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**The Issue of Identity: Great Britain's Need  
for Nuclear Re-armament – The Case of  
Trident Missiles**

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## **Bibliografický záznam**

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## **Anotácia**

Táto diplomová práca sa zaoberá účinkami konkrétnych aspektov identity Veľkej Británie na jej rozhodnutie modernizovať systém Trident, a teda udržať si status štátu disponujúceho jadrovými zbraňami. Z teoretického hľadiska práca operuje s konceptom sociálne konštruovanej identity Veľkej Británie, ktorá vytvára určité súbory vnímania a myslenia, ktoré sa následne odrážajú v procese vytvárania politiky a tým pádom formujú jej výsledky. V prípade Veľkej Británie práve neustála reprodukcia jej identity napojenej na ideu silného aktéra formuje záujem Británie a jej snahu o modernizáciu svojho jadrového arzenálu. Tento koncept je následne zahrnutý do oficiálneho rámca a reflektovaný v Britských strategických dokumentoch a v legitimačných prístupoch. Sociálna konštrukcia reality zaisťuje koncept identity Británie a jej jadrových zbraní pomocou sformovania spoločných aj opozičných identít. Tento mechanizmus teda konštituuje význam Britského jadrového arzenálu. S ohľadom na tento princíp sa analýza venuje aj úlohe externých aktérov – Spojených Štátov, Francúzska a NATO – na proces vytvárania a reprodukcie identity Veľkej Británie s ohľadom na jej politiku jadrových zbraní. Záverečná časť sa znovu spája teoretický rámec s výsledkami analýzy a ponúka náhľad na základy postojov dotýkajúcich sa jadrových zbraní, ktoré vychádzajú z Britskej identity; a tiež ponúka krátku analýzu verejného diskurzívneho rámca s ohľadom na tematiku modernizácie systému Trident.

## **Annotation**

This thesis is dealing with the effects of particular aspects of the British identity on the decision to modernize the Trident system, and therefore to maintain the United Kingdom's status of a nuclear weapon state. From theoretical point of view, the thesis operates with the notion of socially constructed identity of Great Britain that constitutes the perceptions and mindsets, which subsequently portray onto the contours of nuclear policy-making process and therefore shape its outcomes. It is argued that in this case, the constant reproduction of identity of Great Britain as a strong pivotal power is shaping the Britain's interest of pursuing the modernization of its nuclear deterrent. This concept is, in turn, incorporated into the official framework and reflected in British strategic documents and Government legitimizing postures. The socially constructed reality secures both Britain's identity and British nuclear weapons through the creation of common and opposing identities. This mechanism therefore functions as a constitutive principle of the meaning of Britain's nuclear deterrent. With this regard, the analysis also touches on the role of the external actors – the United States, France and NATO – in the process of constitution and reproduction of Britain's identity with relevance to nuclear weapons policy. The concluding part reconnects the theoretical framework with analytical findings and offers an insight onto the basis of British identity posture vis-à-vis nuclear weapons; and also provides a brief assessment of public discursive framework on the issue of modernization of Trident.

## **Klíčové slová**

Velká Británie, jaderní politika, jaderné zbraně, Trident, kritický konstruktivismus

## **Keywords**

Great Britain, nuclear policy, nuclear weapons, Trident, critical constructivism

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## **Poděkování**

Rada by som poďakovala svojmu konzultantovi, docentovi Nikola Hynkovi, za cenné rady a poznámky k diplomovej práci a rodine za podporu počas môjho doterajšieho štúdia

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## INTRODUCTION

Almost 70 years have passed since the first nuclear weapons were launched to ensure the decisive victory on the side of Allied forces in World War II. Since then, a significant amount of literature has been published that devoted the attention to the topic of nuclear weapons – be it technical aspects, nuclear policies of the states, strategic implications, arms control and disarmament etc. Still, however significant the amount of published works was, the scope of the analysis in terms of analyzed subjects remained, for almost half of the century, rather limited. Dominated by the US and Soviet nuclear policies and the implications of their power balancing, other states such as France, Britain and China were only on the periphery of scholars' attention. This could be caused by the fact that there was, and still is, a clear quantitative dominance on the side of both Russia and the United States, which, on a global scale, make other states' arsenals rather insignificant. The other possible contribution could be the fact that a bipolar structure of international relations represented clearly a dominant framework for thinking about studying and analysis of what is perceived as relevant for political reality. Disintegration of that structure, however, brought the opportunity to transcend the old way of thinking about what is considered significant, in terms of relevance for both the international relations as a practice and as an academic discipline.

Hence, during the first decades of the existence of nuclear weapons, the dominant academic discourse has evolved around the spectrum of rationalist theories (mainly realism) connected with the strategic implications derived from the (non)possession of nuclear weapons. These theories have mostly revolved around the theory of deterrence stemming from game theory and analyses of its subsequent effects on behavior of the actors of the international politics. However, at the end of the 1980's, the emergence of a so-called sociological turn in the international relations theory brought a new light of opportunity into very stiff and close-minded tradition of rationalist-only analysis of security, and nuclear weapons-related issues were no exception to that trend. The inclusion of the sociological approaches into the analytical toolkit opened up a new path for qualitatively different modes of analysis. Suddenly, previously omitted or intentionally neglected or ignored topics and/or aspects were brought to the centre of attention. Moreover, even previously taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of international relations were undermined and re-

evaluated through the lenses of newly emerged theories such as that of critical theory project and constructivism.

