



OXFORD CND

NEWSLETTER

November/December 2022



Two routes to extinction: War and climate destruction

**Whether through fossil-fuelled greed and planetary overheating or nuclear war, mass murder, radiation and planetary freezing...
...humanity faces extinction if we do not pull back from the insane military-industrial growth and dominance of our lives and economies.**

Oxford Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

Eternal hope

This happens to be the fiftieth column that I have written for the *Oxford CND Newsletter* over the past ten years, but I could wish for a happier anniversary. A continuing thread through my pieces has been the uncertainty—which has only intensified over time – as to whether there are still grounds for hope in what is a very dismal world scene. Ten years ago, we were confronting a single acute crisis in Syria, which already signalled the downward slide of international cooperation between the main powers, and which called for “the most urgent and challenging initiative for peace”. This was soon followed by the first Ukraine crisis and the occupation by Russia of Crimea. I warned then that in criticising Western double standards (such as ignoring the previous violation of international law in Iraq) “we must avoid ending up on the side of Putin and Russian chauvinism”. Soon after, Trident renewal became an accomplished fact, and to win the argument, I suggested, would require “new ideas on a global scale”.

By 2018, the new UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was warning us that “the cold war is back – with a vengeance. . . The risk we face today [is] that things spiral out of control. It is our common duty to stop it.” The fear of nuclear conflict by accident if not design was heightened by new revelations about the Cuba crisis, by devastating works from Daniel Ellsberg and Eric Schlosser, and by the threatening needle of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists’ Doomsday Clock. The annual report accompanying the latest advance of the Clock now linked climate change to the nuclear danger as risks of similar magnitude. Closely related to the climate crisis was the issue of world poverty, in turn linked to an exponential rise in migration by those seeking to escape hunger as well as war. Even the World Bank now accepted that at least 20 percent of the world’s population is living in “moderate” or “extreme” poverty.

All this was before we were hit by the Covid pandemic, which joined the nuclear and climate dangers as a trinity of existential risks. With time

to spare under lockdown, many turned to fictional accounts in past literature of world disaster, from Mary Shelley and H G Wells right through to *The Handmaid’s Tale*. The early utopian versions had regarded such catastrophes as promoting international cooperation – even preparing the ground for world government. The more recent dystopian versions present the opposite picture which, alas, now seems closer to reality.

And then came Russia’s invasion of Ukraine...

At the top of this article I asked whether there are “still grounds for hope” in a situation which has become darker by the year. I might have written “grounds for optimism” if I hadn’t just read Rebecca Solnit’s excellent essay in the *New Statesman* (“Climate despair is a luxury”, 21-27

October). Hope is the right word, she insists, and optimism is as much its enemy as pessimism, for both embody “a false certainty that excuses inaction”. If we take a long view of history, we can see more clearly how society, beliefs and values change for the better, and how this should feed our sense of hope. I would add,

from my own study of peace history, that hope, like peace itself, is essential for human survival and indeed has helped to keep humanity alive in spite of all the contrary pressures that could have led to the destruction of civilisation long ago. In a religious or ethical sense, this is the true meaning of the contest between good and evil, between the deity and the devil.

It is a characteristic feature of history that we are not able to perceive its current shape, only its past, and perhaps it is better so. Certainly, we can point to some positives even in the last ten years, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and the widening movement of climate activism. But the truth, as John Donne wrote long ago, stands “on a huge hill, cragged and steep”, and whether or not we shall get there, we just have to keep climbing. It is hope that gives us the strength to do so. ■

John Gittings

B61-12 Nuclear Bomb

B61 nuclear bombs have been deployed in Europe under US nuclear sharing arrangements for some time. Originally designed as a Cold War weapon in the 1960s, the B61-12 (modification 12) air dropped gravity bomb entered production in December 2021 with the aim of extending the lifespan of these nuclear weapons. The latest modification includes 'steerability' and 'dialable yields', which means that the bombs can be launched some distance from their target ('standoff capability' meaning that pilots can reasonably expect not to be impacted by a nuclear blast) and that the explosive power of the bombs can be set as 'usable' on the battlefield. The development and deployment of these bombs to Lakenheath (and elsewhere in Europe) represents a significant and dangerous expansion of the US nuclear force and an escalation in tension between nuclear-armed states.

