



British Pugwash

Annual Report of the Executive Committee 2025

Developments in 2025

2025 passed without any improvement in the outlook for nuclear arms control and risk reduction, let alone nuclear disarmament.

Despite President Trump's revival of the relationship with President Putin that was a feature of his first presidential term, the United States failed to support a Russian attempt to salvage something from the approaching expiry of New START. Moscow proposed that both countries voluntarily continue observing New START deployment limits on strategic nuclear weapons for a year beyond the treaty's expiry in February 2026, to preserve stability while a successor treaty was negotiated. The proposal was not taken up.

China continued to expand its nuclear arsenal, probably passing the 600-warhead mark, and to diversify the warhead delivery means at its disposal. Its reasons for doing so remained opaque, although enhancing its capacity to deter a US counterforce first strike seemed likely to be one of them.

Beijing maintained its advocacy of a P5 No First Use pledge, but rejected US suggestions that China take part in future strategic arms limitation negotiations.

The UK's Vanguard SSBN and Trident warhead replacement programmes continued to be plagued by delays and cost overruns. The government announced its intention to acquire aircraft and gravity bombs to create a tactical nuclear force. The UK seems to want to take part in providing a French-proposed nuclear umbrella to European allies who are losing confidence in the US nuclear umbrella and have been spooked by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Whether the French proposal will suffice to quell calls for nuclear weapon acquisition in Germany, Poland, and even Sweden, remains to be seen.

In East Asia, too, namely in Japan and South Korea, declining confidence in US protection was reflected in similar calls.

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty remained unratified by the US Senate and several other nuclear-armed states. Resumption of US nuclear testing appeared at times to be under consideration within the Trump administration.

President Trump launched a continent-wide missile defence acquisition project ("Golden Dome"). Experts doubted whether it would prove any more feasible than President Reagan's "Star Wars" project. It may, nonetheless, prove to be destabilising.

Israel attacked Iranian nuclear facilities during a June war that Israel initiated, despite no indication that Iran was about to embark on producing nuclear weapons. The United States followed suit before imposing a ceasefire.

There is a high probability that the attacks deprived Iran of all its deployed uranium enrichment equipment, but that some 400 kg of uranium enriched to near-weapons-grade, to serve as a bargaining chip, survived. The attacks led to Iran denying the International Atomic Energy Agency access to its fuel cycle facilities, in a belief that the IAEA had been a source of targeting information for Israel and the United States.

Projects and Programmes

- **Student and Young Pugwash (SYP-UK)**

Annual conference

SYP organises an annual conference on peace and disarmament. The subject of the eighth conference, held in March at King's College London, was entitled 'Stepping back from the brink of nuclear war: fresh thinking on peace and disarmament'. The aim was to encourage new thinking on the legal, political and technical questions associated with this topic, with a focus on ethical science. The event featured a keynote panel of subject experts followed by three panels comprising student and young professional presenters.

A collection of materials from the conference can be found [here](#)

The annual SYP article collection, featuring work on nuclear weapons issues from some of those who presented at the conference, can be downloaded as a [pdf here](#)

Webinars

In September and October International Student and Young Pugwash and SYP organised three [webinars](#) on aspects of the US Government's recently announced space-based missile defence system 'the Golden Dome for America'.

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots-UK

SYP is an active member of this [coalition](#) comprising NGOs, academics and tech workers. The group campaigns to ensure that the UK government supports a legally binding international treaty that: a) prohibits autonomous weapons that cannot be meaningfully controlled and those that target humans, and b) regulates other autonomous weapons to ensure meaningful human control over the use of force.

SYP-UK coordinated the production of an updated report investigating the role of UK universities in the development of autonomous weapons systems, which will be published in Autumn 2026.

Report prepared by Tim Street, Coordinator, Student Young Pugwash

- **PeaceJam UK**

This has been a year of successes but also financial difficulty, as despite successful online fundraising we were unsuccessful in some of our grant applications. Despite this, however, we have managed to run our Be the Change and Young Leaders programmes, albeit in a slightly reduced format.

