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Ukraine: world heads toward 'a wider war'

There is no doubt that the sending of main battle tanks to Ukraine by several western nations threatens a major escalation in the war.

Media commentators were quick to point up the significance.

“Sending tanks to Ukraine makes one thing clear: This is now a western war against Russia,” wrote *The Guardian's* Martin Kettle.

“NATO tanks mean war aim is now to get rid of Putin,” said Patrick Cockburn in *The 'i'*.

Meanwhile UN Secretary-General António Guterres addressing the General Assembly was in no doubt as to the gravity of the situation warning that the world was now heading towards “a wider war ... with its eyes wide open.”

US President Joe Biden insisted that the tanks were not an offensive threat to Russia but the fact that he had felt it necessary to say this in the same breath as announcing the decision proves how dangerous this move is. Tanks are offensive weapons. They are also the thin end of an armaments wedge.

Because, guess what? Now that President Zelensky is getting his tank wish list fulfilled he's adding to it.

The *FT* and *The Times* were quick to note that Kyiv immediately began demanding fighter aircraft. Zelensky then made this crystal clear in his trip to London and Brussels. The *FT* also noted the unbridled enthusiasm with which arms manufacturer Lockheed

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STOP PRESS: Chinese peace move

As this edition of *KP News* went to press China was poised to launch a peace initiative aimed at ending the war in Ukraine. What a contrast with the attitude of the US and the UK who have already targeted China for the next major world conflict whether or not peace has been secured in eastern Europe.

See also Chinese balloon Page 7

Homes in Kyiv. Credit: State Emergency Service of Ukraine



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Ukraine: world heads towards 'a wider war'

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Martin announced, the morning after the American tanks decision, that it was ready to 'ramp up' production of its F16 fighters. These would not be sent directly to Ukraine but would be ready to replace those sent by various nations if the decision were taken. What a nice little (er, big) earner. F16 fighters come with a price tag as high as \$63 million a throw.

Poland was quick to make positive noises about supplying F16s. Then Biden, again, felt it necessary to say that the US would not be doing so.

Britain's defence secretary Ben Wallace then commented: "I think what we know about all these demands is that ... the initial response is no and it ends up being yes."

Since that response further news coverage suggests that the UK was warming to the idea.

The French meanwhile have already made it clear that "nothing is excluded in principle" but with President Macron commenting that any delivery of French jets to Ukraine would have to "not be escalatory" which is clearly nonsensical. Once the jets are there their use by Ukrainian pilots is not going to be determined by the Elysée Palace. And Kyiv's desires do not stop at tanks and jets. Another, largely unnoticed story on *The Daily Telegraph* gave a further insight into the Zelensky shopping list.

"We need missiles as well as tanks, says Kyiv" ran the headline.

The story goes on: "Ukraine said last night it expects the west will send long-range missiles capable of striking almost 200 miles behind lines" to attack Russian supply networks and ammunition depots.

Targets within Russia

So, there is a clear scenario for NATO supplied weaponry being used to attack military targets within Russia's borders.

While armchair generals and newsroom strategists love to pontificate about what should be done next (covering everything except a peace initiative!) endless charts appear showing the relative statistics of different weapons (I now know that a British Challenger 2 tank weighs 75 tonnes and an American Abrams M1 gulps fuel at the rate of three gallons to the mile!). But hardly

anybody in the mainstream UK media or the political establishment has uttered a syllable about the ever-increasing risk of starting World War Three.

An exception is Simon Jenkins in *The Guardian*. "... as in all wars, sooner or later some deal must be reached on the basis of some existing balance of power," he wrote, adding, "That is what should dominate the debate over Zelensky's request for new planes." Jets could not be provided with trained Ukrainian pilots in time to prevent Russia's expected spring offensive. So, what next, a Ukrainian call for them to be flown by NATO pilots?

And what would Putin's response be? Oh, he won't resort to nuclear weapons, commentators, blithely assert.

