



Scottish CND

**Banning the Bomb
or
Assuring Destruction?**



A Stark Choice

The UK's proposed replacement for Trident may seem to be simply another infuriating example of a Westminster decision to ignore the clearly expressed opinion of Scottish elected representatives, but while it certainly is that, it needs to be seen as a choice that impacts across the world.

The choice the world faces is on one side, nuclear proliferation, escalation and upgrading the weapons. The other possibility is prohibition leading to elimination, achieved through co-operating and the UN rules-based system.

Nuclear weapons increase the threats to humanity that arise from the climate emergency, so the majority of governments in the world are now working to outlaw them. The number of nuclear-armed states has almost doubled since the introduction of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. This is inevitable. If the weapons have credibility, those who do not have them are under threat, or in dependent alliances like NATO. Possession, and modernisation is leading to more states wanting to acquire them, despite the crippling financial and social costs.

There is now a huge opportunity for Scots and Scotland to contribute to global disarmament efforts, and force the United Kingdom to stop scrabbling after a level of power and control that it cannot afford and which puts Scotland, and the world, at terrible risk.

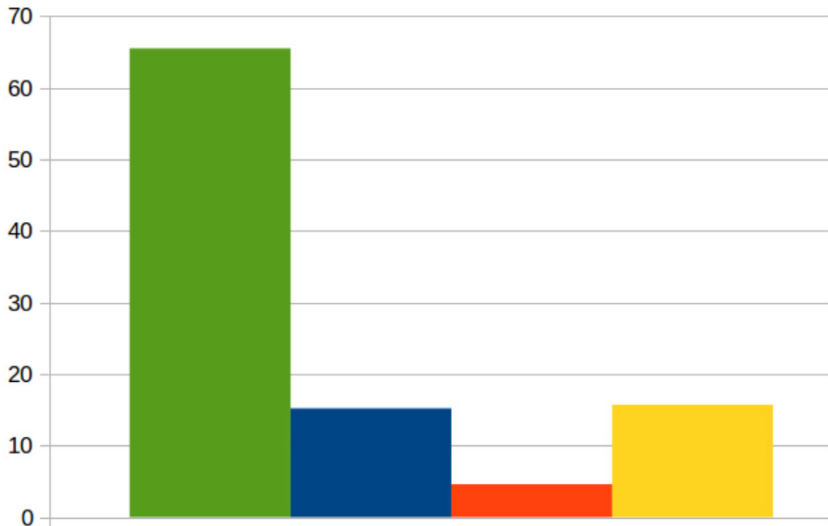
Ban the Bomb

On 7th July 2017, at the United Nations, 122 of the member states voted to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), a new and absolute commitment to prohibition intended to lead to the elimination of all nuclear weapons and based on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of their use, it was also the first nuclear weapons treaty to articulate the disproportionate impact of these weapons on women and girls, and indigenous peoples.

The TPNW was achieved with support from civil society through the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), a global 400 strong partner organisation which includes Scottish CND and other peace organisations in Scotland¹. More than three-fifths of the world's states are supporters of the TPNW. 70 states have already signed (well in excess of the number required to bring it into force once their signature becomes a ratification) and an additional 57 voted in favour of the treaty at the UN.

While support is high in all regions apart from Europe, it is still difficult for citizens in nuclear-armed and reliant states to envision absolute nuclear disarmament, however desirable it may seem, if you live in a state that explicitly bases security on the possession and potential use of

14,500 nuclear warheads and demands that less economically powerful or otherwise dependent allies endorse their nuclear weapons policies³.



Column 1: 64.5% of states are without nuclear weapons
Column 2: 15.7% of states are on board with the TPNW
Column 3: 4.6% of states are nuclear armed
Column 4: 15.2% of states endorse the nuclear armed states

The Global Race to Destroy

With corporate support from arms manufacturing businesses, all nine nuclear-armed states are modernising and upgrading their nuclear weapons, often interdependently, along with use of irresponsible rhetoric, which ignores the threat of annihilation, radioactive poison from fallout and the famine-inducing climate disaster that is the real risk for all member states of the UN.

The actions of non-state actors, nuclear proliferation by states, the impacts of extreme weather and the climate emergency, and infrastructure that limits the visibility of nuclear facilities means that the threat of nuclear war does not arise only from a 'Cold War' between two superpowers. In addition to deliberate use, we have often close to cataclysmic accidents through miscommunication, misunderstanding, and technical malfunctions. The majority of the world's governments understand that the only solution includes not just the prohibition, but the elimination of all nuclear weapons. The nuclear-armed states' preferred process, gradual reduction in the numbers of weapons, slowed after the 1980's, failed to prevent proliferation, and this year's withdrawal from the INF treaty that led to reduction shows

that, even if these treaties can be restored, only an absolute ban can be irreversible and time bound.

