

Newsletter

September 2013

British Pugwash update

This year is proving to be a challenging one for British Pugwash. The political landscape is shifting in particular areas that concern us – Trident renewal and energy policy – as key decisions are fast approaching. Our challenge is to keep the balance right between reiterating our long-held beliefs, now that people seem to be listening, and addressing current priorities.

The most immediate challenge is Trident renewal. Two members of our Committee, Dr Nick Ritchie and Carol Naughton, are playing key roles in formulating and publicising ideas on this subject (see p. 2). The government's recently published *Trident Alternatives Review* indicates that some of these ideas are beginning to filter through, and may gain further impetus during the debates we will be supporting in the run-up to the next general election.

We have been increasingly concerned with two issues which are attracting wider interest – global warming (and more generally, planetary boundaries) together with their implications for energy policy, and the ethical responsibilities of scientists.

Our report on the options for UK energy policy, *Pathways to 2050*, published in February, has evoked considerable interest. We are also actively involved in the debate over the ethics of a range of modern 'conventional' weapons, including the so-called 'killer robots'. Meanwhile we have not forgotten Pugwash's traditional concern with chemical and biological weapons, and plan to focus attention on this topic in future.

Changes at British Pugwash

This year has seen some changes in the leadership of British Pugwash. After many years of devoted service, Professor Robert Hinde has retired as President (though not, as a member of the Executive Committee), and we are engaged in the task of finding a worthy successor. Robert has been a key player in British Pugwash for over two decades and has served as a Trustee of the Pugwash Foundation. He has been instrumental in much of the group's work aimed at the abolition not just of nuclear weapons, but of war itself.



Decision time for Trident renewal - HMS Vanguard at Faslane naval base (Crown copyright)

Carol Naughton has retired from the post of Deputy Chair, and we have elected Dr Ian Crossland in her place. He has extensive experience of working at the interface of science and politics, and has played a key role in several recent British Pugwash projects.

We have also added two valuable new members to our Executive Committee – Dr Patricia Lewis, Research Director, International Security at Chatham House, who brings a wealth of knowledge of the worlds of nuclear disarmament and verification; and Dr Julia Amos, who has a wide range of contacts with the younger generation of scientists, as well as personal experience of peace work in developing countries.

Christopher Watson, Chair, British Pugwash Group

Future meetings

2-4 September Meeting of European Pugwash groups in Noordwijk, Netherlands to discuss Pugwash issues which are particularly relevant to Europe; to seek resources within Europe to support this; and to enhance cooperation between European Pugwash groups.

23 September British Pugwash Discussion Meeting: *Do "proliferating nuclear threats" justify Trident renewal?* Speakers: Peter Jenkins and Shashank Joshi, University College London, 17.00-19.00. See www.britishpugwash.org

1-5 November International Pugwash Quinquennial meeting in Istanbul: British Pugwash will be represented, with Carol Naughton and Nick Ritchie's work on the NPT and Trident respectively up for discussion as well as a paper by Gen. Sir Hugh Beach on 'Flaws in the argument for British Trident'.

Early 2014 We plan to hold a public meeting early in 2014 on the risks posed by the India-Pakistan nuclear weapon standoff.

Nuclear weapons

As the 2015 general election approaches, the debate on Trident renewal is intensifying in both the public and political arenas. British Pugwash is contributing to the debate in various ways throughout the year with a series of meetings, public awareness raising and initiatives in conjunction with other organisations to influence government thinking.



Left to right: Dr Christopher Watson, Dr Nick Ritchie and Sir Nick Harvey at the book launch

Dr Nick Ritchie's book, *A Nuclear Weapons Free World? Britain, Trident and the Challenges Ahead* was launched on 12 March at a British Pugwash discussion meeting. [Nick Ritchie](#) explored the 'enablers' of the Trident replacement process, in particular a commitment to nuclear deterrence, the role of national identity, the 'special relationship' with the US, and the submarine-building industry. He also analysed the key 'resistances' to renewal, including the logic of nuclear disarmament, cost, public opinion, and alternative nuclear weapons policies.

Also at the launch, [Sir Nick Harvey](#), Liberal Democrat MP for North Devon and former Minister for the Armed Forces, who initiated the recently published analysis of alternatives for the Trident replacement programme, questioned the relevance of Trident replacement to the UK's current defence needs and economic situation. He pointed to the next two years as a critical period for debate on the future of Britain's nuclear weapons programme.

