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*Excerpts from the Westminster Parliamentary debate on Global Britain in a Competitive Age: Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, March 16 2021.*

### **Keir Starmer MP**

I voted for the renewal of Trident, and the Labour party's support for nuclear deterrence is non-negotiable, but this review breaks the goal of successive Prime Ministers and cross-party efforts to reduce our nuclear stockpile. It does not explain when, why or for what strategic purpose, so the Prime Minister needs to answer that question today.

### **[NO REPLY FROM PRIME MINISTER JOHNSON ON WARHEADS]**

### **Ian Blackford MP**

... on Trident nuclear weapons, the review disgracefully endorses the attainment of 80 more of these weapons of mass destruction. Will the Prime Minister tell us who gave his Government the democratic right to renege on the UK's obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty?

### **[NO REPLY FROM JOHNSON ON WARHEADS]**

### **Caroline Lucas MP**

Earlier today, the Foreign Secretary justified breaking our nuclear non-proliferation treaty obligations on the grounds that nuclear weapons are "the ultimate insurance policy against the worst threat from hostile states." The logical consequence of that position is surely that

every country should be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons on the same insurance policy grounds. If such nuclear proliferation happens, and since we are increasing our nuclear warheads by more than 40%, how could we possibly have any moral authority to speak out against it? If that nuclear proliferation happens, does the Prime Minister think the world as a whole will be more safe or less safe?

**[NO REPLY FROM JOHNSON ON WARHEADS]**

**Hywel Williams MP**

This integrated review looks like a desperate, confused and self-important search for purpose, far, far removed from the concerns of the people of Wales. With Welsh trade with our most important trading partner, the EU, collapsing as a result of the fundamental political and strategic error of our exit, is it not increasingly clear that the best interests of my country would be served not by squandering billions and more on literally useless nuclear weapons, but by our ability to pursue our own course in the world?

**[NO REPLY FROM JOHNSON ON WARHEADS]**

**Margaret Ferrier MP**

With hostile states, non-state actors, terror and crime groups all posing a threat to the UK and our allies, it is important to be prepared to adapt and develop our cyber-technology and capabilities. However, increasing our nuclear weapons arsenal is something I cannot condone. Both President Biden and Putin renewed their bilateral New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty on nuclear weapons reductions just last month, so why is the Prime Minister going against the flow by increasing our arsenal?

**Boris Johnson's response**

Of course we are committed to nuclear arms reduction. Indeed, we believe that China should be brought into strategic nuclear arms reduction, but one of the most important things about having a credible deterrent for friend and foe alike is setting out what we have, and that is what this integrated review does.

\* \* \*

*Excerpts from the Westminster Parliamentary debate on the Defence Command Paper, March 22 2021*

### **John Healey MP, Shadow Defence Secretary**

On nuclear, Labour's commitment to the renewal of our deterrent is non-negotiable, alongside our multilateral commitment to nuclear disarmament and greater arms control. The Secretary of State made no mention in his statement of reversing 30 years of proud non-proliferation policy in the UK under successive Governments, and the White Paper does not come close to explaining, let alone justifying, this change. Parliament, the public and our allies are owed a much fuller account of this decision from Ministers.

### **Response from Ben Wallace MP, Defence Secretary**

On the nuclear deterrent, we do not believe that the changes to the number of *warheads* in any way breach the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and that advice is backed up by the Attorney General. Of course, if the right hon. Gentleman is correct about his party's new-found love of the nuclear deterrent since his previous leader, or indeed since the shadow Foreign Secretary voted against renewing it, he will of course agree with me that a nuclear deterrent should be credible; otherwise, it would just be a massive waste of money.

### **Phillip Dunne MP**

I welcome the clarity of my right hon. Friend's statement today and I look forward to the publication tomorrow of the defence and security industrial strategy alongside it, which will provide, I hope, a degree of coherence that will be very welcome to all those involved in supporting our armed forces. In light of the necessary decision to proceed with upgrading the warhead for the strategic deterrent, can my right hon. Friend explain to the House the rationale for increasing the number of *warheads* during the transition from one system to the next? Will the cost in developing the strategic deterrent absorb any of the welcome £6.6 billion R&D programme that has been announced?

### **Response from Ben Wallace MP**

... For clarity, the United Kingdom does not buy *warheads* from other countries. Under the nuclear proliferation treaty, *warheads* have to be developed within that very country itself.

