



Trident – Worse than Irrelevant

**If you care about British security...
refuse to support Trident replacement**

On 18 July, the Conservative Government plans to rush through a vote that will allow the MoD to spend billions of taxpayers' money on contracts with BAE Systems to build four "Successor" nuclear submarines to carry Lockheed Martin's US-made Trident missiles for 50 more years. These weapons could never be used without creating an unimaginable humanitarian and environmental catastrophe for the world.

Nuclear weapons are now widely recognised as a security problem, not an asset. They don't bring us status and are not taken seriously for defence. The majority of UN nations have chosen to live without nuclear armaments and are now close to achieving a long-sought Nuclear Ban Treaty to prohibit these inhumane weapons of mass destruction once and for all, as biological and chemical weapons have been banned. It is in keeping with our treaty obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), as well as Britain's direct security interests to join multilateral negotiations aimed at ridding the whole world of nuclear weapons. Voting for Trident replacement on Monday would be foolish and short-sighted.

Post-Brexit security assessment must come first

The Brexit vote changes our security context, with unpredictable impacts on Britain's place in the world. There is no need to sign the BAE contracts now. A rushed vote in July serves no security or jobs purpose.

As Europe reels from the Brexit vote and hundreds of thousands of jobs are put in jeopardy across Britain, now is not the time to be wasting public money on an unusable vanity project like Trident. On the contrary, with multilateral disarmament negotiations on the UN agenda and many more pressing priorities for British security and peace, MPs should refuse to give the Treasury and MoD **carte blanche to sign away the first £41 billion** that the previous SDSR put aside for the nuclear submarines. Overall, replacing Trident will swallow up £205 billion. Already over budget and way over schedule on existing contracts for the Astute hunter killer submarines, BAE Systems is keen to lock in as much of the Trident successor contracts as it can now, tied up with penalty clauses.

It would be the height of fiscal imprudence and folly for MPs to sign the billion-pound contracts to "cut steel" on a new nuclear weapons system that the rest of the world is about to prohibit. At the very least, parliament should insist on remitting such an important decision to a later date, when the UK's future security and economic environment can be responsibly assessed.

Multilateral UN initiatives likely to ban nuclear weapons by 2025

During 2016, UN member states have been meeting in Geneva to discuss pathways to implement the NPT more effectively. For humanitarian as well as security reasons, the majority are advocating a new "Nuclear Ban Treaty" as the next practical step. The aim is to create a legal and normative regime that will delegitimise nuclear weapons and prevent nuclear uses and proliferation. The planned global treaty would prohibit the use, deployment, production, transporting, stockpiling and proliferation of nuclear weapons, while underscoring and universalising legal obligations to eliminate all nuclear arsenals.

Though most mainstream media circles have yet to wake up to these developments, the UN General Assembly is expected to agree a negotiating mandate for such a treaty within the next couple of years. Elected representatives from Scotland and Westminster have attended preparatory meetings in a personal capacity. Senior diplomats from the US, UK, France (among others) have acknowledged that such a Nuclear Ban Treaty is looking "inevitable". Negotiations will probably be carried out in a UN forum that is "open to all and blockable by none". So whether or not a UK government chooses to participate directly, the resulting treaty could well come into legal effect through International Humanitarian Law by 2020-2025, years before any new submarines are built.

Trident jobs are a false, short term promise

Jobs are very important, but not the right reason for voting for Trident replacement. Barrow's civilian shipbuilding and local industries were sacrificed in past decades, making Barrow dangerously dependent on Vickers (now BAE). BAE Systems (reportedly nicknamed "bad and expensive ships" by exasperated MoD insiders) is over budget and behind schedule on current contracts for Astute, and still struggling with design

and construction flaws. Also responsible for the Type 45 destroyers that defence chiefs have admitted cannot operate in the Gulf's warmer waters without breaking down, Barrow has more than enough work for the next decade. Barrow's future jobs need to be based on a mix of relevant civilian and defence industries, not just a single employer. Effective planning and investment can create more reliable local opportunities and skilled jobs if the government, unions and local authorities undertake now to develop well thought out programmes of diversification and economic transition, including workforce retraining.

The jobs dependent on Trident replacement are a fraction of the jobs that are currently being decimated due to Brexit. Pound for pound, Trident provides far fewer British jobs than health or education. And even for localities such as Barrow and Helensburgh, which are claimed to be dependent on Trident jobs,

Trident doesn't provide effective deterrence or security

Just because Trident has been labelled an "independent nuclear deterrent" doesn't make it so. Calling a cat "dog" doesn't give it the ability to bark! Nuclear deterrence is a complicated and psychological relationship that American theorists in the 1950s hoped would work between the nuclear-armed US and Soviet Union. It was also meant to reassure domestic publics who were understandably nervous about the vast sums of money being poured into an nuclear arms race and afraid of nuclear war. Put simply, deterrence says to any adversaries "Don't threaten or attack me because you'll find that whatever you hope to gain will be much less than you risk losing". That "don't mess with me" warning has to be credible.

For deterrence to work and not result in war, governments have to get the communication and rational decision-making right. To prevent nuclear war while wielding nuclear weapons, decision-makers have to get 100 % right. Trident will never deter terrorists. As for other threats, US nuclear policymakers George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn described nuclear deterrence as "precarious" and "psychological, depending on calculations for which there is no historical experience". They had believed in nuclear deterrence in the Cold War, but viewed it now as "increasingly hazardous and decreasingly effective".

Like everyone, British Prime Ministers miscalculate and make mistakes, and sometimes their decisions can wreak havoc with everyone's lives. Nuclear deterrence is supposed to convince other nations that Britain would fire weapons that would inflict unimaginable devastation, human suffering and environmental catastrophe. Realistically, the only circumstances in which anyone would face the decision to fire Trident would be when nuclear deterrence has already failed. At that point, pressing the nuclear button would be futile and suicidal. Do we want any Prime Minister or naval commander to do that in our names? Throughout history, deterrence has best been achieved with political, diplomatic, economic tools and a range of military capabilities. Believing in Trident as "the deterrent" has misled previous governments into reckless and unnecessary military actions, as the Chilcot Report has recently analysed.

Continuous at-sea deterrent (CASD) patrols are not the issue

Deterrence theorists argue that four submarines have to be built so that one can always be at sea on patrol. This is supposed to guarantee invisibility and invulnerability. That's the theory. In the real world, even before new submarines are built, Trident is increasingly exposed as technologically and strategically obsolete. Rapid and ongoing advances in cyber, drone, robotics and other technologies mean that nuclear systems are not "future proof". They can be hacked by cyber warriors and used against us. So replacing Trident provides us with no credible strategic edge. Since the arguments for CASD have become irrelevant, the issue is not how many submarines to build, but whether it's useful to rest Britain's security on any nuclear weapons at all.

Trident makes us more vulnerable to nuclear accidents and terrorism

As long as Britain produces and deploys nuclear weapons, our population is more at risk from accidents and terrorism than people living in non-nuclear countries. The highest dangers occur where the warheads are manufactured at Aldermaston and Burghfield in Berkshire, and the storage and deployment bases at Coulport and Faslane in Scotland. Several times each year, live warheads are transported between these Scottish and English bases on public roads, bringing their deadly cargoes dangerously close to our homes, hospitals, schools, sports grounds and religious meeting places. Cancelling Trident and joining multilateral negotiations on the Nuclear Ban Treaty will enhance our security and hasten the removal of nuclear dangers from Britain and the world.

MPs should decide on the basis of Britain's security needs, ethics and place in the world. The last thing we need is a rush to line the pockets of defence contractors BAE and Lockheed Martin.