Follow [Nick Ritchie's Twitter feed](#) at <http://twitter.com/UKTrident>

On 13 March, Mark Fitzpatrick, Director of the Non-proliferation and Disarmament Programme at the IISS, chaired a [discussion meeting](#) on 'The foreign-policy implications of the Trident replacement debate', with panellists Sir Jeremy Greenstock, Lord David Hannay, Sir Richard Mottram and Sir Gus O'Donnell. The concept for this event was developed with input from the British Pugwash WMD Awareness Programme. It was first in a series of seminars planned in collaboration with other organisations.

Danny Alexander, the Coalition Minister who chaired the Cabinet Office *Trident Alternatives Review*, presented its conclusions on 16 July at a public meeting hosted by RUSI. At that meeting British Pugwash representatives challenged these conclusions, arguing that the *Review* had given insufficient weight to the opportunity cost of any Trident replacement, and to the growing concern among the non-aligned nations that the nuclear weapon states were failing to honour the spirit, if not the letter, of Article 6 of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

On 23 September, British Pugwash is holding a public meeting to debate one aspect of the controversy over Trident renewal – examining the argument that "with nuclear threats if anything proliferating, as more countries seeking to get nuclear weapons, this is not the time to downgrade the UK's nuclear deterrent" (see Future Meetings).

As the debate on Trident replacement gathers pace in the lead-up to the general election, the Nuclear Weapons Parliamentary Liaison Group – an informal collaboration of experts aiming to inform decision makers of the technical and political issues involved – continues to meet and work informally behind the scenes. With new funding from Network for Social Change, it has recently appointed a Parliamentary Liaison Officer to enhance its work at Westminster.

Meanwhile, the WMD Awareness Programme's new Communications Manager, Hannah Cornford, is developing its coverage of the Trident issue online to make a wider range of people aware of the issues surrounding Trident replacement, inviting the public to post '1000 Reasons why the UK Government should abandon Trident'. The programme's *Back to the 1980s* campaign reminds readers that the Trident nuclear weapons system was born in the 1980s and challenges the need to spend an estimated £100 billion on its renewal. [Read Hannah's blog](#) at <http://www.wmdawareness.org.uk/author/hannah/>

Non-proliferation and disarmament

Non-proliferation and disarmament are long-term themes in the work of British Pugwash. In a FCO-supported project to explore future prospects for the NPT, a British Pugwash team, led by Carol Naughton, conducted a project based on 29 one-to-one interviews with representatives of 24 key NPT states parties, as well as a diplomatic roundtable.

The aim was to identify possible grounds for a new consensus on the link between non-proliferation and disarmament in the context of the NPT, with consideration for the potential role of the UK. The results are available in a [recently published report](#), *The link between non-proliferation and disarmament in the NPT: is there consensus behind the conflict?*

The outlook for peace and disarmament Hans Blix

Dr. Hans Blix, the former UN Chief Weapons Inspector in Iraq in 2002-3, gave [the ninth Joseph Rotblat lecture](#) on 26 May at the Hay Literary Festival, the annual lecture initiated through the early work of the WMD Awareness Programme. He said of Britain's Trident system: "Today the UK is contemplating a new generation of Trident nuclear submarines. Washington is not pushing for this costly procurement. Is it required to protect UK independence? Or pride? Japan and Germany seem respected even without nuclear weapons. I would vote for a place for the UK in the Guinness book of records, if it dropped the plan."

Dr Hans Blix and John Snow at the Hay Festival 2013



Continuing another strand of work on the verification of disarmament, the International Panel on Fissile Materials (IPFM) asked British Pugwash to present its [November 2012 report, Verification of Nuclear Weapon Dismantlement: Peer Review of the UK MoD Programme](#) at a Chatham House meeting on 21 March.

The discussion following that presentation focused on whether the UK Government (and hence MoD) was correct in basing its approach to verification on an interpretation of articles 1 & 2 of the NPT that precluded the release of any information about the design or manufacture of the weapons being dismantled to any third party, even to 'independent' inspectors engaged in the process of verification.

Energy policy

British Pugwash launched its expert report [Pathways to 2050: Three possible UK energy strategies](#) at a discussion meeting on 14 February. The report discusses three possible UK energy strategies which our Working Group constructed using the [Pathways to 2050 Calculator](#), made publicly available by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). Each strategy – 'High Nuclear', 'High Renewables' and 'Intermediate' – achieves the UK's

commitment to reduce its emissions of greenhouse gases by 80% by the year 2050, using energy technologies which either exist or can reasonably be expected to be brought to sufficient technical and commercial maturity in time. The report was also presented at a meeting of the Oxford Energy Society on 8 May and will feature in a presentation at the 27-30 October 2013 conference of the European Physical Society (EPS) in Budapest. The report has provoked a lively debate at the meetings between the protagonists of the three possible pathways.

