

British Pugwash Group

Annual Report of the Executive Committee 2018

Developments in 2018

2018 was a bad year for the Pugwash movement's foremost concern: nuclear arms control and disarmament. All five Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) continued to implement nuclear weapon modernisation programmes. India and Pakistan enhanced their nuclear weapon capabilities. Israel remained opposed to the creation of a Middle East nuclear weapon free zone that would require Israel to destroy its nuclear arsenal. North Korea's leader committed the DPRK to denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, at a summit meeting with President Donald Trump, but showed no readiness, subsequently, to undertake irreversible moves in that direction. One of the architects of the 2002 demise of the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty, John Bolton, became U.S. National Security Adviser. Subsequently, the Trump administration decided to respond to a suspected Russian violation of the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty by initiating INF withdrawal procedures. Despite an amicable summit meeting between President Trump and President Vladimir Putin, US/Russian relations remained in the doldrums, and whether Russia and the United States would wish to extend the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, due to expire in 2021, remained uncertain. The U.S. administration accused China of economic and military aggression and started thinking of China in adversarial terms. The 2018 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review posited a dramatic deterioration in the threat environment, ignored the influence of U.S. policies and practices on other states' perceptions, affirmed a need for the full replacement of the existing U.S. nuclear triad, and propounded an expansion of U.S. nuclear options to include low-yield systems. The five NWS maintained their opposition to the 2017 Nuclear Ban Treaty.

President Trump pulled the United States out of the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran and re-imposed secondary sanctions that reduce the value of the agreement to Iran by blighting economic prospects. The Iranian government reacted with "strategic patience", hoping for renewed U.S. adherence in 2021, but suffered politically.

The United Kingdom accused Russia, an original party to the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), of

using a CW to attempt the assassination of a Russian ex-military intelligence officer. A special session of CWC parties voted to establish a mechanism to attribute responsibility for CW attacks, in the face of fierce opposition from Russia and some other states. An independent commission of enquiry established by the UN Human Rights Council identified four instances of CW use in Syria between January and July 2018.

The United States moved a step closer to the militarisation of outer space: in August 2018 President Trump described outer space as a "war-fighting domain" and directed the Department of Defence to set about establishing a "space force".

These developments provided a sombre backdrop to a British Pugwash year of which the highlights included a well-attended Student/Young Pugwash conference, a sell-out Rotblat memorial event at the Hay Festival, a Rotblat memorial lecture at the Polish Embassy, the adoption of a new British Pugwash Group constitution, and the formulation of a Group development plan.

Projects

Student/Young Pugwash (SYP) UK

2018 was another busy and productive year for SYP UK. In March, SYP UK organised its third Annual Conference, titled 'Warwick Peace Conference: Trends in technology, politics, war and peace' at Warwick University. Students and young researchers presented papers exploring trends in digital technologies, nuclear weapons policies, regional security challenges and the possible impacts that emerging technologies might have on strategic stability. The conference also heard from a number of expert speakers, including Chris Cole (Drone Wars UK), Dr Andrew Futter (University of Leicester) and Lord Wood of Anfield (UNA-UK).

A multimedia report from the conference is online here: <https://tinyurl.com/y2nv78km>

SYP UK launched its first ever high school group in 2018, at Abbey Christian Brothers Grammar School in

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Northern Ireland. This is a group for science students whom meet regularly to discuss the social and political aspects of science and is led by their chemistry teacher, a former SYP member, Dr Maeve Carey. We also continue to have groups or SYP representatives at the following universities: Warwick, KCL, Oxford, Bradford, Leeds, Durham, SOAS, LSE and Aberystwyth.

SYP UK hosted a diverse series of seminars and public lectures in 2018. Examples of topics and speakers include: a student-led roundtable on 'Outer space and society', a lecture on 'How to win a Nobel Peace Prize' with ICAN's Dr Rebecca Johnson, lecture on 'Self-driving cars, drones and killer robots' with Dr John Finney, and 'Ethics and Chemical Weapons' with Alastair Hay.

In 2018, SYP UK began publishing think pieces from its members. The first piece, by undergraduate David Almási, considered how social media is changing the way the public are informed and influenced regarding debates around Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Finally, in 2018 SYP UK appointed a President, working alongside its Coordinator, whom has acted as the public face of the organisation and ensured a student perspective is central to all SYP activities. The President is Nicolas Ayala Arboleda, an extremely talented student from Warwick University, with special interests in space policy and the role of private companies in the development and regulation of emerging technologies.

Report prepared by Andrew Gibson, SYP UK

PeaceJam UK

A year ago I reported that PeaceJam UK had received grants towards its peace education work in parts of Hampshire and Leeds from the Building a Better Britain Together programme run by the Home Office. We are pleased to report that this support has continued and this year we have obtained a grant to introduce the PeaceJam programme into Wales where its focus is on three constituencies – secondary schools, young male refugees settling in the Cardiff area, and young offenders and at risk youth groups. We are planning to hold a youth event in Wales in 2019. As always it will be a one-day event, provided at no cost to participants, on a Saturday, and hosted in a community centre, public building, school or university, for up to 150 youth participants, teachers and youth workers.

One of the highlights of the year was the attendance of a number of our university mentors at the European Youth Event (EYE) Conference 1/2 June in the European

Parliament's seat in Strasbourg. This was a tremendous opportunity for young Europeans to make their voices heard and around 9,000 young people attended. The most concrete ideas and proposals were written up into a report which was distributed to all MEPs. We ran a well-attended workshop at the conference.

