Amongst the many storms provoked by the Johnson electoral victory, debates about the direction of the UK’s defence policy are crucial but under-reported. Last month the Financial Times reported that the Prime Minister had cancelled a National Security Council meeting at short notice, following a row over the scope and direction of an anticipated major defence review, due to set Britain’s priorities over the next decade.

Reports suggest that a move towards a ‘soft power’ focus has been mooted and that Johnson’s advisor Dominic Cummings is pushing for a shift in direction to focus on advanced technology, Artificial Intelligence and drones, while the Whitehall establishment favours the traditional approach based around the armed forces and military equipment. Cummings has annoyed the MoD with his disparaging remarks and keen criticism of the new aircraft carriers.

Such a dichotomy has been in evidence for at least a decade. In 2010, the Conservative-led coalition government had a serious rethink of the UK’s strategic threats, introducing much of what
Cummings is referring to and downgrading the risk of state-on-state nuclear conflict. Simultaneously it retained its commitment to Britain’s nuclear weapons and the extensive spending involved. In truth, every government since has tried to ride both horses, the traditional approach and the 21st century reality. Now something’s got to give.

There has been widespread concern over the MoD’s plans for spending on ‘big ticket’ projects like the aircraft carriers and Trident replacement, the costs of which seem to be ballooning alarmingly. Basically the money isn’t there if the MoD wants also to spend on cyber and improved military intelligence, not to mention meeting the demands of armed forces chiefs who want to upgrade conventional military hardware.

As the Financial Times indicates, ‘One of the biggest decisions is whether to maintain Britain’s two aircraft carriers and the naval forces needed to protect them, or to find savings from these resource-intensive assets to spend elsewhere.’ Absolutely so, but it is high time that the spending debate is extended to properly include Trident replacement. The arguments are indeed compelling not only in terms of opportunity cost but in terms of the probable obsolescence of Trident brought about by the very technologies that the UK is underfunding but other states are piling investment into – notably underwater drone technology and the ability to hack into submarine computer systems.

The recent report from a National Audit Office investigation shows that £1.35 billion has been wasted due to the Ministry of Defence’s poor management of nuclear-regulated sites, responsible for the UK’s nuclear weapons programme, including Trident replacement. This hardly inspires confidence in those running Britain’s so-called defence, and it’s high time that the UK nuclear arsenal is jettisoned and our resources instead invested into genuine human security – like dealing with the climate crisis.
**Our history at LSE**

CND Campaigns Officer Sara Medi Jones explains how CND’s history is stored to inspire the next generation of activists.

**WHEN** we attend our local CND group meeting or get the placards ready for the latest protest, we don’t think of ourselves as creating history. But all our individual actions since CND was first set up in 1958 add up to create a campaigning organisation with an important heritage. And this heritage is captured and stored in over 600 boxes of material at the London School of Economics (LSE) library, where CND’s archive is kept.

Daniel Payne, the curator for politics and international relations at LSE Library, explains the significance of the CND archive: “The CND archives are important because they provide unique evidence of the activities of a hugely influential organisation that has affected great social change. Its importance is backed up by the number of people that come to visit and study it – it is in the top ten most requested collections at the library.”

The archive is catalogued by a team of archivists and covers the founding of CND until the present day, a resource available free of charge to the public. While the archive mainly focuses on the national organisation, it also includes things such as the minutes of various committees alongside correspondence, planning documents related to Aldermaston marches and demonstrations, posters, leaflets, pamphlets, photographs and badges.

LSE plans a wide variety of events related to the CND archive, including a recent exhibition entitled ‘Give Peace a Chance’, examining how world peace was sought in the 20th century. Some of the artefacts on display for this included the belongings of Pat Arrowsmith, one of the organisers of the first Aldermaston March.

Pat’s collection is one of Daniel Payne’s favourite parts of the CND archives. “I have to say it is the papers of Pat Arrowsmith that are the most extraordinary,” he says. “These include various papers related to her campaigns on nuclear issues, the Vietnam war, British troops in Northern Ireland and logbooks for marches during her time as Organising Secretary for the first Aldermaston March. Alongside this are her more personal items. (The papers) capture a snapshot of the peace movement.”

Daniel Payne also talks about the important educational value of the archive, saying “we use them to teach students about the past and inspire them to take action in the present.” And what better use for our history than to motivate the next generation.

If you have items that you are considering donating to the archive, or would like to arrange a visit, please get in touch with the library: library.enquiries@lse.ac.uk
For a full, updated list of events, see cnduk.org/events/

Faringdon Peace Group meeting February 5th, 7:30pm, Friends Meeting House, Faringdon SN7 8AL. Contact 01367 710308 or steve.jenny@hotmail.com

An Ethical Foreign Policy Agenda for Britain: London CND conference March 7th, 12 noon-5pm Khalili lecture theatre, SOAS, 10 Thornhaugh Street, London. Contact 020 7607 2302 or info@londoncnd.org

Beyond Nuclear: Helensburgh CND conference April 4th Adelaide Place Baptist Church, 209 Bath Street, Glasgow. Contact ellen.renton@sky.com

Labour CND conference May 9th Venue to be announced Contact labourcnd@gmail.com

Peace Camps
Aldermaston Women’s Peace Camp Second weekend of every month. Tel: 07946 676761 info@aldermaston.net www.aldermaston.net @Peace_women_AWE

Faslane Peace Camp Permanent. A814, Shandon, Helensburgh, Dumbartonshire G84 8NT. Tel: 07376 188216

Menwith Hill vigil Every Tuesday 6-7.30pm at the main gate – contact Sarah: Tel: 01765 600928 or sswift64@gmail.com

Meet the staff
This month: Eve Cuthbert, CND Finance and Network Manager

“I am retiring at the end of February, having been CND’s Finance & Network Manager for 27 years. My job is to run CND’s finances which involves many, many tasks such as payments, banking, bank accounts, audit schedules, preparing draft accounts for CND and NET, payroll, pensions and dealing with the Inland Revenue. I also keep the computers running and sort out any problems.

I wish my successor an easy takeover and hope they enjoy working with the amazing staff at Holloway Road, as I have.”

Remember Fukushima
Commemorate the nuclear disaster

Vigil
March 11th, 5.30-6.30pm Japanese Embassy, 101 Piccadilly, W1 J7

March and rally
March 14th, 12 noon-4pm Assemble Japanese Embassy

Parliamentary public meeting
March 19th, 7-9pm Houses of Parliament For full details see: rememberfukushima.org