Let's pray that they're right about Putin once his military is being attacked inside Mother Russia herself and he is losing the illegal and barbaric war he started. Let's pray they are correct, because if they are not then there won't be any historians around to publish the accurate account of what actually happened.

Phillip Cooper

D'oh - it's a warning you idiot!

A rather ridiculous article appeared in *The 'i'* newspaper in late January. The organ devoted an entire page to the latest advance of the Doomsday Clock. But that's where the positive coverage came to an abrupt end. The article was headed 'Time is up for the Doomsday Clock' with the sub-heading 'The Armageddon countdown makes no sense, it is unscientific.' The article was penned by one Stuart Ritchie, a 'Scottish psychologist and science communicator' who commented with evident disbelief that "we're being told that now is a more dangerous time for humanity than at any time during the Cold war - more dangerous than the Cuban Missile Crisis ...". He then rattled on about "inconsistency" because the focus of the Clock now includes existential climate change as well as nuclear Armageddon. "Any scientist will tell you, if you change your methods halfway through a study, your results will no longer make sense," he opined. He then accused the Bulletin of Atomic Scientist, who maintain the Clock of being, not scientists who work to

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“keep their measures consistent and interpretable”, but being “activists, willing to say outrageous things to grab publicity for a cause.”

That ‘cause’ being to prevent the end of the world of course!

So just who are the scientists behind these “cry-wolf announcements” that so annoy psychologist Dr. Ritchie?

The Board of Sponsors of the Bulletin currently includes ten Nobel Laureates. Some 40 Laureates have supported the Board’s work over the years. The founder of the organisation in 1948 – who knew a thing or two about nuclear physics – was Albert Einstein. The organisation’s first chair – who also had a track record on the subject – was Robert Oppenheimer.

Misses the point

Dr Richie misses the point that the Doomsday Clock – which since January has been moved to 90 seconds to midnight – its closest ever position, is not, nor has it ever been, the result of scientific experimentation. Those who maintain the Clock readily describe it as a metaphor, “a symbol that represents the likelihood of human made global catastrophe.” It is the standing of those who support the Clock that add credence to the warnings issued.

Dr Ritchie ends his polemical rant by stating “It’s time to stop the clock.” If it does ever stop the cause will have been the global catastrophe that it has been warning against!

Remember Yemen

The understandable world-wide coverage of the destruction and loss of life in Ukraine because of Russia’s illegal invasion has had the effect of diverting attention from the plight of Yemen where 24million people are in dire need of humanitarian aid and 1million affected by cholera and the risk of famine. The UN reports that its target of \$4.2billion in aid for Yemen was only 57% achieved during 2022 while the Ukraine Appeal for \$4.3billion achieved 80% success.

Meanwhile the UK and the US continue to supply Saudi Arabia with the weapons to inflict ever more death and suffering on the Yemeni population.

Army told to stand up straight and get into line

The NHS is not the only public service that has been starved of funds till they have reached breaking point over the past 13 years of Conservative rule. The same is true of the armed forces, and the American have noticed.

Sky News reported in late January that a senior US general had told UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace that the British Army was no longer regarded as a ‘top level fighting force’.

And the Pentagon wants to see more money poured into armaments and recruitment because, in the words of unnamed defence sources ‘it’s an entire service unable to protect the UK and our allies for a decade.’

Added to this embarrassment was Germany saying Britain was not up to taking over responsibility for providing NATO’s rapid reaction force.

Set these comments against Boris Johnson’s grandiloquent promises, both as prime minister and now a back-bencher, to give Ukraine president Zelensky whatever he wants to oppose the invading Russians. Set this also against any of the past five prime ministers going on about ‘global Britain’, ‘punching above our weight’, and sending aircraft carriers to the far east to worry the Chinese etc.

Perhaps this really points to one thing. Britain has not been the world power it once was since the end of the Second World War and has become less and less significant, not least because of Brexit. The fact that Tory politicians (and some Labour ones) and the Tory media haven’t got the message is unsurprising given the mutually reinforcing echo chamber that they all inhabit.