Scotland's Share

The UK's nuclear weapons system is based in Scotland at Faslane, on the West Coast, and its adjacent Coulport facility. The Scottish Government and Parliament are strongly opposed to them and support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons⁴. Four Vanguard class submarines, with at least one fully armed and on patrol 24/7, operate Continuous At Sea Deterrence (CASD). Each armed submarine can carry eight Trident D5 missiles and a total of 40 nuclear warheads⁵ (the equivalent of 320 Hiroshima-sized bombs⁶).

Following votes in 2007 and 2016, against all odds, the UK Government continues to drive forward its Defence Nuclear Enterprise (DNE) programme to replace the Vanguard class submarines with new Dreadnought class vessels⁷. It is also proposed that from 2020, all of the UK's submarine fleet will be based at the upgraded Faslane naval base⁸.

The first new nuclear-armed submarine was scheduled to enter service by 2030 (the Vanguard-class will then be 13 years beyond its design life). In addition to slippage on the service dates, the programme has been dogged by escalating costs, unforeseen technical difficulties, shortages of skilled personnel and inadequate management⁹. The political controversy that surrounds it is fraught with but not eclipsed by the constitutional crisis that is Brexit, and Scotland's highlighting of its democratic deficit in supporting but being excluded from joining the TPNW¹⁰.

A flaw in the reactors planned for the Dreadnought submarines led to a new reactor design, the PWR3, and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) is commissioning reactor cores for the first Dreadnought submarine and also for Astute-class attack submarines, which are nuclear powered¹¹. To secure compatibility, the UK is also contributing financially to the US development of the new Trident D5 missiles and components¹².

The UK weapons and system is so integrated with, and compromised by the US systems, that Scotland can, and must expect pressure from the US as well as the UK in its efforts to scrap Trident and join the TPNW. All these projects are behind schedule, and while some information is in the public domain, there are major gaps in the UK's transparency. The Mk4A warhead modernisation programme has been largely concealed from the public and parliament, and the upgrade of nuclear warhead facilities was presented as if it was unrelated to the UK Trident replacement¹³.

[A Price Too High](#)

The ever-rising costs of the programme at a time of financial insecurity and austerity can bring the reality of the Government's plans to public attention. The MoD does not release figures for the total cost of the nuclear weapons programme, but estimates that DNE spending over the next 10 years will be £50.9bn. In 2016 CND produced an estimate of the cost of renewal of £205bn. The House of Commons library estimated lifetime costs until 2065 as £140bn. Overall, the claim that lifetime costs have risen from £31bn (2015) to £205bn (2018) have not been disputed by the Government¹⁴. The Dreadnought into-service date has slipped from the original projection of 2024 to 2040, calling into question the provision of the Continuous At Sea Deterrence (CASD) which has been given as an absolute requirement of the system. Extending the service life of the Vanguard fleet requires disproportionate increases in costs. Despite a series of major safety concerns and near accidents over many years, sticking with CASD shows that the Government is unwilling to give consideration to potential accidents, or any response to changed capacity for detection of the submarines which on patrol.

In September 2018 the chair of the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee declared that the infrastructure supporting the DNE was 'not fit for purpose'. It gives the programme an 'Amber/Red' rating, meaning the successful delivery of the project is in doubt¹⁵. Delivery of the new Astute class is also rated red, and delay here will further impact on the Dreadnought delivery.

The process of decommissioning of the Vanguard class boats will also be adversely affected at Devonport in Plymouth with bottlenecks at the deep water facility where dismantling is undertaken, thus creating storage and cost implications. The MoD is reportedly considering a £1bn programme to address dock capacity at Devonport although this is still likely to lead to further delays to the submarine dismantling programme.

[Who Is In Charge Around Here?](#)

A further difficulty arises from the reliance by the UK Government on private contractors to deliver almost every element of the programme. Major contractors are Rolls Royce (with customers in over 150 countries, operational in upwards of 50 countries in Europe, the Americas, Africa, Pacific Asia and the Middle East) and Babcock (whose stated strategy has long been to maintain their position in the UK whilst growing overseas). The volatile economic post-Brexit environment will impact on their market position and in both cases the trend suggests that in the future the MoD

may be forced to prioritise sustaining their viability in the UK over keeping costs low.

