

Decommissioning Trident and Delivering Disarmament

Labour in Government in 2015 will be responsible for overseeing a major decision on whether or not to replace the submarines that carry the Trident nuclear weapon systems, expected in 2016.

The same Labour Government will be committed to nuclear disarmament through the UK's signature to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, for which a Review Conference is being held in 2015.

Labour's Defence team currently states '*Labour has said that we are committed to a minimum, credible independent nuclear deterrent, which we believe is best delivered through a Continuous At-Sea Deterrent. It would require a substantial body of evidence for us to change this belief.*

This position does not represent the views of party members expressed in CLP submissions to the National Policy Forum in the Agenda 2015 policy review for the party's general election manifesto.

There has also been no significant review conducted by the Government, Labour Party or other body that has given serious consideration to decommissioning Trident and delivering disarmament.

The changed global security environment and challenging economic climate make Trident replacement unjustifiable, while failure to deliver disarmament risks losing trust and encouraging proliferation.

Labour has debated Trident at length in the past and it is right that it does so again in new and changed circumstances that set the political situation apart from that of the 1960s and 1980s.

Labour in Government must chart a new course to deliver nuclear disarmament for the UK and worldwide - this requires action on Trident and in the Non-Proliferation Treaty process.

Labour can deliver nuclear disarmament and ensure a legacy of a safer world for generations.

Why Labour should reject Trident

In this briefing we set out why Labour should reject Trident, on the grounds of:

- National Security and Non-Proliferation
 - Economy and Employment
 - Disarmament Commitments
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Voting at the National Policy Forum this weekend

Almost 50 CLPs across the country have submitted anti-Trident amendments to the National Policy Forum (NPF) this weekend. There is no mood for Trident replacement within the Labour Party membership.

A decision that gives support to the replacement of Trident at this weekend's National Policy Forum will not reflect opinion across the Labour Party.

NPF delegates should represent the membership's views by voting to commit Labour to nuclear disarmament and the decommissioning rather than replacement of Trident at this weekend's meeting.

NPF delegates who want to widen the debate can take the discussion to the Annual Conference in September, again by voting for an amendment to give it majority or sufficient minority position status.

Labour's Manifesto 2015

The Agenda 2015 Britain's Global Role document:

With other nations possessing nuclear weapons, and nuclear proliferation remaining a deep concern, we can never be absolutely certain as to what the future security landscape will look like. In July 2013 the current Government published its Trident Alternatives Review which examined alternative defence systems and postures for the UK's deterrent. Labour has said that we are committed to a minimum, credible independent nuclear deterrent, which we believe is best delivered through a Continuous At-Sea Deterrent. It would require a substantial body of evidence for us to change this belief, which the Government's Trident Alternatives Review does not appear to offer. Labour will rightly continue to scrutinise sources of evidence to ensure the deterrent is delivered in the most cost-effective and strategic way.

Decommission Trident amendment

Labour CND's Decommission Trident amendment would replace the above paragraph and read as follows:

Labour is committed to achieving global nuclear disarmament and welcomes growing discussion of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons by fellow states.

We recognise the success of past international bans in delegitimising weapons of mass destruction such as landmines, cluster munitions, and chemical and biological weapons and support a similar process to ban nuclear weapons, as a complementary and necessary mechanism to our disarmament commitment under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Labour will decommission rather than replace Trident. Labour will re-direct Trident spending to where it best serves our Society. Labour will develop an industrial plan to make use of the skills of those workers in the sector.