Our own annual conference at the University of Winchester would have been with the Nobel Peace Laureate Tawakkol Karman. Sadly it had to be cancelled because of the weather - the university pipes were iced up and our school students were iced in. Tawakkol Karman was awarded the peace prize in 2011 for her unwavering defence of democracy and justice in Yemen, and for giving women a role in the peace building process. The first Arab woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize, she joined the PeaceJam Foundation in 2017. She did manage to get to Winchester, however, and we worked with her over the weekend videoing her message to the students. We then ran a one-day event using the material.

As well as the UK we are now working in Europe. The Erasmus grant for our work continued through 2018 and we are piloting the Compassion in Action curriculum in line with the objectives of the Paris Declaration of March 2015. The target group is 12 to 18 year olds in Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands and the UK with a view to up-scaling to all 28 EU countries within the next ten years.

Report prepared by Sally Milne, British Pugwash Executive Committee

WMD Awareness - the podcast!

British Pugwash was the host of a major public awareness campaign for 15 years – WMD Awareness – which informed the public and politicians about the reality of nuclear (and other) weapons.

One of the leading lights of the initiative – Luke Wilson – released an impressive podcast in June 2018 about the history of and insights gleaned from the project, called 'Drop The Bomb'. It is based on wide-ranging interviews with experts and campaigners on nuclear weapons, whom had been involved with WMD Awareness over many years.

The WMD Awareness 'Drop The Bomb' podcast can be found online here:

<https://tinyurl.com/y4rmt2dg>

Events

Rotlbat Memorial Lecture - 'Cold War Nuclear Confrontation: Lessons for Today'

Sir Rodric Braithwaite GCMG, Ambassador to the U.S.S.R. and Russia between 1988 and 1992, spoke to a packed hall at the 2018 Hay Literary Festival on the theme of his 2017 account of the Cold War nuclear confrontation ('Armageddon and Paranoia'), the golden age of nuclear arms control under Presidents Gorbachev, Reagan and G.H.W. Bush, and the contribution to those achievements of Sir Joseph Rotblat, a founder of the Pugwash movement, which earned him and the Pugwash movement a Nobel Peace Prize in 1995.

On 21st November 2018, Sir Rodric covered similar ground for the benefit of an invited audience at the Embassy of the Polish Republic in London. For this event British Pugwash was indebted to the hospitable generosity of the Polish Ambassador, H.E. Dr. Arkady Rzegocki.

A summary of Sir Rodric's latter talk, with accompanying photos, was kindly made available by British Pugwash member John Brenner. It can be found online here:

<https://tinyurl.com/y3s9fy4l>

Other events

BPG hosted two other events during the year. These were a lecture on 'Emerging technologies and strategic anti-submarine warfare' by Sebastian Brixey-Williams (BPG, BASIC) and 'The Salisbury poisonings: A look behind the headlines' by Dr Richard Guthrie (BPG, CBW Events).

International Pugwash

International Pugwash, guided by the Pugwash Council, was very active across the globe in 2018. Examples of its work include:

- Organising a side-event during the UN General Assembly First Committee on 'The future of multilateral nuclear disarmament'.
- Organising a seminar on 'Avoiding Nuclear Destabilization' in Moscow in December.
- Co-organising a workshop on cyber security and warfare in Geneva, bringing together 20 experts.
- Supporting the founding of the new Pugwash Brazil National Group.

BPG development

New Constitution

On 26th April 2018, BPG adopted a constitution, drawn up by the Executive Committee along lines recommended by the Charity Commission. Unlike the British Pugwash Trust, the Group has not sought and does not have charitable status. Nonetheless, the Executive Committee took the view that the Charity Commission's guidelines represent a form of best practice and that BPG should adopt them wherever appropriate.

A copy of the document can be found online here:

<https://tinyurl.com/y324w6t5>

BPG Business Development Plan

In the course of 2018, the Executive Committee devoted several hours to discussing a business development plan drafted by Sebastian Brixey-Williams.

The committee agreed that, with a view to contributing scientific and technical expertise to debates on technologies and policies that pose grave risks to humanity, British Pugwash should aim to:

- Provide a network for scientists, technologists and arms controllers to share ideas, concerns and support within their fields, and to break down silos to present a 'big picture' view of the impacts of certain technologies.
- Be an innovation hub for the development of effective strategies to control and/or mitigate the risks posed by certain scientific developments and assign responsibility/accountability for their deleterious effects on mankind.
- Foster a stronger (inter)national culture of and public commitment to social responsibility in the sciences, especially in those that may have military applications.
- Contribute to ongoing work on appropriate elements of a verification regime for the elimination of nuclear weapons.
- Develop a reputation for being able to provide objective 'expert witnesses' in relation to pressing policy questions or media requests that involve complex scientific and technical analysis.

Committee members' views differed with respect to the areas in which British Pugwash should seek to be active. Some favoured concentrating on WMD and warfare technologies, others on expanding the scope of activity

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should be seen as priority themes.

The committee recognised the crucial importance of capacity. It agreed that for some time British Pugwash has lacked the 'critical mass' needed to have adequate impact on public policy. It came to the view that there would be merit in exploring the feasibility of appointing an executive director, full- or part-time, tasked with expanding and coordinate British Pugwash expertise, and driving British Pugwash programmes. This exploratory work will be undertaken by the committee during 2019. Questions to be resolved include the extent to which it is realistic to expect that the pool of relevant expertise can be expanded, and whether an executive director post would be capable of attracting sustained funding from charitable donors.

British Pugwash Group

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Further information at www.britishpugwash.org

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British Pugwash Group Executive Committee 2018

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