This thesis, therefore, attempts to contribute to the body of works that challenge the study of nuclear weapons issues concerning both the objects of analysis and theoretical approach used in order to study them. First, by analyzing certain aspects of British nuclear policy, the author is hoping to contribute to the growing body of works devoted to cases of previously marginal interest. The aim however, is not to provide any universal and definite picture of Britain's nuclear policy as it is, since the complexity of the topic is far above the extent of this thesis. Furthermore, the author also does not attempt to present any universal or definite answers to issues stemming from Britain's nuclear policy, but to rather shed some light on the processes behind its making. Second, precisely by trying to deconstruct the motives behind nuclear policies of a state (in this case of Great Britain) and their respective effects on their practices, it is possible to get better insight into how the construction of motives or identities within those policies shape the picture of reality and subsequently the political outcomes, and thus can provide us with a better roadmap for understanding social processes in politics in general and social processes behind nuclear policies in particular.

To delimitate the topic further, this thesis is particularly concerned with the analysis of quite a recent phenomena within Great Britain's nuclear policy. The agenda, that has been keeping the attention of British policy makers during recent years, has been connected to modernization of weaponry systems with all kind of political, financial and security aspects that need to be taken into count. What is not so obvious, and definitely not so stressed within the official framework, are actual policies or better said processes and mindsets behind those policies. What makes Great Britain so eager to continue on modernizing its nuclear weaponry and what makes it so important? These kind of questions has been usually set within security analytical framework, but for purpose of this thesis it is important to gain a different perspective - by looking on the connection between state's identity and pursue of specific nuclear weapon policy, in this case policy of modernizing Trident nuclear weapon systems.

The research questions therefore deal specifically with some of the aspects that are assumed to shape the construction of nuclear policy of Great Britain. As mentioned above, there are certain practical limitations as to what can be enclosed into the framework of analysis. However, by selecting specific set of aspects of Britain's

identity that are considered crucial for understanding the nature of Britain's nuclear policy, we can gain a fairly comprehensive picture of what is happening behind the curtains of mentalities and identities that are part of the processes of policy formation and promotion. The decision to include certain aspects while omitting others does not intend to suggest that there are not other aspects of Britain's identity that have some effect on its outcome. Nor to suggest that only selected aspects can explain why certain policies are pursued while others are not. Nevertheless, the aim of subsequent analysis is to show that in particular, those aspects chosen for an analysis are vital for understanding the connection between identity and nuclear policy of Great Britain.

Through the first part of an analysis, the author will try to clarify *how the construction and reproduction of Britain's identity (mostly focused on preserving important place and status within world politics) shapes its nuclear weapons policy and related practices*. In this matter, the next chapter will deal with the issue of the meaning of relationship both with France and the US for Britain's identity, as well as membership in the NATO structure. The hypothesis is derived from the concept of socially constructed reality. It is assumed that constructed notion of British identity connected to preserving world power status, along with the combination of special relations with US (as one of the leading power) and Britain's need to preserve their status as undeniable part of their state's identity, is creating strong pressure towards retaining and modernizing its nuclear capabilities. This notion of great power and responsibility as well as the perception of nuclear weapons as a matter of vital interest contributes to the recreation and reproduction of the picture of a strong Britain, which, however, stands in a discrepancy with actual state of Britain's prestige and a role that it has as a world power both from the global stance and the eyes of the public. The last part of an analysis deals with a theoretical assessment of analytical findings and will also partially mention the role of wider public opinion and the potentiality of its contribution to the collective identity formation and effect on British nuclear policy with regard to a discrepancy between the public and official level of understanding of Britain's nuclear weapons program and its future.

# THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

## ***Basic tenets of constructivist analyzing***

The thesis is both theoretically and methodologically based on the analytical approach derived from the theory of social and critical constructivism. Both approaches focus their attention on the study of social facts, i.e. the portions of the world that are treated as if they were real by social agents.<sup>1</sup> The basic principles of constructivism revolve around three aspects – the importance of non-material elements in shaping the behavior of actors, the intersubjective nature of social reality and co-constitutive effects of agents and structures. Constructivists in general put much of their emphasis on the structural elements; however, they assume that structural frameworks are based on different ontological principles than those considered by proponents of traditional approaches. Wendt argues, that physical structures such as material resources are irrelevant without meaning that they have for actors. As such, ‘material resources only acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded.’<sup>2</sup> By adding the meaning to seemingly objective and basically socially isolated material structures, ideas create a qualitatively different, intersubjective level of approaching brute material forces by making them the products of social interaction. Ideas, therefore, bring structural quality and value to material basis in the first place.

Constructivism also stress the effect of norms and other ideational structures on the environment<sup>3</sup>, their effect on the nature of both actors and structures, on the production of collective knowledge and on the social practices. Non-material attributes, therefore, are considered vital for understanding of functioning of the structures and processes that occur within social environment. Another key postulate is based on the intersubjective nature of reality. According to Onuf, ‘any coherent set of social relations is also, and always, a process in which agents and their worlds constitute each other’<sup>4</sup>. Kratochwil also acknowledges the both ontological and epistemological role of intersubjectivity through the analysis of theory of regimes. He considers regimes to be inherently intersubjective and calls for epistemological approach that will reflect their

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<sup>1</sup> POULIOT, Vincent. The essence of constructivism. p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> WENDT, Alexander. *Social theory of international politics*. p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> See for example KATZENSTEIN, Peter J, (ed). *The Culture of national security: norms and identity in world politics*.

intersubjectivity.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, stemming from the inherent social nature of human beings, social relations account for agents' construction and conversely, agents constitute the world 'from raw materials that nature provides, by doing what we do with each other and saying what we say to each other'.<sup>6</sup> This means that separate existence of one or other element is not possible, agents and their structures have co-constitutive effect.<sup>7</sup>