**Rachael Maskell MP**

The Government have frequently confirmed their commitment to the non-proliferation treaty, which they recognise plays “an unparalleled role in curtailing the nuclear arms race and keeping the world safe.” But this Government are now feeding, not ameliorating, nuclear risk. Will the Secretary of State publish the detail of the Attorney General’s advice to explain why he is seeking to break yet another international agreement, undermining our legal position, and why, rather than cutting nuclear *warheads*, as is his obligation, he is increasing them by 44%?

**Response from Ben Wallace MP**

... Madam Deputy Speaker, you will know, having been in the House for many years, that Governments do not publish the Attorney General’s advice. We do not believe in any way that we are breaking the nuclear proliferation treaty, and what we really need to do is make sure that we maintain a credible deterrent.

**Bernard Jenkin MP**

...May I echo what has been said about the need for discussion and exploration of why we need to increase the cap on the number of *warheads*? I am convinced that we need to maintain a credible deterrent, and I am sure that the Government would not be doing this unless there were very strong arguments for doing it to maintain the credibility of the deterrent.

**Response from Ben Wallace MP**

Obviously, detail around development, use and, indeed, deployment of nuclear *warheads* is a very sensitive subject. However, I will see what I can do to provide further briefing to Members and to specific Committees, if that is a better way to furnish more detail in a secure environment.

**Richard Thomson MP**

... What exactly is the new threat, or the change to the strategic environment, that the Government consider requires a stockpile of 260 *warheads*, rather than 180, to offer that minimum credible deterrent that was presumably offered before? Furthermore, how can that 45% increase in the number of *warheads* be reconciled in any way with a sincere, meaningful commitment to arms control, disarmament and this country’s obligations to nuclear non-proliferation?

### **Response from Ben Wallace MP**

Disarmament is achieved when both sides are credible in what they offer up. To offer up something that is not credible would see us get taken to the cleaners, and the other people would just carry on, especially with the completely unbalanced numbers of *warheads* around the world.

### **Emma Lewell-Buck MP**

Last week, the Prime Minister was unable to state how the Government's commitment to international law fitted with breaching article 6 of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. The Defence Secretary has since said that the raising of the cap on the nuclear warhead stockpile is to ensure the UK has a credible nuclear deterrent in response to Russia and others, and that we will still have one of the lowest stockpiles. Will he explain for exactly how long our deterrent has not been credible? How does this increase—below others—make it now credible?

### **Response from Ben Wallace MP**

I am afraid that I cannot, at the Dispatch Box, tell people about the credibility of our nuclear deterrent in detail, because to do so would undermine its security. However, I can assure the hon. Lady that we keep it under review, and as we announced last week, it is important to increase the *warheads* in stockpile—which still makes us the lowest of the declared nuclear powers—to make sure it remains credible.

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## **Responses to the Integrated Review**

**The Elders** are an international non-governmental organisation of public figures noted as senior statesmen and women, peace activists, and human rights advocates, who were first brought together by Nelson Mandela in 2007. On their behalf, Mary Robinson commented:

*“The announcement today by the UK Government of its intention to increase by over 40% the cap on its nuclear warhead numbers is surprising and deeply alarming. This would be incompatible with the UK’s international obligations to pursue disarmament under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and risks contributing to a dangerous new nuclear arms race. It also risks undermining the NPT Review Conference due to take place in August this year.*”

*It is particularly shocking that a permanent member of the UN Security Council should make such an announcement at a time when other countries have been taking positive steps to reverse the deterioration in nuclear arms controls, following the extension of New START between the US and Russia, and the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons earlier this year.*

*While the UK cites increased security threats as justification for this move, the appropriate response to these challenges should be to work multilaterally to strengthen international arms control agreements and to reduce – not increase – the number of nuclear weapons in existence.*

*The Elders call on all nuclear states to demonstrate their commitment to nuclear disarmament, and to make concrete reductions to their stockpiles in line with the proposals put forward by The Elders.*

*As decision-makers take stock of the UK government's announcement, we urge all world leaders to recall the spirit of Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev's declaration in 1985 that "a nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought", and redouble their efforts to make progress towards achieving a world wholly free from nuclear weapons."*

\* \* \*

Stéphane Dujarric, spokesperson for **UN Secretary-General António Guterres**, raised similar concerns in a March 17 press briefing. "[W]e do express our concern at the UK's decision to increase its nuclear weapons arsenal, which is contrary to its obligations under Article VI of the NPT," he said. "It could have a damaging impact on global stability and efforts to pursue a world free of nuclear weapons."

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### **Russian Foreign Ministry**

On March 16, the UK government released an updated version of the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. In addition to the modernisation and rearmament of the British armed forces, the factor of China, cyber threats and terrorism, the document focuses on Russia.