Management for the Trident Renewal Programme is proving particularly difficult to decide on or to implement because of the programme's complexity, involving many highly trained specialised technicians. Rolls Royce have been unable to recruit specialist nuclear engineers and managing the programme requires a high degree of secrecy and reliance on monopoly suppliers. Management continues to carry very high risk and responsibility. It will not be possible to deliver Dreadnought on schedule within budget constraints that still allow basic maintenance of current defence spending so additional budgeting will be required by the cash-strapped UK Government. Although the programme is incompatible with the UK's NPT disarmament obligations, the present UK Government is committed to Trident renewal at any cost. The main opposition party, Labour, is also committed to the programme despite the personal views of the present party leader¹⁶.

While Brexit is creating shifting of allegiances with UK political spectrum, there does not appear to be any concerted political opposition towards nuclear disarmament of any addressing of the threat of climate chaos within the main party political system at Westminster. This means that the shortest route the UK's disarmament is still independence for Scotland, which would require the weapons' removal from Scotland. Without any other viable base in the UK, decommissioning and dismantling would be the only remaining option¹⁷.

[How Can Scotland Support the Ban?](#)

Divestment from nuclear weapons is an important tool to undermine the drivers of the nuclear weapons posture through impacting on the risk adverse financial institutions the propel the modernisation programmes. More than 50 major financial institutions worldwide have divested from nuclear weapons since the adoption of the TPNW. In this respect, Scottish CND is appreciated of the important and valuable work done to enable campaigners and lobbyists to be informed and active by the Scottish Don't Bank on the Bomb network and their colleagues working globally through PAX¹⁸. Other global efforts that contribute to a powerful impact on the nuclear armed governments' claim to democratic mandate include the ICAN Parliamentarians Pledge¹⁹ and the Cities Campaign²⁰, through which elected representatives can offer support to each other across the world and communities can stand aside from governmental decisions on nuclear weapons policies, and pass formal resolutions to show support for early adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Notes

1. See www.nuclearban.scot for details of these
2. Ban Monitor Executive Summary
3. BBC News 2015 www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-34106546
4. National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review, 2015, November 2015
5. Scientist for Global Responsibility www.sgr.org.uk/resources/nuclear-weapons-beginner-s-guide-threats#_edn37
6. Rowena Mason and Anushka Asthana, "Commons votes for Trident renewal by majority of 355," *The Guardian*, 18 July 2016.
7. UK Defence Journal Feb 2018 www.ukdefencejournal.org.uk/faslane-expansion-plans-well-received-local-area-says-mod/
8. John Ainslie, *The Trident Shambles*, Scottish CND, March 2016, www.banthebomb.org/images/stories/pdfs/shambles.pdf
9. Nuclear Ban.scot www.nuclearban.scot/the-ban/uk-scotland-the-ban/
10. 'Successor Submarine Project (Note by the Assistant Secretary)'. Defence Board, 25 November 2009. Document released under FOI request. Available at www.robedwards.typepad.com/files/declassified-report-to-mod-defence-board.pdf. P11
11. National Audit Office. *The Defence Nuclear Enterprise: A Landscape Review*. P20
12. Peter Burt. 'AWE: Britain's Nuclear Weapons Factory; Past, Present, and Possibilities for the Future'. Nuclear Information Service, 2016, www.nuclearinfo.org/sites/default/files/AWE-Past%2C%20Present%2C%20Future%20Report%202016.pdf. p1
13. National Audit Office. *The Defence Nuclear Enterprise: A Landscape Review*. p35
14. UK Parliamentary Select Committee report www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committee-a-z/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/news-parliament-2017/mod-nuclear-budget-report-published-17-19/
15. Scotsman.com/news/uk/labour-not-going-back-on-decision-to-support-trident-1-4759091 Oct 2018
16. *Trident Nowhere to Go* by John Ainslie March 2013
17. <http://nukedivestmentscotland.org>
18. <http://www.icanw.org/projecs/pledge>
19. <http://nuclearban.org/cities>



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Text is by Janet Fenton and draws on work done by the late John Ainslie for RCW.

Scottish CND works toward the global elimination of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction. Scottish CND has members across Scotland. We are one of the largest and longest running peace organisations in Scotland campaigning against nuclear weapons, working both here in Scotland and with other partners in the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

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