Non-material structures such as norms and institutions do not only constitute the agents, they also shape their identities and interests, which, in turn, have effect on their behavior. They attach certain meanings to actors' identities and consequently shape the way in which actors think about themselves and their preferences. They create a framework of options for actors; they constitute the images of "how they think they should act, what perceived limitations on their actions are, and what strategies they can imagine, let alone entertain, to achieve their objectives."<sup>8</sup> Katzenstein, for example, studied the effect of norms on both identities and environment. He claimed that "the state identity is shaped through norms suggesting appropriate behaviors, which, in turn, construct its particular interests."<sup>9</sup> Through his work on regimes, Kratochwil also dealt with the effect of norms on international politics. In his work, he stressed the importance of the analysis of context = through analysis of processes of deliberation and interpretation, through analysis of language.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Critical constructivism and the role of the language***

Contextual and discursive attributes therefore play an important part in uncovering of meanings. If we want to understand how particular structures such as identities have affected particular policies, we need to analyze them within proper contextual setting which is subjected to certain mindsets. Ideas such as norms are indeed responsible for a formation of identities and in turn interests. But their existence is

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<sup>4</sup> ONUF, Nicolas Greenwood. *Making sense, making worlds: constructivism in social theory and international relations*. p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> See KRATOCHWIL, Friedrich and RUGGIE, John Gerard. *International Organization: A State of the Art on an Art of the State*.

<sup>6</sup> ONUF, Nicolas Greenwood. *Making sense, making worlds: constructivism in social theory and international relations*. p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> More on the agent-structure problem see WENDT, Alexander. *Social theory of international politics*. pp. 139-192.

<sup>8</sup> BURCHILL, Scott. *Theories of international relations*. p. 218.

<sup>9</sup> CHO, Young Chul. *Conventional and Critical Constructivist Approaches to National Security: An Analytical Survey*. p. 59.

<sup>10</sup> ZEHFUSS, Maja. *Constructivism in international relations: the politics of reality*. p. 17.

dependent on the processes of repeated production and reproduction through social practices, on the processes of either their affirmation or challenging of the ideas that serve as their basis. As a result, both norms and identities are not rigid structures. Norms can be reinforced or challenged and overcome over time, and identities are also susceptible to similar effects – by being endorsed, replaced by other identities and thus become obsolete, or simply perish. The continuous fluctuation of these structures, therefore, indicates that in a constant process of their (re)making, their continuity or termination must be affected by some bigger framework.

What critical constructivism does is looking at those social constructs from the standpoint of the social and cultural frameworks, within which both norms and identities are (re)created as social facts. Critical constructivism, therefore, looks at social constructions within social and cultural environment and adds a dimension of critical analysis of these environments. Taylor, for example, points out that epistemological foundation of critical constructivism ‘addresses the socio-cultural contexts of knowledge construction and serves as a powerful referent for cultural reform’<sup>11</sup>. This suggests that study of so-called social reality necessarily happen in already created knowledge systems, that are, in their essence, already part of the social constructs that they try to recreate. A priori knowledge, as well as objective and value-neutral knowledge of social constructs such as norms and identities is therefore non-existent.

Critical constructivist analysis, as other approaches in IR, is still based on observation, however, in this case, ‘observation *is* interpretation [itself]: social reality is a web of intersubjective meanings, and meanings cannot be studied in any objective way’<sup>12</sup>. Everything is therefore subjected to the social and cultural realities in which social practices not only shape the reality, but are responsible for their constitution. Moreover, ‘the meanings and norms in these practices are not just in the minds of the actors but are out there in the practices themselves, practices which cannot be conceived as a set of individual actions, but which are essentially modes of social relations, of mutual actions’<sup>13</sup>. Focus is therefore on the meanings behind the language reflecting those practices, but also on their constitutive effects and contextual environment in which they are embedded. Ultimately, interpretation opens up a possibility for

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<sup>11</sup> TAYLOR, Peter Charles. Mythmaking and mythbreaking in the mathematics classroom. p. 151.

<sup>12</sup> POULIOT, Vincent. The essence of constructivism. p. 329-330

understanding perception and cognition of social reality that is at least partially separated from the observer, but not in the way that objective validity measures of natural sciences and rationalists require. In essence, we simply cannot escape the interpretive moment, since we are bound to end up within the trap of endless interpretive circle.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, with the critical constructivist analysis focusing on language, understanding and deciphering relationship between certain linguistic constructions and particular meanings attached to them is an essential part of the analytical process. In the centre of theory is the notion that meanings are defined through difference, by negative definition of what it's not rather than what it is. Jacques Derrida adopts this idea and expands it by claiming that meaning is rather dynamic in its nature, 'on the move'.<sup>15</sup> The dynamic character of the meaning makes it susceptible to change and therefore unstable. Derrida argues, that within Western thinking, this instability is secured through use of binary oppositions where the meaning of opposing terms is dependent on their mutual existence.<sup>16</sup> This points out to the process of negation in defining and securing the meaning, which became a basis for the deconstructive analysis. 'Deconstruction is a mode of thinking that takes the instability of meaning as its starting point in order to then trace attempts at securing it'<sup>17</sup> This analytical approach thus opened up a possibility for questioning the fixed meanings that were secured as 'real', as something that is 'obvious' and 'true' and trace the process of their securing. The category of 'truth' was also in the centre of attention of Michael Foucault. He was interested in the process of how certain meanings were established and reproduced as 'truth'. Foucault came up to the conclusion, that there is no such thing as a 'truth', only 'regimes of truth' that emerge over time as certain 'facts', although being a product of discourse.<sup>18</sup> Discourse, however, does not refer only to the language itself, but also 'as a series of practices, representations, and interpretations through which regimes of truth... are reproduced'<sup>19</sup>. Both Foucault and Derrida thus stressed the constitutive role that language in relation to reality, or to what is considered as such but at the same time

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<sup>13</sup> TAYLOR, Charles. *Interpretation and the Sciences of Man*. p. 27.