Something which gave us enormous pleasure was that we were able to welcome our largest cohort of Youth Leadership Team members to date. 17 young leaders have joined our year-long mentorship programme from places as far afield as Manchester, Petersfield, York, Bolton, Oxford, Stroud, Ascot and the Channel Islands. Over the year we have offered in-person training, mentorship and opportunities to collaborate and network with each other and other inspirational changemakers, as well as supporting a number of social action projects in team member's communities.

A significant amount of our work is with schools, such as Bootham School in York, where we launched our 'Be the Change' programme across years 7 to 12 totalling 380 students. Following this launch, students from across the school have been meeting on a Tuesday afternoon every week to develop social action projects. Three Year 12 students also applied and are now social media interns for PeaceJam UK. They have undergone Social Media Training and are volunteering every week, developing skills they aim to put to use when building and implementing their projects. In July, we ran an online youth panel for 250 Year 10 students at Smithills School in Bolton. Students were able to take part in an extensive Q&A, which included discussions around issue areas including nuclear disarmament, hidden disabilities, and reducing barriers to education.

A further activity in which we have participated through March to September is a research study conducted by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research on 'Supporting schools to teach controversial issues: Teacher Guidance for working with external organisations', including being interviewed and observed by the research team and networking with other charities across the UK to feedback and discuss how we can support teachers in the current climate.

Report prepared by Sally Milne, British Pugwash Executive Committee member

- **Analysis and resources**

British Pugwash produced and published articles and information on the following topics:

[A Second U.S. "Strategic Defense Initiative"](#)

[France's Nuclear Umbrella Offer to other European States](#)

[The Case for Parliament to Scrutinise the UK's Nuclear Weapons Programme](#)

[Dialogue across Divides: Pugwash's contribution to sustainable security](#)

[Nuclear Risk Reduction in an Era of Great Power Rivalry](#)

Other publications:

- Submission to the Public Accounts Committee Inquiry: *The UK's F-35 stealth fighter capability*, from the Nuclear Education Trust (with BASIC and British Pugwash), September

Read the submission [here](#)

- Stepping Back from the Brink: The Myths of Tactical Nuclear Weapons and Limited Nuclear War

Dr Tim Street (British Pugwash Secretary) wrote this report, which was published by the Nuclear Education Trust in November

Download the report [here](#)

Meetings and events

Annual Lecture, Dr David Ellwood: 'Is even a minimal nuclear deterrent MAD?'

On 14 May Dr Ellwood provided an introduction to recent work on nuclear winter and made the case that nuclear weapons are not an instrument of national security, but rather a spectre of our own annihilation.

The video is [here](#)

British Pugwash Lecture at the Hay Festival, Mark Lynas: 'Six Minutes to Winter: Nuclear War and How to Avoid It'

On 25 May, Mark Lynas provided an introduction to his latest book, which is an unflinching review of the nuclear nightmare, as well as describing how weapons can be taken off hair-trigger alert and ultimately abolished altogether.

The video is [here](#)

70th Anniversary of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto

On 8 July the Royal Society, British Pugwash and International Pugwash hosted a special event marking the 70th anniversary of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto. The event featured several eminent speakers who explored how nuclear threats can be reduced at a time of heightened tension and conflict, and the contribution intellectuals, politicians, scientists and the public can make to a more peaceful world.

The video is [here](#)

Webinars

Professor Tom Sauer on 'New Technology and Nuclear Deterrence'

On 29 January Professor Sauer discussed how the combination of emerging and disruptive technologies and strategic conventional weapons may have a revolutionary impact on the future of the debate about nuclear weapons.

The video is [here](#)

Dr P.J. Blount on 'The Co-evolution of the Nuclear-Space Age'

On 19 February Dr Blount explored the co-evolution of nuclear and space technologies from the perspective of space security and reflected on how the spectre of nuclear war still shapes the security environment in outer space.

