1. The importance and urgency of signatures and ratifications, without delay and without conditions and in accordance with constitutional processes, to achieve the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.
2. A moratorium on nuclear-weapon-test explosions or any other nuclear explosions pending entry into force of that Treaty.
3. The necessity of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in accordance with the statement of the Special Coordinator in 1995 and the mandate contained therein, taking into consideration both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation objectives. The Conference on Disarmament is urged to agree on a programme of work which includes the immediate commencement of negotiations on such a treaty with a view to their conclusion within five years.
4. The necessity of establishing in the Conference on Disarmament an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament is urged to agree on a programme of work which includes the immediate establishment of such a body.
5. The principle of irreversibility to apply to nuclear disarmament, nuclear and other related arms control and reduction measures.
6. An unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament to which all States parties are committed under Article VI.
7. The early entry into force and full implementation of START II and the conclusion of START III as soon as possible while preserving and strengthening the ABM Treaty as a cornerstone of strategic stability and as a basis for further reductions of strategic offensive weapons, in accordance with its provisions.
8. The completion and implementation of the Trilateral Initiative between the United States of America, Russian Federation and the International Atomic Energy Agency.
9. Steps by all the nuclear-weapon states leading to nuclear disarmament in a way that promotes international stability, and based on the principle of undiminished security for all:
  - Further efforts by the nuclear-weapon states to reduce their nuclear arsenals unilaterally.
  - Increased transparency by the nuclear-weapon states with regard to the nuclear weapons capabilities and the implementation of agreements pursuant to Article VI and as a voluntary confidence-building measure to support further progress on nuclear disarmament.
  - The further reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons, based on unilateral initiatives and as an integral part of the nuclear arms reduction and disarmament process.
  - Concrete agreed measures to further reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons systems.
  - A diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies to minimize the risk that these weapons ever be used and to facilitate the process of their total elimination.
  - The engagement as soon as appropriate of all the nuclear-weapon States in the process leading to the total elimination of their nuclear weapons.
10. Arrangements by all nuclear-weapon states to place, as soon as practicable, fissile material designated by each of them as no longer required for military purposes under IAEA or other relevant international verification and arrangements for the disposition of such material for peaceful purposes, to ensure that such material remains permanently outside of military programmes.
11. Reaffirmation that the ultimate objective of the efforts of States in the disarmament process is general and complete disarmament under effective international control.
12. Regular reports, within the framework of the NPT strengthened review process, by all states parties on the implementation of Article VI and paragraph 4 (c) of the 1995 Decision on “Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament”, and recalling the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996.
13. The further development of the verification capabilities that will be required to provide assurance of compliance with nuclear disarmament agreements for the achievement and maintenance of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

**NET** Nuclear  
Education Trust

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**Independent Survey & Inquiry**  
**The UK's Defence Needs and International**  
**Nuclear Disarmament Responsibilities**

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