<sup>14</sup> PRICE, Richard and REUS-SMIT, Christian. *Dangerous Liasons? Critical international Theory and Constructivism*. p. 271.

<sup>15</sup> KRAUS, Keith and C WILLIAMS, Michael. *Critical security studies: concepts and cases*. p. 64.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> KRAUS, Keith and C WILLIAMS, Michael. *Critical security studies: concepts and cases*. p. 65

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

point out to the need to uncover meaning *behind* the linguistic structures and challenge their dominant positions within discourse.

### ***Critical constructivist project: Identities, interest and meaning***

With the application to the studying of international relations, the key is premise is to challenge the ‘fixed’ meaning of language structures that are behind reasoning for particular policies or behavioral outcomes. Within IR theories, critical scholars started to apply the theories of language on the analysis of ‘fixed’ meanings of international relations, and through the lenses of those meanings and binary oppositions started to question the stability of the structures of international politics.<sup>20</sup> The influence of post-structuralism can be seen in Walker’s groundbreaking work on the nature of International Relations and issue of identity<sup>21</sup> and Ashley’s work on critical social theory<sup>22</sup>. For example, Fierke in her book *Changing Games, Changing strategies*, analyses the process of the end of the Cold War from the perspective of the language of discourse of Russian and American elites and non-governmental (dissent) organizations and movements. Her theoretical foundation for analysis also draws from theory of the language as action<sup>23</sup> and deals with the question of interpretation of ‘objective’ phenomena, the role of meanings, metaphors and analogies (language games) in constituting the picture of objective reality.<sup>24</sup>

Relativity, therefore, plays an important part of the creation of the Self, since actors define their identities, and in turn interests, with regards to significant Others. Identities are what the actors are, interests, on the other hand, refer to what the actors want.<sup>25</sup> That does not mean that those two elements are separable. In order for the actor to know what he wants, he also needs to know who he is, i.e. to have an identity.<sup>26</sup> The co-dependency of identity and interest can be traced also in the process of reproduction of the identities of states. Not only those interests have effects on constituting identities, they also affect their reproduction. By interacting with each other ‘states are not only trying to get what they want, but trying to sustain the conceptions of Self and Other

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<sup>20</sup> KRAUS, Keith and C WILLIAMS, Michael. *Critical security studies: concepts and cases*. p. 67

<sup>21</sup> WALKER, R.B.J. *Inside/Outside: International Relations and Political Theory*.

<sup>22</sup> See Ashley: *The Geopolitics of Geopolitical space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of IR*.

<sup>23</sup> Notably Wittgenstein language games

<sup>24</sup> See FIERKE, Karin M. *Changing Games, Changing Strategies: Critical Investigations in Security*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid* p. 231

<sup>26</sup> WENDT, Alexander. *Social theory of international politics*. p. 231.



which generate those wants.’<sup>27</sup> Therefore, by pursuing certain policies, states can produce and reproduce their identities. In her work on national interest, Jutta Weldes denounces the realist notion of the national interest and promotes the need for the interpretative process that presupposes shared language.<sup>28</sup> She builds her theory of the process of constructing national interest on the creation of representations that in turn create objects including Self and Others with particular identity. These representations, consequently, create relations among the objects that can appear as quasi-causal arguments. Their importance lies in their ability to shape the perception of a rationality and desirability of action, to create a picture of what needs to be protected and what is a threat. Finally, precisely by populating the world with these objects and making them interrelated in the form of quasi-causal arguments, the national interest is *already* created and defined through that process.<sup>29</sup>

Hence, the relationship between constitution of the meaning, its attachment to the particular identity and subsequent creation of the interest, all of these aspects obviously affect the behavior in a certain way. This is particularly important when we think about the relationship between identities, interests and in turn, actions. Since we can usually observe only the latter phenomena, both identities and interests are subjects of an interpretive analyzing of both actions and meanings attached to those actions (in this case policies). In constructivist view, identity, as it is defined by Alexander Wendt, is ‘a property of intentional actors that generates motivational and behavioural dispositions’<sup>30</sup>, ‘a subjective, unit-level quality, rooted in actor’s self-understandings.’<sup>31</sup> Although identities have indeed subjective quality, they do not exist separately by itself, outside of the realm of social interaction. Their meaning also depends on other actors’ willingness to represent actor in the same way.<sup>32</sup> Wendt distinguishes four types of identities, but only two of them, role and collective, are inherently bound to the social environment. Collective identities are constantly redefining the boundaries of Self and Other so as to constitute a “common in-group identity” or “we-feeling”.<sup>33</sup> Identities are,

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid p. 316

<sup>28</sup> See WELDES, Jutta. *Constructing National Interest*.