Echo chamber

That echo chamber is currently unhappy with Rishi Sunak, the latest to inhabit the role of “wartime prime minister”. “The PM’s wartime approach is currently to cut the army, hollow it out further by gifting equipment to Ukraine and with no plans to replace the weapons for five to seven years,” a defence source said.

Will they ever learn? Of course not. We can expect an uplift in defence spending – Tory MPs and right-wing media are clamouring for this - because investors make money out of more armaments. And you can’t make more money out of paying nurses, ambulance crews, teachers, and train drivers a decent wage so they can do their jobs properly and live with dignity.

Inspiring attitude at Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Carol Clisby was at the organisation's AGM

Rosemary, Mary and I attended the AGM on 4th February at Conway Hall. There were some absences due to the on-going rail problems, but the atmosphere was inspiring and encouraging, in spite of the truly horrendous situation at present in Palestine - referred to by many of the speakers.

The current Israeli Government was recognised as being the worst ever, but it was pointed out, that although large numbers of Israelis have been on the streets protesting, in particular about the planned changes to the Supreme Court, they are not protesting about the plight of the Palestinians.

BDS movement co-founder Omar Barghouti spoke movingly about our moral duty to resist, and argue against, the portrayal of Palestinians around the world, as either incompetents or terrorists or both. This enables governments to ignore their legitimate aims and continue to support Israel with weapons and money. Reference was made to the hypocrisy of many of the world's leaders, in contrasting their treatment of Ukrainian and Palestinian refugees. In contrast to these leaders, many of the world's people, in America and many other countries, fully support the Palestinian struggle.

With reference to anti-semitism - again many of the world's leaders appear to have accepted the IHRA definition of this, effectively, any criticism of Israel is anti-semitic - in reality any criticism of the Israeli Zionist project should be recognised as fully justified.

Sabotaging BDS

At present many governments are trying to sabotage the BDS movement, recognising what a big weapon it is in the hands of protesters. These efforts must be resisted. There was some discussion about whether PSC should focus more on items which are OK to buy and those which are not, as well as focusing on specific companies, i.e. Barclays Bank, Puma, JCB etc. This change was not agreed to by the executive. There was also some discussion about the PSC campaign to persuade Local Government Pension Schemes to divest from all companies involved in the arms trade with Israel. It was

suggested that this campaign should be extended to include all companies committing human rights abuses in Israel.

Another interesting discussion took place concerning the charitable status of the Jewish National Fund and the attempts made to have this status abolished. The Charity Commission produced the argument that this could not be done, as the charitable status had been awarded with reference to what the JNF had been set up to do, not what it actually was doing!! Perhaps the Charity Commission should be abolished, or at the very least, redesigned?

Media attitude

Media representation was also attacked---in particular by Sami Abou Shahadeh who spoke from Jaffa. He referred to the killing of the *Al Jazeera* journalist, Shireen Abu Akleh, who was reporting on an Israeli military raid on a refugee camp in Jenin in the northern occupied West Bank, an exception to the general pro-Israel reporting of most of the mass media. Shireen was killed by the Israeli military but the Israeli Government has stated categorically that no Israeli citizen will be investigated in connection to her killing.

A rousing speech by the Palestinian ambassador to the UK, Dr Husam Zomlot concluded the AGM.

Nuclear blackmail not just one way

This month marks the 20th anniversary of the Iraq War so let's just remind ourselves that Putin is not the only world leader to threaten nuclear Armageddon against a non-nuclear armed state. Many US and British nuclear threats were made against Iraq during the run-up to the US-UK invasion in 2003. For example, on 20 March 2002, British defence secretary Geoff Hoon told the House of Commons select committee on defence that states like Iraq "can be absolutely confident that in the right conditions we would be willing to use our nuclear weapons".