Science and ethics – the military robotics debate

Following a discussion at the 2012 meeting of UNESCO's World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Information and Technology (COMEST), on which Pugwash has a seat, a new strand of work has been developed to address the ethics of modern military robotics, which is highly relevant to British Pugwash's concern with ethical and humanitarian constraints on the conduct of warfare. On 21-22 March an expert workshop, hosted by the Birmingham University's Institute for Conflict, Cooperation and Security, discussed the ethical issues involved and how these might be addressed by COMEST. Speakers included Christof Heyns, UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.

A [short report](#) on the workshop was presented to the COMEST meeting in Bratislava in May, when COMEST accepted a recommendation to consider including this issue in its future workplan. A joint COMEST/Pugwash session on 'Ethics of Converging Technologies' at a two-day workshop following on from the Bratislava meeting included two of the main participants at the Birmingham workshop. The final report of the Birmingham workshop will be a joint publication by British Pugwash and the Birmingham University Institute for Conflict, Cooperation and Security.

An [International Campaign to Stop Killer Robots](#), coordinated by Human Rights Watch, was launched in London on 23 April. This is supported by International Pugwash whose President, Amb. Jayantha Dhanapala, is a member of the steering group.

Outreach

WMD Awareness

With its new branding as WMD Awareness (WMDA) the programme's recent focus, in addition to the work on nuclear policy outlined above, has been on upgrading and updating its website. The aim of the new website is to ensure that all aspects of WMDA's activity are integrated into the content, and that it takes account of the increased importance of social networking in its outreach work. Visit the site at www.wmdawareness.org.uk

PeaceJam UK

In place of the PeaceJam conference this spring we held 3 one-day Slams – in Coventry, York and Scarborough.

The idea of the Slam is to reflect on the work of the previous year, to report back on projects which have been carried out, looking at what was successful and why, and just as importantly, what did not go so well. It is also an opportunity to meet up with teachers and students from other schools in the area and from further afield; to listen to and ask questions of an inspirational speaker and to take part in a choice of workshops related to the PeaceJam course. We also use the Slams as an introduction for teachers and students who are

considering taking the course.



At the York Slam for instance, the theme was *Courage*, and our speaker was an outstandingly brave African woman, Rehab Maina, who had stood up for human rights and electoral reform in Kenya. Because of

the serious violence threatened against her, for her safety she had to leave her family and seek asylum and a new life in the UK. She was hugely impressive. For details of PeaceJam UK's work, see www.peacejam.org.uk/

Pugwash History

We have agreed with the archivist at Churchill College, Cambridge, where the bulk of Joseph Rotblat's papers are held, to transfer to the archive the remaining papers (up to 2005) which are still in the British Pugwash office. Our main concern is that all the material on the history of Pugwash should be safely stored and accessible to historians and others who wish to consult it.

We are continuing to develop the photo archive based at British Pugwash, in collaboration with Sandra Ionno Butcher, Director of the Pugwash History Project. The aim of the project is to organise, index and digitalise the collection and make it available to Pugwash members and the public through a searchable database.

In addition, we are developing a photo blog which we will use to seek information about photographs without captions or other evidence of who is shown in the picture and where it was taken.

None of this work could have been carried out without the generous help of British Pugwash Executive Committee member Sally Milne and our interns Nara Improta and Stuart Pallister. Two new interns will begin work in the autumn.

Meanwhile, our volunteer Ed Ross is working on listing all the Pugwash publications held at British Pugwash. The Executive Committee has agreed that we should keep no more than 100 copies of each publication, and offer duplicate copies to members and possibly to relevant libraries.

Publications from British Pugwash 2013

COMEST short report on a workshop: *The ethics of military robotics: developing international agreement on ethical principles relating to the military exploitation of modern information and communications technology*, Birmingham University 20-22 March 2013 (see www.britishpugwash.org)

The link between non-proliferation and disarmament in the NPT: is there consensus behind the conflict? Final report of a British Pugwash Group project by Matthew Harries, Associate, Centre for Science and Security Studies, King's College London (May 2013)

Nick Ritchie on Trident & the Labour Party in the *Guardian* 17 July 2013

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/jul/17/crunch-trident-miliband-labour-statesmanship>

Gen. Sir Hugh Beach, letter to *The Times*, 23 April 2013 querying the logic of Britain's Trident programme

Pathways to 2050: Three possible UK energy strategies. Report of a British Pugwash working group (February 2013)

Dr Nick Ritchie, *A Nuclear Weapons Free World? Britain, Trident and the Challenges Ahead* (Palgrave, 2012)

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Printed by Park Lane Press Limited, Unit 11, Leafield Way, Leafield Industrial Estate, Corsham, Wiltshire SN13 9SW