<sup>29</sup> WELDES, Jutta. *Constructing National Interest*. p. 281-2

<sup>30</sup> WENDT, Alexander. *Social theory of international politics*. p. 224.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> WENDT, Alexander. *Social theory of international politics*. p. 338.

therefore, ‘always in process, always contested, always an accomplishment of practice’.<sup>34</sup>

Within the framework of critical constructivism, identity is clearly defined by difference, by what it is not<sup>35</sup>. Formation of identity is not a one-time event with a definite end, but rather a continuing process of constant definition and redefinition through practice. As Campbell points out, “identity is constituted in relation to difference”<sup>36</sup>, and ‘the constitution of identity is achieved through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an “inside” from an “outside”, a “self” from an “other”, a “domestic” from a “foreign”’<sup>37</sup>. As mentioned earlier, because there is an ongoing process of constant redefinition and reproduction of identities, their stability can be easily undermined and thus needs to be secured through binary oppositions. What does it mean for the realm of security? According to Weldes, since identity is defined through the process of exclusion, “insecurities, rather than being natural facts, are social and cultural productions. ...insecurity is itself the product of processes of identity construction in which the self and the other, or multiple others, are constituted”<sup>38</sup>. There is no difference between the subject, be it a state or an individual. Critical constructivists, therefore, argues that “identities themselves are to be explained to make sense of the cultural production of (in)securities, rather than treating them as explanatory variables affecting national security”<sup>39</sup>. Hence, only by studying simultaneously both production of identity and insecurity within the discourse, can we make sense international relations and security.

### ***Critical Constructivism, nuclear weapons theory and Great Britain – deterrence and beyond***

With regard to study of nuclear weapons, the incorporation of above-mentioned elementary aspects of critical constructivism is a rather recent phenomenon reaching back to the beginning of 1990’s. Throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was the deterrence theory that has dominated the discourse on nuclear weapons. From the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid p. 340.

<sup>35</sup> CHO, Young Chul. Conventional and Critical Constructivist Approaches to National Security: An Analytical Survey. p. 90.

<sup>36</sup> CAMPBELL, David. *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. p.9

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> WELDES, Jutta et al. *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities, and the Production of Danger*. p. 10-11

<sup>39</sup> CHO, Young Chul. Conventional and Critical Constructivist Approaches to National Security: An Analytical Survey. p. 92

classic works of Brodie (1959) and Schelling (1966), a little was disputed within the rationale of pursuing and the preservation of nuclear weapons for the sake of power and its balance within international system. Power in terms of military power has become a centerpiece of any realist assumption about the nature of international system and its actors. As commonsense as it may seem, it was only “logical” to assume that since the emergence of nuclear weapons, their qualitatively different characteristics will draw the line on who holds the power within the system and who not. Therefore, the mindset of states focused on relative gains vis-à-vis their potential adversaries drew other actors towards pursuing their own nuclear arsenals. The conclusion was that since USA did indeed gain a significant advantage by acquiring a nuclear weapon by 1945, it was only presumable that other states would follow the suit, with Soviet Union probably being the most eager to join the nuclear club. With the emergence and subsequent fixation of the bipolar nature of the Cold war world, the main body of scholarly works concerned with nuclear weapons focused heavily on those two countries.

The end of the Cold war, however, brought a new possibility for redefinition of the principle of balance of power within international system. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and hence bipolar setting, the bipolar nature of international relations has developed into a more complex system. In 1996, Scott Sagan wrote an article, *Why do States built nuclear weapons?*, that dealt with the rationale behind acquisition of nuclear arsenals. The article has offered an alternative view to nuclear proliferation. Instead of traditional model of a chain reaction, Sagan introduced 3 models, “the security model”, “the domestic politics model” and “the norms model”, as an explanation for pursue of nuclear weapons. Subsequently, he categorized existing nuclear weapon states within those models.<sup>40</sup> Sagan attempted to prove that apart from securing the state, ‘nuclear weapons also serve other, more parochial and less obvious objectives’<sup>41</sup>. Among those objectives, he argues that domestic model uses nuclear weapons as political tools for securing parochial domestic interests while norms model provide a state with ‘an important normative symbol of a state’s modernity and identity’.<sup>42</sup> It’s the norms model particularly that brings the attention to the issue of state’s identity, which, although not studying thoroughly, an attempt to bring ideational structure into conservative thinking of nuclear proliferation. According to this model,

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<sup>40</sup> See SAGAN, Scott. *Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons: Three Models in Search of a Bomb*.

<sup>41</sup> SAGAN, Scott. *Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons: Three Models in Search of a Bomb*. p. 55.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*.

‘state behavior is determined not by leader’s calculations... but rather by deeper norms and shared beliefs about what actions are legitimate and appropriate’<sup>43</sup>. Even though Sagan was more concerned with causal influences of norms, he nevertheless acknowledged and interpreted their significance in relation to nuclear weapons and their proliferation. Similar patterns were also observed with regard to proliferation of conventional weapons<sup>44</sup>, where spread of the weapons was not linked to national security concerns, but rather symbolic and normative nature of militaries and their weaponry.<sup>45</sup>

Weapons can carry other meanings than just ones connected with military or strategic purposes. With regard to Great Britain, the notion of nuclear weapons as a symbol of state’s modernity and identity presents a model case. The basis for this argument can be derived from various points of view, stretching from weapons’ actual military utility, economic aspects of maintaining the arsenal, adherence to international norms to ethical concerns stemming from their potential use. Although military utility per se regarding destructive force is obvious, its actual potential use for military purposes is less so. Nuclear weapons are weapons claimed to serve for deterrence purposes and us such maintain stability and status quo of international order. By persuading the enemy to refrain from or halt its aggressive action through the threat to inflict unacceptable damage<sup>46</sup>, nuclear weapons are deemed to function as a psychological military tool without actual usage. The following part is devoted to briefly examine some of the points mentioned above. The aim is to show, that traditional military/deterrence argument is proving to be somehow problematic in justification of the modernization of Britain’s nuclear arsenal. Moreover, the support for this claim can be bolstered by theoretical works on chemical and nuclear weapons taboos written by Price and Tannenwald. Normative frameworks of NPT treaty as well as some of the judicial decisions of International Court of Justice are also playing the role. These elements are shown to subsequently work as a reference framework for the

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<sup>43</sup> SAGAN, Scott. Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons: Three Models in Search of a Bomb. p. 73.

