WO YEARS AGO, Boris Johnson unveiled his Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. It was designed to project and promote a post-Brexit ‘Global Britain’ on the offensive, ‘projecting force’ globally. At the time I described it as an ‘attack’ document – notorious for announcing an increase in the UK’s nuclear warheads and increasing the range of scenarios in which they might be used.

It included a key strategic shift towards the Indo-Pacific region – described as a ‘tilt’ with a focus on the Indian Ocean and its two key powers, India and Australia, aiming to build a network of regional allies against China. Two years on we can clearly see how this has played out. We’ve had the launching of the tripartite AUKUS military pact, centred around the

Sunak updates ‘defence’ strategy

CND General Secretary Kate Hudson looks at the government’s latest policy thinking – as outlined in the recent Integrated Review ‘Refresh’. 
US/UK provision of nuclear-powered submarines for Australia. And now, in last month’s ‘Integrated Review Refresh’ (IRR) – Rishi Sunak’s update of the Johnson vision – we see how this controversial initiative is being advanced, much to the concern of many in the region.

As part of the IRR, the government has announced an additional £5 billion of military spending over two years. This takes UK military spending up to 2.2% of GDP this year (2.29% if military funding for Ukraine is included), with a ‘new aspiration’ to reach 2.5%. £3 billion of the increase will go to the ‘defence nuclear enterprise’, including spending on new submarines and ‘supporting the delivery of AUKUS’. The remaining £2 billion is for replenishing military stockpiles and improving the UK’s ‘munitions infrastructure’.

Sunak claims that these commitments – including going beyond the baseline NATO requirement of 2% GDP on military spending – will ‘maintain our leading position in NATO’ and that lessons will be learned from the war in Ukraine. Sadly, though, he is not talking in terms of the importance of diplomacy and negotiation, but of the modernisation of Britain’s armed forces. His claim that ‘we will also support efforts to renew arms control and counter-proliferation’, rings hollow when there is no suggestion of reversing Johnson’s increase to Britain’s nuclear arsenal.

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What links nuclear weapons and climate change?

CND – as part of XR Peace – will be joining XR’s ‘The Big One – Unite to Survive’ action later this month to explain the links between nuclear weapons and climate change. Angie Zelter, coordinator of XR Peace explains the connections.

We know the climate impact of an exchange of just a fraction of the world’s nuclear weapons would cause a ‘nuclear winter’ leading to global famine and the death of two billion people. But nuclear weapons are only the most horrifying part of our militarised capitalist society.

War causes climate change and climate change causes war – a vicious circle that is destroying the biodiversity that sustains life on earth. To understand this, we must recognise that militarism is a central pillar of the carbon intensive exploitative extractive industrial system that is driving the climate crisis.

Around 6% of global carbon emissions are from direct military activity but this does not include emissions caused by the destruction of homes, bridges, dams, power stations and other infrastructure that is turned into rubble and then has to be rebuilt. The weapons themselves contain metals and rare minerals that are usually extracted from the lands of local people, against their will and by force of arms. The mining devastates the livelihoods of these people, pollutes their drinking water and soils, devastates their forests, leading to eco-system failure and biodiversity loss. This not only causes climate change in itself but also impoverishes once self-reliant people.

Climate change is a key factor driving the refugee crisis, both from food shortages and climate-induced conflicts as people fight for scarce resources. As the climate crisis worsens, we can see the increasing tension leading to more wars. The war in Ukraine reminds us all how close to a nuclear catastrophe we are, not only from nuclear warheads but also from the bombing of nuclear power stations.

As long as countries continue to prepare for and resort to war as a means of solving conflict, we will not be able to address climate change. To avert catastrophe, we demand that the government reduce international tensions, avoid war as a method of resolving conflict, end the arms trade, eliminate nuclear weapons, dramatically reduce military spending and redirect resources to address the threat of climate catastrophe that faces all life on earth.

Please join us in London on 21st April and contribute to the discussions on the streets as we present our demands to Parliament with our massive but peaceful presence.

Find out more: www.xrpeace.org/the-big-one/.
What’s on: For a full, updated list of events, see cnduk.org/events/

Faringdon Peace Group meeting 5 April 7:30pm, online.
■ Contact steve.jenny@hotmail.com

‘The Mistake’ – play by Michael Mears 18-22 April
Arcola Theatre, 24 Ashwin Street, London E8 3DL.
■ Contact information@cnduk.org

Abingdon Peace Group meeting 18 April 8pm, online.
■ Contact abingdonpeace@gmail.com

Peace and Planet: CND at The Big One 21 April-24 April
■ Contact information@cnduk.org

100% Renewable UK seminar 22 April 9:30am-5pm
Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London.
■ Contact information@cnduk.org

CND groups workshop: lobbying your MP 9 May
7pm, online.
■ Contact parliamentary@cnduk.org

Free Palestine – London demonstration 13 May
12 noon, BBC Portland Place, London W1A 1AA
■ Contact information@cnduk.org

Stop US nukes coming to Lakenheath! – demonstration 20 May
1pm-4pm, RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk
■ Contact information@cnduk.org

Stop US nukes coming to Lakenheath!
20 May 2023
Join us for rally and entertainment
1pm-3pm, RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk
Visit www.cnduk.org for more information, including travel options to the base.

Meet the staff

This month: Kate Hudson, General Secretary

Being General Secretary is a full-on job! Right now it’s 24/7 – with this terrible war on Ukraine, and the increasing risk of nuclear war. At this time our international links are crucial, and working to build solidarity with peace movements in Ukraine, Russia and internationally, is vital.

My role is to oversee and develop our work in whatever political context we are facing – to raise our campaigning priorities and advance the cause of nuclear disarmament at every opportunity.

Usually the public face of CND, I also manage the staff in the national office, have final sight of all our output, and keep in close touch with the elected officers. Never a dull moment!

Opinions expressed by authors in online Campaign are their own, and do not necessarily reflect the policies of CND.