See 'How the West Paved the Way for Putin's Nuclear Threats Over Ukraine' by Milan Rai.

www.tinyurl.com/westernnuclearthreats

Foul play at Rugby stadium

Members of KPC/CND joined with colleagues from Richmond and Kingston PSC in their campaign against the use of Twickenham Rugby Stadium as a venue for an armaments fair in January. “Whether it was signing group letters, circulating information on your social media, helping with leafleting in nearby streets and at the Saturday street stalls, or spending hours in the cold at the stadium protest, every contribution was much appreciated. Without your members' assistance the campaign could never have been so impactful,” PSC wrote to KPC following the event.

The campaign activities and achievements were as follows:

- leafleted hundreds of the stadium's neighbours;
- wrote to all 54 London Borough of Richmond upon Thames councillors expressing disgust;
- wrote to the board of the Rugby Football Union;
- held two stalls in Twickenham, handing out hundreds of leaflets (nearly 4500 between the stalls and local homes);
- initiated 3000 emails to the RFU;
- mobilised about a dozen other local groups, including CAAT, KPC/CND, Richmond & Hounslow Amnesty, Stop the War, Richmond XR, Kingston Quakers, Jews for Justice for Palestinians, Camden, Merton and Lambeth & Wandsworth PSC (14 signed the letters to the RFU and the Council)



Scenes from outside Twickers



- held a sold out film screening: *The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade*, and Q&A with Andrew Feinstein;
- obtained 200 signatures on a physical petition that is to be continued;
- held the protest outside the stadium with probably double the attendees of last year.

OBITUARY Val Glynn

Val Glynn, who had been a member of Kingston Peace Council/CND, and was a successful guitar and music teacher despite having had no formal musical training, has died at the age of 92. *The Guardian* carried her obituary in December. It noted that she only learned to play the guitar herself in her early 30s, yet remarkably, within just a few years, in 1966, she began teaching guitar as an accompaniment to folk-singing at Richmond Adult College. Born in Kensington and Chelsea, Val was the daughter of Fielding West, a Labour MP for the London constituencies of North Kensington and then North Hammersmith. In 1951 she was married to Kenneth Glynn, a trade union general secretary, with whom she had five sons (including two pairs of twins). During this time Val and Kenneth were active in the local and national Labour party and Kenneth also became a member of KPC/CND.

OBITUARY Neil Calvert

Memories of the brief period when the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames became a Nuclear Free Zone were revived recently following the death of former local councillor Neil Calvert.

Dr Calvert, who died shortly before Christmas at the age of 78, was leader of the small group of Labour councillors who held the balance of power on Kingston Council following the borough elections of 1986. That election returned equal numbers of Conservative and, what were then, Liberal/SDP members. Four Labour councillors were also returned, including Dr Calvert, representing Norbiton, and (your editor for this edition of *Kingston Peace News*) Phil Cooper, representing Tolworth West.

Holding the balance of power meant that no council policy could be agreed without the approval of the Labour members who set about the task of reversing various plans by the other two parties to cut services.

This was also a time when nuclear-related issues were achieving widespread national coverage thanks to the ongoing Greenham Common Peace Camp and related protests.

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities movement was well underway since Manchester City Council had announced that it was the first city in the world to be declared a Nuclear Free Zone in November 1980.

Kingston Borough joined this illustrious grouping in 1986 although the victory, along with the other policies tempering the planned excesses of both the two major parties, was to be short lived. Bye-elections lost by the Liberal/SDP resulted in the authority going back to Tory control.

There are still more than 50 councils in the UK that are members of the Nuclear Free Local Authorities organisation.

Fear and hope in the nuclear nightmare

Too vast, too complicated, beyond human comprehension. This is where we, collective humanity, have come to on the menacing existence of nuclear weapons - a position where actually we block it out. Disarmament campaigners are not immune from this effect, even while we doggedly go on, trying to wake up governments and the population at large to awareness of the danger. 'Nuclear Winter', what was that? Just one of the doomsday consequences of nuclear war, carefully researched and publicised in the 1980s, subject of ongoing research, but now almost ignored or forgotten.