The new version is also designed so that U.S. and allied bomber planes and fighter aircraft – including B-2 and B-21 bombers and F-15, F-16, F-35

and Tornado fighter jets – are all able to carry the weapon, as opposed to the several older versions of the B61 that have been in storage for years.

The warhead itself is one of the most versatile in the U.S. arsenal because its explosive power can be dialed up or down depending on the target, making it either a low-or medium-yield weapon.

Because these "upgraded" B61-12 nuclear bombs can be set to explode with a very low explosive power for a nuclear weapons 0.3 kilotons (or 300 tons of TNT); this means that if the B61-12 is set to its lowest yield/explosive power, it will be 27 times more powerful than the largest US conventional bomb. This blurs the line between conventional and nuclear weapons. Some running US foreign policy believe that these nuclear bombs are more "usable". This makes it much more likely that they might choose to use them against Russian forces.

A combination of accuracy and low yield make the B61-12 the most usable nuclear bomb in America's arsenal.

Nuclear Base Modernizations

There is a controversial arrangement known as nuclear sharing, under which the United States installs nuclear equipment on fighter jets of select non-nuclear NATO countries and train their pilots to carry out nuclear strike with U.S. nuclear bombs.

The arrangement is controversial because the United States as a party to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has promised not to hand over nuclear weapons to other countries, and the non-nuclear countries in the sharing arrangement have promised not to receive nuclear weapons from the nuclear weapon states.

In peacetime the nuclear weapons are under U.S. control, but the arrangement means that they would be handed over to the non-nuclear country in war time. The arrangement was in place before the NPT was signed so it is not a violation of the letter of the treaty. But it can be said



to violate the spirit and has been an irritant for years.

During the past several years, the nuclear bases and the infrastructure that support the nuclear sharing mission in Europe have been undergoing significant upgrades, including cables, command and control systems, weapons maintenance and custodial facilities, security perimeters, and runway and tarmac areas.

There are currently six active sites in Europe that store U.S. nuclear bombs: Kleine Brogel air base in Belgium, Büchel air base in Germany, Aviano and Ghedi air bases in Italy, Volkel air base in the Netherlands, and possibly Incirlik in Turkey. The estimated number of weapons at each site is based on the number of active vaults, aircraft, and other information.

The first weapons are said to be arriving in December. There is no definite information yet about whether the new bombs will be going to Lakenheath or not.

On Saturday November 19th CND will be holding a demonstration at USAF (RAF) Lakenheath in Suffolk.

Nuclear, war and climate destruction – what can we do?

Wars, nuclear weapons and fossil-fuelled greed are pushing humanity to the brink of extinction. We hold meetings on zoom and sometimes in person, wave antinuclear banners as the Trident warheads drive pass, block traffic with 'just stop oil', and participate in treaty meetings on climate justice and eliminating nuclear weapons. But is it enough? The dangers and nightmares feel overwhelming. What can we do to make a difference?

The war on Ukraine has made people realise that nuclear dangers did not disappear when the Cold War ended. This year Vladimir Putin deliberately issued nuclear threats as Russia's invasion got blocked by courageous Ukrainian citizens. In recent decades we've heard other nuclear-armed 'leaders' brandish their ability to incinerate those that stand up to them. Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un traded 'mine's bigger than yours' insults with their threats, but we should not forget various European, US, Indian, Pakistani and Israeli possessors of nuclear weapons who have hidden behind the catch-all excuse of 'deterrence' while building up nuclear arsenals and carrying out military operations against other countries, some of which did not have nuclear weapons.

When did 'deterrence' become a cover for aggressive militarism? Some time in 1945, as the 1939-45 war bled to an end and the first nuclear weapons were used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. By the mid 1950s US military-industrial bureaucrats, academics and politicians had renamed nuclear weapons 'the deterrents'. The nuclear weapons-fuel cycle was rebranded 'atoms for peace', while American and Russian economies armed bloody wars around the world, all the while proclaiming that nuclear weapons were 'keeping the peace'. Britain, of course, waved the poorer Union Jack

over identikit militaristic myths, lies and arms sales.