The review repeatedly refers to our country as the “most acute threat to our [UK] security.” At the same time, London is stating its plans to use, in conjunction with its NATO allies, its military, intelligence and diplomatic potential to successfully “deter nuclear, conventional and hybrid threats to our [UK] security, particularly from Russia.” In addition to this, the British present as a fact their assumption that Russia will allegedly step up its activities with the aim of “undermining democratic systems and open economies” “around the wider European neighbourhood.” The British government has reiterated that “we will uphold international rules and norms and hold Russia to account for breaches of these.” How interesting! They keep silent about the international law, because they themselves undermine it. They have coined a new term “international rules and norms” and instantly came up with the idea that Russia is undermining them.

As before, Britain is using the all-too-familiar fakes that are not backed by any convincing evidence to justify its vision of relations with Russia. There is no evidence whatsoever, which once again shows that the propaganda spread by the British media has become London’s state policy.

Despite our numerous messages about our willingness to turn the page in our bilateral relations and focus on the development which will benefit our nations, as well as our calls to get serious about normalising relations between us and solving the accumulated problems, the British government has taken another step towards dismantling Russian-British ties.

The fact that London continues to formulate its approaches to its relations with Moscow based on the logic of confrontation and the approaches typical of the Russophobic part of the British political establishment is both disquieting and regrettable. London is again ignoring the interests of its own people.

In addition to this, the document in question shows that London has abandoned its previous plans to reduce its nuclear arsenal to 180 warheads and is now talking about building it up by more than 40 percent to a total of 260 nuclear warheads. All of this is presented under the guise of absolutely far-fetched rhetoric about alleged “military threats” coming from Russia.

Clearly, this move is at odds with London’s many statements about its commitment to obligations to promote nuclear disarmament under the NPT. Such plans on the part of Great Britain confirm the growing importance of making the US nuclear allies, who are building up their nuclear arsenals, part of the Russia-US strategic equation. This concerns not only Great Britain, but France as well, which is closely interacting with

Washington in the military-nuclear sphere. The British leadership's decisions underscore the urgent need to directly involve US nuclear allies in the efforts to reduce and limit nuclear weapons, which Russia never ceases to point out.

We would like the Western nuclear "troika" to act responsibly. Time is ripe for it to abandon its threatening rhetoric and to start practical interaction with Russia in order to improve international security and strategic stability.

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### **Church leaders made the following statement:**

"The government's decision in the integrated review of defence, security and foreign policy to increase the number of Trident nuclear warheads the UK can stockpile by more than 40 percent is a retrograde step that will not make any of us safer.

Our Trident submarines already carry warheads that in total have an explosive yield equivalent to hundreds of the bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima. It is immoral that the UK government is committing resources, which could be spent on the common good of our society, to stockpiling even more.

Over the last 50 years, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has restricted the increase in the number of nuclear weapons worldwide as well as the number of new nuclear-armed states. This announcement puts those gains in jeopardy and weakens collective action on non-proliferation. Progress on reducing the threat from nuclear weapons will come through dialogue, diplomacy and principled action. The government's announcement today will complicate rather than aid this process.

The entry into force of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition in of Nuclear Weapons is an encouraging development. As people of faith, we join with millions across the world who are working towards the elimination of nuclear arsenals. Living up to our responsibilities under the Non Proliferation Treaty would be a step towards realising that vision. We believe that 'Global Britain' should strive for peaceful and cooperative international relationships, and joint endeavour on climate change, global poverty and other challenges. This announcement takes us in a worrying and wholly wrong direction."

**The signatories are:**

Most Revd and Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York

Most Revd John Davies, Archbishop of Wales

Revd Clare Downing, Moderator of General Assembly, United Reformed Church

Bob Fyffe, General Secretary, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

Bishop William Kenney, Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham, International Affairs Department, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Bishop Declan Lang, Bishop of Clifton, Chair, International Affairs Department, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Carolyn Lawrence, Vice-President of the Methodist Church

Revd David Mayne, Moderator of the Baptist Union Council

Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, Quakers in Britain

Revd Dr Joanna Penberthy, Bishop of St David's

Revd Richard Teal, President of the Methodist Church

# EUROPE

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## European Nuclear Disarmament

Produced by the *Bertrand  
Russell Peace Foundation*

*END Info* is a regular  
newsletter produced by the  
Bertrand Russell Peace  
Foundation covering  
disarmament, nuclear threats  
and anti-nuclear campaigns  
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perspective.

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