

Security this is not - say no to NATO writes Rae Street

Over 400 British troops have already died in the conflict, alongside countless Afghans, including many civilians. But according to our government keeping up the occupation is 'vital for our security.'

NATO itself admits that one of the prime threats to citizens in its member-states is from terrorist attacks - but how are nuclear weapons supposed to counter that threat? The September 11th 2001 attacks on New York took place despite the fact that the US had 14 Trident submarines operational at the time. NATO continues to trot out the message that member-states need a nuclear deterrent. This deterrence theory was and is a lie.

But President Obama is looking for some cuts in his military budget - as well he might, since it accounts for over half the military spending in the world. So in a speech to the Pentagon in January Obama said European countries would have to contribute more - or rather 'take more responsibility for collective security.'

What was the British response?

Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Defence Gerald Howarth MP gushed that NATO was 'the cornerstone of our collective security' and that NATO was a community of allies with values, 'ready to back principles with power.'

It begs the question as to what those principles are. Bombing civilians in Afghanistan? Threatening the world with annihilation?

Talking of 're-prioritising' spending - at a time of drastic cuts - he added that 'all the investment in our schools and hospitals - or indeed welfare - could be set at naught if we fail to provide

adequate defence.' 'The United States will be watching closely,' he said. 'So too will our adversaries. The Chicago summit provides the perfect opportunity to show them all that when it comes to defence and security Europe remains committed, capable and solvent.'

Brushing aside the tacit acknowledgement that Europe doesn't currently look capable or solvent in any other regard, the important point is that defence and security are just euphemisms for military power when used by NATO states.

The alliance was, supposedly, founded to counter the Soviet threat, though its establishment predated that of the Warsaw Pact. But the end of the cold war didn't mean the end of NATO.

Through the 1990s NATO built up its membership across central and eastern Europe right up to the Russian border.

And since the end of the cold war the alliance has become much more aggressive. Foreign policies are increasingly influenced by the thirst for profit of huge weapons-manufacturing firms. The US owns many of these but Britain and France aren't that far behind.

That's why when ex-Soviet bloc states joined they had to scrap their Soviet hardware and buy in US planes for 'interoperability.'

NATO's close connection with the military-industrial complex, its maintenance of vast nuclear weapons systems, its constant talking up of supposed enemies are all putting British lives in danger without mentioning the residents of its 'adversaries.' The alliance is creating further world instability.



Security this is not, and the huge sums spent on weaponry are obscene in an age of 'austerity.'

But there is resistance. A No to NATO Network has been established and took action during the recent NATO summit. It's time we stood up to the militarism of our rulers.

New Policy Review chief

Ed Miliband has asked Jon Cruddas to take over co-ordination of Labour's policy review from Liam Byrne, and Angela Eagle has become Chair of the National Policy Forum.

Jon Cruddas voted against the proposal to replace Trident when the Commons voted on it in March 2007.

Since then, in January 2010 he wrote,

"We should give more mental health care, equipment, housing and support to our veterans. Why not pay for it by scrapping Trident?"

This is not to say that Labour policy on Trident will automatically change, but it is a welcome development that Cruddas has been given this role, and we hope to work with him to open debate on Trident.

Time to change: Contribute to Labour's Defence Policy Review

The Labour Shadow Defence Team has launched the Labour Party's Defence Policy Review and is seeking submissions.

It is now vital that members engage in and shape the debate particularly regarding the Labour Party's current policy on the continued possession of nuclear weapons and engagement in foreign military interventions.

Labour CND has drafted two model responses for you to consider submitting both to the Defence Policy Review and to your National Policy Forum representatives.

You can do so both as an individual member and via your CLP.

Please ensure you submit this to the Labour Shadow Defence Review by emailing officeoflfof@gmail.com and posting to Shadow Defence Secretary Jim Murphy at the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

You should also send it to your National Policy Forum representatives, via the MembersNet section of the Labour Party website - <http://members.labour.org.uk/npfrep>

Please tell us if you have made a submission.

Labour and Trident

Labour will put greater importance on working with other nuclear weapon states to increase progress on nuclear reductions and disarmament towards the goal of global abolition.

Labour will encourage non-nuclear states to also keep up their pressure for nuclear disarmament as required by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Labour will back a global nuclear weapons convention with the ultimate aim of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Labour will make a clear commitment to scrap Trident and all plans for Trident replacement.

Supporting arguments:

The Labour Party needs to change its policy on Trident and its replacement.

Trident or its replacement does not address our real threats. Even the Coalition Government has confirmed that the UK does not face a nuclear weapon threat from another state, according to their National Security Strategy published in 2011.

Trident or its replacement is a green light to nuclear weapons proliferation. It sends the wrong message at a point when the US and Russia are taking further disarmament steps. It is through honouring our nuclear disarmament commitment that we can achieve a nuclear weapons free world.

Trident replacement is unaffordable. Constructing and maintaining Trident's replacement will cost over £100billion over its lifetime to 2060. In the shorter term the maintaining the existing Trident system and constructing the Trident replacement will cost us £55billion over the next 15 years.

Trident replacement is unpopular. There is clear and consistent polling evidence that shows the public is opposed to Trident replacement. Even amongst the defence community, many do not favour a costly nuclear weapon system in the face of other public spending cuts.

East and the scrapping of Trident here in the UK.

Supporting arguments:

Ed Miliband stated in his first speech as leader that 'This generation wants to change our foreign policy so that it's always based on values, not just alliances.'

The UK's alliances, notably with the US and NATO or other Western powers, have led the country into numerous military strikes and wars in recent years, particularly Iraq and Afghanistan, under the justification of 'liberal interventionism.'

These interventions have left thousands dead and injured, harming rather than helping the people who live there and leaving behind countries that are neither stable nor safe.

The UK's Cold War-era alliance, NATO, has expanded its sphere of influence by encouraging former Warsaw Pact countries to join and engaging in 'out of area' operations. Given the Warsaw Pact was dissolved twenty years ago, serious questions remain unanswered as to the role of NATO.

A progressive, socialist foreign policy requires resources and skills to be committed to reducing poverty and improving living standards rather than supporting military action and the instability and misery it causes.

Labour and foreign policy

Labour will adopt a foreign policy that rejects military interventionism and nuclear aggression.

Labour will reject the principle that UK forces should operate anywhere in the world. Their only purpose should be for the defence of these islands.

Labour will support peaceful negotiations and dialogue through the UN and its member states, in conflict situations.

Labour will immediately withdraw troops from Afghanistan and advocate global disarmament, including a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle

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