<sup>44</sup> See EYRE, Dana P. and SUCHMAN, Mark C.: Status Norms, and Proliferation of Conventional Weapons: An Institutional Theory Approach. In: KATZENSTEIN, Peter J, (ed). *The Culture of national security: norms and identity in world politics*. Pp. 79-113.

<sup>45</sup> EYRE, Dana P. and SUCHMAN, Mark C.: Status Norms, and Proliferation of Conventional Weapons: An Institutional Theory Approach. In: KATZENSTEIN, Peter J, (ed). *The Culture of national security: norms and identity in world politics*. p. 86.

<sup>46</sup> RITCHIE, Nick. Deterrence dogma? Challenging the relevance of British nuclear weapons. p. 82.

analysis of effects of particular aspects of British collective identity on discourse and practices of nuclear weapons policy.

Ministry of Defense of Great Britain claims that its nuclear deterrent is relevant in four cases: against British/NATO vital interests, against blackmail by regional 'rogue' states, against state-sponsored acts of nuclear terrorism and in general to preserve peace and stability in an uncertain world.<sup>47</sup> However rational these reasons may seem at the first sight, the potential utility of nuclear weapons in tackling those issues within current security framework is less so. Ritchie argues that there are certain theoretical misconceptions about what actually deterrent is in the eyes of British officials, and that there are other aspects that needs to be taken into account when thinking about advantages of having nuclear arsenals - such as credibility of a deterrent in the eyes of both actor and potential enemy, theoretical versus practical effects of deterrents and their role in prevention of war between major powers.<sup>48</sup> What Ritchie tries to pinpoint out is not only that in practice deterrence is not working according to its theoretical principles, since social interactions are much more complex than just based on a cost-benefit calculations. But in the case of Great Britain, the very objects of deterrence are questionable both in their nature and the potential effectiveness of nuclear deterrent on them. From four cases mentioned above, the first one – against British and/or NATO vital interests - consider only two relevant adversaries, China and Russia, which both are perceived positively in spite of possible areas tensions and Britain nuclear weapons 'are of little relevance to its strategic relationship'<sup>49</sup>. Ritchie even doubts that 'consideration of using nuclear weapons against Russia or China will ever be part of the solution to future confrontations, particularly in the absence of ideological enmity.'<sup>50</sup> The same line of argumentation goes also for the usage of nuclear weapons in the case of an attack of 'rogue' states or in a case of state-sponsored terrorism, both of which would be considered highly unlikely<sup>51</sup> and morally abhorrent<sup>52</sup>. All of these above mentioned factors are making a nuclear weapons seem rather meaningless in dealing with the security challenges in the current world order, both

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<sup>47</sup> Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent*. London. Dec 2006. Cm 6994.

<sup>48</sup> RITCHIE, Nick. Deterrence dogma? Challenging the relevance of British nuclear weapons. p. 83-5.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid p.86

<sup>50</sup> Ibid p. 88

<sup>51</sup> See RITCHIE, Nick. Deterrence dogma? Challenging the relevance of British nuclear weapons. pp. 89-92.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid p. 93.

from the standpoint of psychological effects of deterrence and their potential actual use in a conflict situation. Despite some of the advocates of the contemporary military meaning of nuclear weapons in general<sup>53</sup> and British nuclear weapons program in particular<sup>54</sup>, there is more than a strong evidence against the case, be it the tradition of non-use of the nuclear weapons by global community, ICC decision on (il)legality of nuclear weapons or Britain's decision not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear state during relatively stable bipolar division of the world, as was the case of Falklands.

As written above, military utility is not the only aspect that needs to be taken into account when looking on the feasibility of having nuclear weapons, let alone their modernization. Due to their qualitatively different nature, nuclear weapons became a symbol of what is perceived as one of the most lethal weapon in the world, and as such nuclear weapons became a part of the group of so-called weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). This 'exclusive' club that usually refers to chemical, biological and nuclear weapons carry an additional weight in terms of what Price and Tannenwald ascribed with a label 'taboo'. While Price devotes his attention to genealogy and implications of chemical weapons taboo<sup>55</sup> and other weapons such as anti-personnel landmines<sup>56</sup>, Tannenwald analyze the emergence and effect of the nuclear taboo<sup>57</sup>. By taboo, Tannenwald refers to 'more developed normative prohibition', which carries 'such qualities as absoluteness, unthinkingness, and taken-for-grantedness'<sup>58</sup>. At the same time, the potential breaking of a taboo 'involves expectations of awful consequences or sanctions to follow in the wake of a ... violation.'<sup>59</sup> The price for the use of nuclear weapons against any security threat, both imminent and potential, would be unbearably high from the moral stance, but it would have also other, more 'real' consequences such as loss of the prestige, diplomatic and/or economic isolation and general animosity

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<sup>53</sup> See GOLDSTEIN, Avery. *Deterrence and Security in the 21st Century: China, Britain, and the Enduring Legacy of the Nuclear Revolution*. p. 222-3.

<sup>54</sup> See for example SLIWINSKI, Krzysztof. *British Nuclear Strategy at the Threshold of the 21st Century*.

<sup>55</sup> See PRICE, Richard. *Genealogy of the Chemical Weapons Taboo*; PRICE, Richard and TANNENWALD, Nina. *Norms and Deterrence: The Nuclear and Chemical Weapons Taboos*. In: KATZENSTEIN, Peter J (ed). *The Culture of national security: norms and identity in world politics*.