And here we are in 2022, dragging heels on tackling the climate emergency, weapons and wars that our policies imposed on billions of people around the world. War and military operations of all kinds massively increase toxic and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions into air, sea and soil as their weapons destroy and burn people, homes, forests and fields. Nuclear weapons make every explosion immeasurably worse, from the blasts and uncontrollable fires to radioactive fallout, agricultural collapse and global famine. Exploding the warheads of just one Trident-armed

British submarine on six cities could cause nuclear winter, according to Scientists for Global Responsibility. Two billion or more could die within 5-10 years of what is euphemistically called a 'limited' nuclear war between NATO and Russia, or India and Pakistan.

These interconnected global threats reflect a continuum of violence perpetrated by patriarchal governments and military-industrial practices and ideologies. We haven't got much time now to pull the world back from the brink of extinction. We can't deal with all the problems personally, so where do we start?

We can achieve sustainable survival and peace, but we have to commit and act now. In years of campaigning I've learned about the power of creative activism to stop the nightmares and harness our diversity to make impossible necessities become real transformations. We are most powerful and convincing when we work for changes that inspire us.

My earliest songs and campaigns were about saving forests from pollution and acid rain. By 1982 I was an ecofeminist campaigner, adding my own little strand to the powerful web of Greenham Women working for sustainable peace and justice.



Together we made the nuclear-armed cruise missiles undeployable, and pressured governments to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. The 1987 INF Treaty that eliminated 'intermediate-range nuclear forces' from Europe was signed by US and Soviet leaders, but this vital treaty would never have happened without Greenham Women and peace activists all over the world.

Thirty years later governments working with the globally diverse International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) have achieved the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW, abbreviated to Nuclear Ban Treaty), which entered into international legal force in 2021. Grounded in international humanitarian principles and law, this multilateral treaty prohibits the use of nuclear weapons along with all operational activities and requires the total elimination of all nuclear arsenals. Its first Meeting of States Parties was held in June 2022 in Vienna. The governments adopted a strong Declaration on 'Our commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons' and a 50-point action plan which provides innovative legal and normative tools to raise awareness of nuclear impacts and strengthen activism to bring nuclear-armed states on board and implement the treaty.

Key decisions include: 10 year deadlines for destroying the nuclear arsenals; a 90 day deadline for NATO 'host' countries to remove nuclear weaponry from their territories and policies; establishment of a Scientific Advisory Group to work on verification and technical issues; plus initiatives on cooperation, bringing all governments on board, environmental remediation, assisting victims of nuclear use and testing, and fulfilling the treaty's objectives of banning and eliminating all nuclear arsenals through strong, effective verification and compliance mechanisms.

Here in nuclear-armed, fuel-guzzling Britain we've got a lot of work to do to explain the military-climate connections, and why preventing nuclear weapons and building peace are such urgent security imperatives for nuclear as well as non-nuclear countries. If a leader is prepared to use nuclear weapons, they are essentially agreeing to threaten, risk and carry out the mass annihilation of everything they – and we – care about. This mindset is embedded in British politics – declaring a willingness to launch Trident is treated here as a litmus test of leadership. This is a dangerous delusion. No-one is fit to be a leader if they are so ambitious or weak that they are afraid to question and refuse pressures to launch nuclear weapons.

We can turn this around by demonstrating and empowering alternative images for leadership and security that reflect the realities we live with now. Real leadership means acting humanely with love and care at all levels. Providing resources for housing, health, education and food are the security necessities people really need. Nuclear weapons are irrelevant for security but epitomise corrupt power politics, violence and belief systems based on force and coercive control.

From the grassroots to local councils, elected mayors and parliamentarians, the Nuclear Ban Treaty gives us political, legal and financial tools to pressure governments to sign up to nuclear abolition. Initiatives such as 'Don't Bank on the Bomb' and the 'Nuclear weapons financing and research group' provide info and resources for divesting from military and nuclear businesses. The prohibitions in the treaty can be used to deter governments, people and businesses from assisting anyone to make or use nuclear weapons. ICAN provides updates on the Treaty, relevant briefings for developing issues like the Ukraine war, and tools to enable your local councils and governments to take legal, political and financial steps to implement at least some of the Treaty's provisions at local and regional levels.

City by city, using local media, we can convince our neighbours, elected representatives and all levels of government that nuclear weapons are not only wastefully expensive, immoral and inhumane; they are illegal now – and dangerously foolish!