Detailed Debate

Before concluding its policy debate, we believe the party should consider a widely-discussed range of factors:

National Security and Non-Proliferation

- *Reviewing the future of Trident in a post-election Strategic Defence and Security Review alongside conventional defence capabilities.*
- *Reducing operation of Trident, including ending continuous patrols, removing warheads from submarines, and future phases of warhead reductions as part of a process of complete disarmament.*
- *Delaying the Main Gate submarine replacement decision on Trident whilst current submarines operate on reduced patrolling schedules.*

Economy and Employment

- *Investing funds identified for Trident replacement for other public services including delivering the necessary security infrastructure.*
- *Establishing a Defence Diversification Agency with unions and business to re-invest in and renew skilled employment with a proportion of the Trident replacement budget.*

Delivering on Disarmament Commitments

- *Setting out clear action points to advance international disarmament negotiations; including to be tabled at the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in April-May 2015.*
- *Supporting and attending future conferences on Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons.*
- *Supporting proposals for a Nuclear Weapons Convention or ban on nuclear weapons at the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in April 2015.*
- *Supporting a clear timetable for nuclear disarmament.*

National Security and Non-Proliferation

The decision on whether or not to replace Britain's Trident submarines and nuclear weapons system must be taken on the basis of what will most contribute to the security of the British people.

Consideration must be given both to what threats and instability those weapons themselves can create and what threats Trident and nuclear weapons can or can't defend us from.

Replacing Trident could act as a driver for the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The number of nuclear weapon states has slowly increased as has the risk of proliferation, as many states lack faith in the nuclear weapon states' intentions to disarm and adopt their justification for possession.

There has also been no significant review conducted since 2010 by the Government, Labour Party or other body that has given serious consideration to decommissioning Trident and delivering disarmament.

The Government's Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) published in 2010, the Trident Alternatives Review (2013), and studies such as IPPR's National Security Commission (2009) and BASIC's Trident Commission (2014) only considered alternative nuclear weapon options, including operating fewer submarines and ending continuous patrols.

The Government's National Security Strategy (NSS) published in Autumn 2010 with the SDSR ranked the risk of an attack on the UK using chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CNRN) weapons in a lower tier than a range of 21st century threats, including climate change, pandemics, organised crime, cyber warfare, and terrorism. The report stated, *'A [nuclear] attack on the UK by a state was judged to be low likelihood but high impact'*.

The SDSR that accompanied the NSS failed to consider decommissioning Trident in contrast with decisions to cut conventional capability, but it did decide to delay the main investment decision on constructing Trident replacement submarines until 2016.

This has opened the opportunity of a Labour Government in 2015 reconsidering Trident replacement in a new SDSR, before the main investment decision on constructing submarines needs to be made.

A 2015 SDSR should include the option of not replacing Trident and decommissioning the system. It should also include consideration of ending continuous patrols, removing warheads from submarines, and future phases of warhead reductions as part of a process of complete disarmament and delaying the Main Gate submarine replacement decision on Trident can be delayed while such detailed considerations are taking place.

Robin Cook, writing in *The Guardian* in 2005, on proliferation threats:

'There is a chasm too wide for logic to leap, between arguing that Britain must maintain nuclear weapons to guarantee its security, and lecturing Iran et al that the safety of the world would be compromised if they behaved in the same way.'

Des Browne, writing in *The Telegraph* in 2012, on changed security circumstances:

In 2006, the Labour government decided to pursue like-for-like renewal of Trident, a decision that was reaffirmed by the Coalition in 2010. The thinking underpinning both decisions now needs to be re-examined. Since 2006, important things have changed and it is time for a more honest debate about the defence choices facing the country. It has become clearer, for example, that a set of long-term threats has emerged, to which deterrence, nuclear or otherwise, is not applicable: not only climate change, which can be addressed only through coordinated international action, but also cyber-attacks and nuclear terrorism. Attacks of both kinds will be difficult to trace. Since deterrence only works against those with a known address, it is not a viable strategy for meeting this category of threats.

Economy and Employment

The most recent estimates of the cost of the Trident submarine replacement programme are around £25-30 billion for construction and further in-service maintenance costs estimated at £2 billion per annum.

The cost of replacing and running Trident on a 'like-for-like' basis over 40 years will be well in excess of £100billion. This may be a conservative estimate. This also does not take account of spending overruns that have taken place with other major projects, such as Eurofighter Typhoon and Astute-class submarines.

The scale of the project is such that it is impossible not to consider the potential waste of resources, and the alternative areas that could benefit from the funds. This is true both for other areas of defence and security spending, and wider public services, particularly in a time of such austerity. Investment in housing, energy, health or education would create greater employment and be more effective in generating the growth to bring down the deficit than replacing Trident will do.