<sup>56</sup> See PRICE, Richard. *International norms and the mines taboo: Pulls toward compliance*.

<sup>57</sup> See PRICE, Richard and TANNENWALD, Nina. *Norms and Deterrence: The Nuclear and Chemical Weapons Taboos*. In: KATZENSTEIN, Peter J (ed). *The Culture of national security: norms and identity in world politics*; TANNENWALD, Nina. *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use*; TANNENWALD, Nina. *Stigmatizing the Bomb: Origins of the Nuclear Taboo*; TANNENWALD, Nina. *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945*.

<sup>58</sup> TANNENWALD, Nina. *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use*. p. 436.

towards any actor that would break the taboo. As Tannenwald notes, possible use of nuclear weapons could be classified ‘as outside the bounds of “civilized” international society’<sup>60</sup>, which practically represents an image of Western society, the image that proudly Great Britain adheres to. Especially, in the case of nuclear weapons where United States, Britain’s strategic partner, both pioneered the strategic use of the technology and also set the course for emergence and at the end embedding of a taboo, the possibility of Great Britain to contest these aspects of US nuclear policy is practically limited to zero, or non-existent. In more than 50 years of continuity of a taboo<sup>61</sup>, Tannenwald stresses that within a process of taboo’s evolution ‘it provided agents and states with new understandings of...interests and identities.’<sup>62</sup> If at the beginning of nuclear age, the idea of nuclear weapons as part of a regular warfare was considered normal, with the emergence and continuation of the taboo, its identity mechanisms is that ‘we [U,S, Western states] do not use nuclear weapons – because of who we are and what our values are, because civilized states do not do this and so on.’<sup>63</sup> Even though certain security threats such as terrorism and ‘rogue states’ could trigger a reaction in which ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ dichotomy would blur the lines of illegitimate behavior, the change in identity perception as mentioned earlier (we do not use nuclear weapons because it’s immoral, because they are abhorrent) along with the line of reasoning that we (West) would not give in to use such inhumane weapons.<sup>64</sup>

The moral obligations, or better said, the constructs of what we perceive as moral obligations towards compliance with the taboo are also (partly) institutionalized within normative framework. The most important document regarding nuclear weapons, the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which Great Britain is a signatory state to, bound the states ‘to achieve at the earliest possible date the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to undertake effective measures in the direction of nuclear disarmament’<sup>65</sup>. Under the Article VI of the treaty, all of the parties should pursue ‘complete disarmament under strict and effective international control’<sup>66</sup>. Although there is no specific deadline for the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> TANNENWALD, Nina. *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use*. p. 463.

<sup>61</sup> Tannenwald claims the beginning of a taboo from the Korean War

<sup>62</sup> TANNENWALD, Nina. *Stigmatizing the Bomb: Origins of the Nuclear Taboo*. p. 41.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p.45

<sup>64</sup> The relativity of what can be considered more humane or inhumane is part of a social construct of nuclear weapons – see Tannenwald for more

<sup>65</sup> See *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

total disarmament, it sets a signal towards the international community that this is the way in which all civilized nations should pursue. This notion was even strengthened by president Obama in his speech in 2009.<sup>67</sup> Even though the opponents could argue that while United States are proclaiming the effort to achieve total disarmament, they are also modernizing their nuclear arsenal, the discursive aspect of creating the image of nation pursuing the policy of total disarmament and attaching this image to its identity is sending a strong signal towards other states of Western community, particularly the ones that are in possession of nuclear weapons. The other normative framework, although non-binding, also shapes the meaning of nuclear weapons with regards to their potential use. International law is not only about treaties, but also about customary law, general principles and judicial decision. In 1996, ICJ issued advisory opinion on the legality of the use of nuclear weapons<sup>68</sup>. Even though non-binding in its effect, the ICJ concluded that ‘in considering the principles of proportionality and discrimination, the Court found nuclear use...to be generally unlawful.’<sup>69</sup> Unfortunately, as Farrell concludes, ICJ ‘was unable to ‘definitely conclude’ that nuclear use would be unlawful in all circumstances’<sup>70</sup> which makes the potential for definitively binding prohibitory norm less viable.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, in general it sets a precedence for some kind of normative boundary that pushes the nuclear weapons to the category of special weapon of last resort, even though their ‘last-resortness’ and ability to make a discriminate attack has been found questionable.<sup>72</sup>

Finally, all of the above mentioned issues – questionable military utility in current security environment, ‘taboo’ and moral abhorrence toward the use of nuclear weapons and normative framework supporting that taboo – make the justification or better said reasoning for nuclear weapons modernization more complicated. Therefore, the consecutive analysis will focus on the more subtle aspects that are believed to significantly shape the British nuclear weapons policy and thus the decision to modernize its nuclear arsenal. The analytical point of departure is rooted in the connection of Britain’s self-identity as a major world power and ‘the historical

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<sup>67</sup> See *Remarks by President Obama*. Washington: The White House – Office of the Press Secretary.

<sup>68</sup> See *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*. International Court of Justice.

<sup>69</sup> FARRELL, Theo. *Nuclear non-use: constructing a Cold War History*. p. 826.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> On the issue of ICJ court decision on the legality vs. international and national norms covering nuclear weapons see FARRELL, Theo and LAMBERT Hélène. *Courting controversy: international law, national norms and American nuclear use*.



association between major powerdom and possession of nuclear weapons'<sup>73</sup>. The basic narrative is set within the framework where the combination of Britain's history, power, influence and values confers on it [Britain] a special responsibility to uphold international peace, security and order as a pivotal power<sup>74</sup>. This identity is closely interrelated to the nature of the relations both with the United States as the most important strategic partner and France as a potential 'prestige' rival within European space. Both these countries, at the end, affect the British identity and therefore also its nuclear policy. This thesis, however, does not only attempt to show how relations with other countries shape the identity of a state and thus shape its policies. The author also believes that by revealing the basic aspects of state's identity and contesting (deconstructing) the logic of social reality upon which Britain declares the rationale for nuclear modernization, it is possible to understand how particular policies can emerge and be pursued despite the contrast with general global tendencies and normative constructs operating in this matter within the realm of international politics.