The video is [here](#)

Dr Hans Blix on ‘A Farewell to Wars’

On 2 April Dr Blix explained the central thoughts and findings in his book ‘A Farewell to Wars- The Growing Restraints on the Interstate Use of Force’.

The video is [here](#)

Tariq Rauf on the future of the NPT

On 24 October Tariq Rauf discussed the review process for the NPT, the meaning of “consensus”, whether an outcome document is required at Review Conferences, as well as friction points between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states.

The video is [here](#)

Dr Marion Messmer on Euro-Atlantic Nuclear Relations in the Age of Trump

On 5 December Dr Messmer discussed Europe’s options after: the collapse of the INF Treaty; an increase in investment in missile technologies across the European continent; and declining confidence in the US nuclear umbrella, at a time of regional and global instability.

You can watch the video [here](#)

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The British Pugwash YouTube channel has many other videos available [here](#).

International Pugwash Council

International Pugwash’s work in 2025 was centred on increasing nuclear dangers, regional conflict, emerging technologies and the continuing need for dialogue across divides.

The year opened with a January workshop in Istanbul on [nuclear risk reduction](#), bringing together international participants to examine NATO–Russia strategic relations, regional missile proliferation, nuclear modernisation, escalation risks in the Middle East, and the challenges facing the NPT ahead of the 2026 Review Conference.

In May, Pugwash contributed directly to the NPT review process through a [side event at the Third Preparatory Committee in New York](#), organised with The Simons Foundation Canada and Canadian Pugwash. The event, “Preserving the NPT: Failures, Opportunities, and the future of Nuclear Disarmament”, drew on the expertise of Pugwash officials and Council members and formed part of a wider effort to support a healthy and robust NPT regime. Later that month, a Pugwash delegation led by Secretary General Karen Hallberg and President Hussain Al-Shahristani travelled to Tehran for [meetings on the Iran nuclear issue and regional security](#), including a workshop with members of the Iranian strategic community. Pugwash emphasised the value of respectful, mutually agreeable diplomacy to preserve the centrality of the NPT and reduce tensions in the Middle East.

In October, the reconstituted Pugwash [Chemical and Biological Weapons Working Group](#) held its first virtual event, involving more than 75 participants from all continents and identifying future priorities including treaty verification, peaceful scientific and technological cooperation, and the impact of new science and technology on the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and Chemical Weapons Convention.

The [63rd Pugwash Conference in Hiroshima](#), held from 1–5 November, was the year’s major event, convening 180 people from 40 countries and marking 80 years since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the 70th anniversary of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, and the 30th anniversary of the Nobel Peace Prize being awarded to Sir Joseph Rotblat and Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs. From the bombed areas, where the scars are still very evident, the conference sent a strong message to the world: No more Hiroshimas. No more Nagasakis. No more war.

The Council’s [Hiroshima Declaration](#) reaffirmed Pugwash’s founding commitment to peace, dialogue and nuclear disarmament.

[International Student/Young Pugwash](#) continues to play a growing role in Pugwash activities, organising a two-day conference in Hiroshima that preceded the main conference, bringing young professionals and graduate students into the wider discussions, as well as projects on the “Third Nuclear Age”, Golden Dome, South Asia dialogue and Africa.

In summary, International Pugwash’s 2025 activities reflected both continuity and renewal under the leadership of its new Secretary General Karen Hallberg. For British Pugwash, these developments provide opportunities to contribute expertise, support International Student/Young Pugwash, and connect UK work more closely with International Pugwash priorities for 2026 and beyond.

British Pugwash developments

Mamdouh El-Shanawany resigned from the Executive Committee.

Membership growth

In 2025 British Pugwash gained 48 new members. 29 of these were in the Student or Under 30 categories.

Joseph Rotblat Memorial Trust Trustees

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