The myths of deterrence must be countered with today's realities. Cyber and AI technologies are making it easier for clever hackers and spoofer to turn nuclear bombs and power plants into explosive nightmares that could destroy their possessors.

Putin's threats and Tony Blair's memoir have exposed that far from providing any form of national or international security, nuclear possession encourages deluded leaders to believe they have 'freedom of action' to invade others. Any nuclear threat or use risks spiralling into war and nuclear war. The only way to prevent nuclear weapons being used is to ban and eliminate them completely.

To build real security all of us need to become conscientious Earth Protectors, and all governments need to sign the TPNW Ban Treaty and commit to climate justice and a global 'Fossil Fuels Nonproliferation and Elimination' treaty. ■

Rebecca Eleanor Johnson

Two nuclear warhead convoys in October

Two nuclear warhead convoys travelled back and forth across England and Scotland in October. These convoys travel regularly between Atomic Weapons Establishment, Burghfield in Berkshire - the nuclear bomb factory – and Royal Naval Armaments Depot, Coulport, next to the Trident submarine base at Faslane in Scotland. Both convoys were tracked and monitored by nukewatchers. They are the most deadly cargo on our roads.



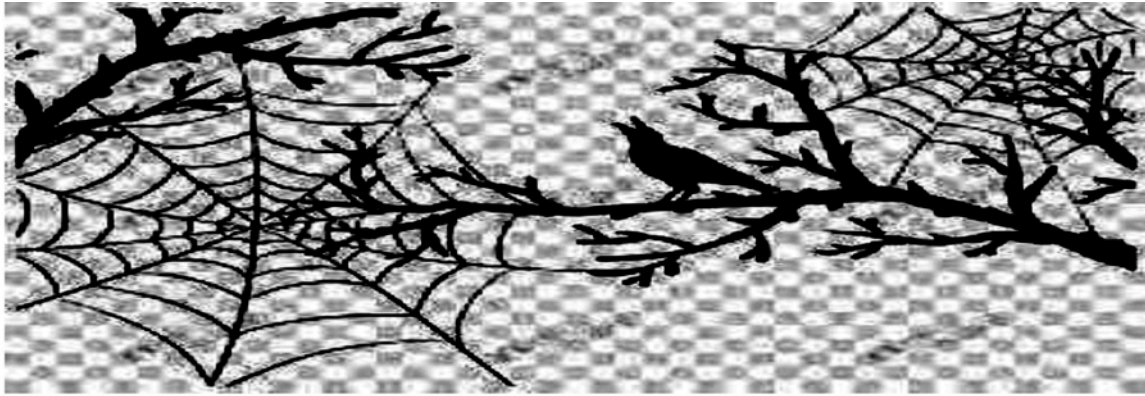
A deadly legacy: 20 years of drone targeted killing

Drone Wars has long-argued that armed drones are a destabilising technology that is helping to lower the threshold for the use of force. This is dismissed by those who insist that drones are no different from other forms of air power. But it is surely unarguable that drones have enabled and normalised a culture of targeted killing which is making the world a more dangerous place.

As the use of armed drones spreads, such targeted killings operations will expand and become normalised unless there is a strong push back from states, civil society groups and the public, insisting that drone operators adhere to international law.

<https://dronewars.net/2022/10/31/a-deadly-legacy-20-years-of-drone-targeted-killing/>





AWEA - Anarchic Women Embrace Aldermaston

The spiders and crows are gathering on the **40th anniversary of Embrace the Base** when 30,000 women joined hands in solidarity, protesting against the siting of American nuclear weapons on Greenham Common.

Join us at any point during the monthly Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp from **Friday 9th - Sunday 11th December 2022** in resistance against UK nuclear weapons at AWE Aldermaston.

We will be weaving webs, celebrating the spiders & crows and resisting nuclear weapons through co-learning, connection and creativity.

Programme for Saturday 10th December:

Daytime -

Workshop 1 - Making crows, spiders and jar lanterns (for evening Lantern parade) to encircle the base with webs, spiders & crows and expose the web of connections that enable nuclear weapons and AWE Aldermaston to exist (uranium mining, militarism, financial interests, etc.).

Workshop 2 - The Web of Resistance. Weaving the web of resistance to nuclear weapons and nuclear colonialism. What we need to resist, both in terms of personal energy, commitment and resilience, and possible/feasible actions.