Within military and political circles, concerns about the costs of replacing Trident centre on the large proportion of the defence equipment budget that the programme will consume. Not surprisingly, military sources have questioned whether this money would be better spent on meeting more pressing and relevant needs which the armed forces have.

But it is not only conventional military spending that is suffering. We are living through an almost unprecedented period of austerity. Almost no area of government spending has been spared from the axe except the government's commitment to the replacement of the Trident nuclear weapons system.

There are two distinct ways in which the economy and society as a whole can benefit from the redirection of investment. The first way is directly, through the tangible change in the physical infrastructure. The second way is less tangible, through an improvement in the capacity of the economy which can benefit us all.

The trade union movement continues to support nuclear disarmament and has identified an important debate to be had about the number of jobs that Trident replacement can sustain, and how many more the same funding could sustain with the political will to invest elsewhere in the economy.

Field Marshal Lord Bramall, General Lord Ramsbotham, General Sir Hugh Beach, and Major General Patrick Cordingley writing in 2010 in *The Times*:

'this decision will have a direct impact on our overstretched Armed Forces ... it may well be that money spent on new nuclear weapons will be money that is not available to support our frontline troops, or for crucial counterterrorism work; money not available for buying helicopters, armoured vehicles, frigates or even for paying for more manpower.'

Trades Union Congress in 2013 restated existing policy for decommissioning Trident:

'Public finances can also be improved by addressing tax avoidance and scrapping the replacement of Trident. Money saved by ending our nuclear weapons system could be used to sustain the process of defence diversification, vital to our manufacturing future.'

Scottish Trades Union Congress, in 2014, restated existing policy for decommissioning Trident:

'At a time of unprecedented austerity, spending on Trident diverts vital resources away from spending on social need and job creation.'

John Prescott in 2013, writing in *The Daily Mirror*:

'I say we scrap Trident for good, stop being the world's policeman and spend that money protecting the health of the nation.'

Delivering on Disarmament Commitments

Britain has binding legal obligations in international law requiring it to take steps towards the elimination of its nuclear weapons. These obligations have been accepted by successive governments, both Labour and Conservative.

Britain is a depositary state for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Non-Proliferation Treaty - NPT), giving it a duty to ensure that the Treaty is properly executed. Under Article VI of the Treaty nuclear weapon states have an obligation to disarm.

Furthermore, under international law, the use, or threat of use, of nuclear weapons is illegal under virtually all conceivable circumstances. This was confirmed in 1996 in a ruling by the International Court of Justice.

Successive UK governments, both Labour and Conservative, have affirmed Britain's commitment to its NPT obligations and to a multilateral disarmament process, while also arguing the replacement of Trident nuclear weapon system is consistent with those obligations.

Delays and procrastination on the part of Britain and other nuclear armed states in meeting their disarmament obligations have led to frustration and allegations of bad faith by many non-nuclear weapon states.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands, a victim of nuclear weapon tests, has recently commenced a law suit in the International Court of Justice asking the court to rule that nuclear armed states are in breach of their NPT obligations and order them to take action to comply with the treaty.

Other states have sought new international mechanisms to pursue nuclear disarmament including a Nuclear Weapons Convention and recent intergovernmental conferences on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons, both of which successive British Governments have refused to support.

This concern over the humanitarian impact of the use of nuclear weapons acknowledged as a core issue at the NPT Review Conference in 2010 and is consistent with the Treaty commitments.

The intergovernmental conferences, attended by 127 states in Norway in March 2013 and by 145 states in Mexico, in February 2014 were convened to examine the 'immediate humanitarian impact of a nuclear detonation' and 'the possible wider developmental, economic and environmental consequences', and to add urgency to the need for disarmament.

The British government has refused to take part in either conference. Labour should urge the government to confirm their attendance at the next conference in Austria in December, and send its own representative.

Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (1970)

'to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.'

International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion (1996)

'the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be generally contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law.'