What hope in all this?

I recently found myself in a very crowded lecture room at UCL. Significantly, most participants in this lecture and subsequent gathering were at least 50 years younger than me. Using clear graphics and by reference to latest research Paul Ingram and colleagues from the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk, University of Cambridge, clearly explained the various scenarios for nuclear winter and their effects on humanity. The outlook is grim; even a limited South Asian nuclear war could put so much ash into the earth's

atmosphere as to cause global crop failures for many years. Along with all the other consequences, we, humanity, would be starving, two billion deaths being not unlikely.

Waking up

Paul explained that in working with policy makers, scientific credibility is crucial and there are various ongoing scientific studies. Thankfully we find that governments are waking up to nuclear risk – risk to all aspects of infrastructure. This is prompted by the real risk of escalation of the war in Ukraine to a tactical and then possibly global nuclear war. Paul then briefly reviewed the contentious and tortuously complex subject of deterrence theory. In general it is all about what your opponent needs to believe in order for deterrence to be effective; that and the effects of various situations on the stability of the 'balance of terror'.

A critical factor in the current situation is the deployment and threatened use of tactical nuclear weapons. There can be no tactical response to this. Inhibition of use of tactical nuclear weapons depends on credibility of

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intention of escalation to a strategic response. So right now, unless all the players are rational and also given ample scope for an unhumiliating compromise, we are in a very dangerous situation. Added to all this there is the risk we run of scaring people into hopelessness. I was not able to stay for the subsequent discussion, but I left with some hope. How could I feel encouraged? Probably because, right there, I could see young people waking up to the problem. And deterrence policy, that might have seemed to some of us a logical approach to international security in the wake of WW2, now appears not only immoral but criminally stupid. We survived the consequential Cold War; now we must stay awake and get the disarmament job done. Implementation of the UN Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) could enable humanity to get on and deal with the other real and pressing threats that we face.

Martin Birdseye

The Day The Balloon Went Up

Media coverage of the recent furor over China's 'spy' balloon over the United States seems to have neglected to mention a rather salient fact. Every nation with the technology to operate spy satellites has them over every other country it wishes to observe.

So, China has spy satellites that pass over the US every day and vice versa. That being the case why the hoo-ha over a balloon, technology that is so 19th century? Could it be more to do with the continual need within the US to paint China as an enemy, to find an excuse to cancel a long-planned visit to Beijing by American Secretary of State Antony Blinken?

Voices within the US are already foreseeing a war with China over Taiwan. CIA Director William Burns has said he knows Chinese President Xi is ready to invade the island by 2027 while one top US Air Force general has already predicted that the US and China will be at war in 2025. The Pentagon was quick to distance itself from those comments.

In the same way that Britain has never adjusted to the loss of Empire, the US cannot accept that with the development of China as a major economic competitor we are no longer living in a US dominated unipolar world.

So while the US military continues to shoot down various other objects launched by scientific investigators and hobbyists let us just mull over whose global actions might be considered the more aggressive.

David Vine is the author of a book *Base Nation* that charts the development of the US world-wide network of military bases.

He shows that America has just added four new military bases on the Philippines adding to the five already there so as to escalate the military pressure on China which is already encircled by US bases.

There are currently 313 American bases in East Asia which the Chinese view as a threat aimed primarily at them. The US is also actively increasing the militarisation of Japan and Australia with the same intention.

The US has a total of 759 military bases around the globe in 80 countries. China maintains a total of eight overseas bases, none of which constitute a threat to the United States.

Vine comments, "the US should be building embassies not more bases."

Trump the nuclear nutcase

The once, and hopefully not to be future, United States president Donald Trump wanted to nuke North Korea and blame somebody else for the attack.