Workshop 3 - Visions of a good society. What a world without nuclear weapons would look like.

After dark -

Lantern parade

Site-specific performance by local Movement Artists (this will last approx. 20 mins and will also happen at 10am and 1pm)

Crows & Spiders shadow puppet show

Wintry spider & crow party (bring your own crow/spider costume or make one at Camp).

Sunday 11th December:

10.30 am - 12 pm Workshop:

Movement Building: Militarism. Links to the Climate and Nature Crisis

Access information:

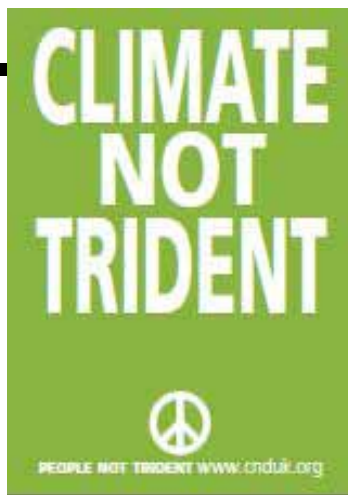
- Accessible portalo
- Accessible car park
- We are endeavouring to make the slope down to camp fully accessible. At the moment it needs assistance for wheelchair users or others with mobility issues

Other access/Camp information

- Lifts from nearest train station (Aldermaston) or bus stop (Tadley) can be arranged (please phone 07852 293386)
- Please bring a tent and sleeping bag if you are camping. However, spare tent space and clean sleeping bags/extra bedding are available on request (phone 07852 293386 to confirm)
- Shelter from the weather in large marquee
- Basic meals/tea & coffee provided but contributions of vegetarian/vegan food and drink welcome

Against all wars - for the peaceful resolution of international conflicts - no place for nuclear weapons in a dangerous world already on the brink of climate catastrophe

Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp - Paices Hill, Aldermaston RG74PW
<https://www.facebook.com/events/889150202045459/?ref=newsfeed>



Diary

November

Wednesday 2nd – Faringdon Peace Group – 7.30pm – Rae Street.

11-12th – Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp – Nuala 01865 749459.

Saturday 12th – Peace Remembrance Day – Martyrs Memorial, St Giles with Women in Black.

Saturday 12th – Future War conference, Birkbeck University, London.

Tuesday 15th – Abingdon Peace Group meeting 8.00pm.

Saturday 19th – CND demo, RAF Lakenheath.

Saturday 19th – Sea Green Singers, Friends Meeting House, Oxford, 7.00 for 7.30pm.

Saturday 26th – CND Council.

December

Wednesday 7th – Faringdon Peace Group meeting – 7.30pm.

9-11th – Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp – 40th Anniversary of Embrace the Base – Nuala 01865 749459.

Tuesday 20th – Abingdon Peace Group – 8.00pm.

Best list of news items, webinars etc:

https://www.cndsalisbury.org.uk/news_items

<https://www.cndsalisbury.org.uk/events>

<https://www.cndsalisbury.org.uk>



Latest News

Can you help? Facebook for Peace

Oxford CND is planning to have a Facebook Peace Page. Do you have the skills to design and organise such a page for the group? If you do, or know someone else who has the skills and would be willing to help, please contact:

Oxfordcnd@phonecoop.coop

or **01865 248357**

THANK YOU.



Membership subscriptions 2022 Please pay your subscription soon!

If you pay your subscription by cheque please can you pay us as soon as possible. Oxford CND needs that money to campaign and send you information and newsletters. We are also very grateful for extra donations.

Subs are very reasonable – £10 or £5 low wage, but are essential for us to continue to campaign. Standing orders can continue as before.

Make cheques for 2022 payable to Oxford CND and send to: Membership, 22 Downside Road, Oxford, OX3 8HP.

Oxford CND Newsletter by email

Some members already receive the Oxford CND newsletter only by email. If you would also like to receive it only by email, contact:

oxfordcnd@phonecoop.coop

Oxford Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

3 Harpsichord Place, Oxford, OX4 1BX.

01865 248357 or oxfordcnd@phonecoop.coop

www.oxfordcnd.org.uk

Contributions to the next issue...

Please send letters and items to:

Newsletter, 22 Downside Road, Oxford, OX3 8HP

No later than **Monday, January 2nd 2023**