Not only that but when Russia launched its illegal invasion of Ukraine last February Trump told a room full of Republican politicians that the US should "put the Chinese flag" on a "bunch of military planes" and "bomb the sh*t" out of Russia.

The revelations come in a new book *Donald Trump v. The United States: Inside the Struggle to Stop a President*, by two-time Pulitzer prize winning *New York Times* journalist Michael Schmidt.

He reveals that during much of 2017 while occupying the White House, Trump obsessed over attacking North Korea with nuclear weapons and then announcing "it wasn't us."

It was down to the president's then chief of staff, former Marine Corps General John Kelly to explain to a man with no knowledge or interest in geopolitical matters why this would be a bad idea. The argument about how many people might die had no impact on Trump, Schmidt writes, nor did the threat of the economic consequences.

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Peace Council/CND

Advance Notice

KPC/CND will hold a
garage sale in Lower Ham
Road, Kingston, on April 10
Offers of help please to
Maggie
contact: maggie@galdor.co.uk

Our regular stall in Kingston
Market Place is held on the
first and third Saturday of
each month. If you wish to
help please contact Angie
Cooper on 0208 399 5537 or
angecooper47@hotmail.com

Dates for your Diary

March 2023

Saturday 4th March

Tree planting in memory of Bruce Kent. A tree will be planted in memory of Bruce Kent at 2pm in Finsbury Park in north London. This was Bruce's local park. He was very active in his local community as well as having a world-wide impact. The tree has been grown by Jeremy Corbyn. He will be there to assist in planting the tree. Come in to the park via the Endymion Road entrance and walk straight ahead. Organised by CND.

Thursday 9th March

The War We Nearly Stopped. The British anti-war movement needs to realise how close it came to detaching Britain from the 2003 invasion of Iraq. UN weapons inspectors were about to throw a wrench into US war plans – we came close to giving them the time they needed. 7pm online. Milan Rai, Editor, *Peace News*. Register on Zoom: <https://www.tinyurl.com/peacenews3959>

Friday 17th March

Iraq 20 years on, with Paul Rogers. Britain's best-known peace researcher, Prof Paul Rogers, has kept a careful eye on Iraq since the summer of 2002, when he predicted a US-led war against the Saddam Hussein regime. In the years since, he has documented the brutal air wars, the harshness of occupation, and the rise of the 'Islamic State' terror network. Organised by *Peace News*. 7.30pm online. Register on Zoom: <https://www.tinyurl.com/peacenews3960>

Monday 20th March

Stop the War Coalition will hold an event marking the anniversary of the start of the Iraq War. Venue: The Swiss Church, 79 Endell St, London WC2H 9DY. Details to be confirmed.

Wednesday 22nd March

Right to Boycott – Parliamentary Lobby. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign. As the government attempts to push through a dangerous "anti-boycott bill", we urgently need your voice. The new legislation will specifically target public bodies (including local councils), with an aim of preventing them from cutting ties with companies involved in human rights abuses in Palestine or elsewhere. This could easily impact on any campaign using boycotts as a tool for achieving climate or social justice. Register to lobby your MP: <https://palestinecampaign.eaction.online/RTBLobbyDay2023>

Saturday 25th March

World Demilitarisation. A conference organised by Humanity United for Universal Demilitarisation (HUFUD). Speakers include: HUFUD Africa Director Bruno Ndagga, who will talk about the impact of HUFUD activities in creating an arms-free Africa and pacifying the continent; Rebecca Johnson of XRPeace; More international speakers to be announced. Free. 9am to 5pm. Birkbeck, University of London, Malet Street, Bloomsbury, WC1E 7HX. Register now at <https://tinyurl.com/yz2xpz9y>

Thursday 30th March

Iraq: lessons from War and Sanctions. Former UN assistant Secretary General Hans von Sponeck. Organised by *Peace News*. 7.30pm. Online. The effect of 13 years of sanctions that followed the illegal war. Register on Zoom: www.tinyurl.com/peacenews4002