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<sup>72</sup> FARELL, Theo and LAMBERT Hélène. *Courting controversy: international law, national norms and American nuclear use*. p. 314-20, 324-25.

<sup>73</sup> RITCHIE, Nick. *Relinquishing nuclear weapons: identities, networks and the British bomb*. p. 469.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid* p. 470.

# **HISTORY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND ITS NUCLEAR DETERRENT**

Great Britain is a country that can be considered historically as one of the most influential global actors from both global and regional perspectives. Indeed, since the very beginning of its existence as a political unit, Great Britain has represented an important player of the international politics. The vast expansion of the empire during the 18<sup>th</sup> and most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the geographical expansion of the Empire throughout continents brought Britain both power and prestige. It could be said that the combination of the expansive politics, highly successful liberal trade and policy liberalization promptly led de facto to the era of British world domination. This domination, however, has proved to be unsustainable. Economic limitations of the colonial expansion, increasing tensions and conflicts with other countries, and two world wars destabilized the overall dominant position of Great Britain. Yet, after the First World War, Britain was still perceived as a great power. As one of the winner countries and as a member of so-called 'Big Three' group (France, the UK, and the US), Britain had a direct impact on the decision about the post world war reordering of the world. The interwar period followed the trend of Great Powers making decision together on the principles of multilateral diplomacy and liberal ideas of the world order. The Second World War and its end, however, started to slowly change the balance of power. The rising star of the Soviet Union as a new strong player in the field of international politics brought the competition to the power game. The change of the WWII situation and turn of the Soviets to the Allies side allowed them to gain the influence on the post war redistribution of the world and subsequent division of the spheres of influence. Soon after the WWII, the ideological and power war with the United States started. In this light, Great Britain became a second rank power, losing a grip with the strongest. With the United States pioneering the atomic bomb in 1945 and the Soviet Union following the suit in 1949, Great Britain understood that the only way to not avoid being completely excluded from the power game and the specter of potential annihilation was to engage in creation of the bomb of their own.

## ***The beginning of the British bomb***

Very shortly after the end of the World War II, then prime minister Clement Attlee acknowledged the qualitative difference of a newly emerged weapon. He states that previous conceptions were 'completely out of date... [and] the only deterrent is the

possibility of the victim of such [nuclear] attack being able to retort on the victor'<sup>75</sup>. Obvious helplessness of the potential target of any nuclear attack (in this case Britain), was something that was considered unacceptable both in the eyes of the prime minister and society, especially given previous experiences of courage of those that undertook the risks in order to save the country. The other important aspect of gravitating towards establishing its own nuclear program was the fact that Britain did start its own version nuclear research as early as in 1941, and then established a joint cooperation with the United States that turned into the Manhattan project.<sup>76</sup> The cooperation, however, ended in 1946 with the US adoption of the McMahon Act. Britain was left with no option but to develop the weapon on its own. As Quinlan points out in his book, no other alternative was really acceptable as it was 'hard to imagine that Britain – conscious of itself as one of the main load-bearing victors of World War II, and still with the worldwide imperial responsibilities – might have decided otherwise'<sup>77</sup>. Britain thus started its own program in 1947 and successfully tested its first nuclear weapon in 1952. The third nuclear weapon state was born.

This move has brought several security implications for the United Kingdom as well as it comes to its position within the international system. According to Jeremy Stocker, the purpose of the British nuclear deterrent was tri-fold – nuclear arsenal should serve as an 'ultimate guarantee' against the Soviet Union, a leverage and possibility of a co-operational platform with the US and a tool for preservation of the Britain's former Great Power status.<sup>78</sup> But the question of so-called 'ultimate guarantee' was slightly problematic. According to the records, the initial cabinet talks about building the nuclear deterrent made 'little mention of the Soviet threat'<sup>79</sup>, and the decision to vote in favor was 'not the result of any immediate threat', but rather 'a necessary precaution: a desire for security in preparation for a potential atomic enemy'<sup>80</sup>. Moreover, by the time Britain successfully tested its first nuclear weapon, the size of the Soviet arsenal made that of Britain quite insignificant.<sup>81</sup> The fact that the

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<sup>75</sup> QUINLAN, Michael. *Thinking About Nuclear Weapons: Principles, Problems, Prospects*. p. 116.

<sup>76</sup> Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent Factsheet 5: The History of the UK's Nuclear Weapons Programme*. p. 1.

<sup>77</sup> QUINLAN, Michael. *Thinking About Nuclear Weapons: Principles, Problems, Prospects*. p. 117.

<sup>78</sup> FITZPATRICK, Mark, NIKITIN, Alexander, OZNOBISHCHEV, Sergey (eds). *Nuclear Doctrines and Strategies: National Policies and International Security*. p.64.

<sup>79</sup> GILL, David James. *Britain and the bomb: nuclear diplomacy, 1964-1970*. p. 14.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> See KRISTENSEN, Hans M and NORRIS, Robert S. Global Nuclear weapons inventories, 1945-2013. Figure 2

British deterrent was, at least in its early stages, strategically quite insufficient was also one of the reason why Britain was so eagerly clung to the US nuclear weapons. As Stocker notes on this issue: ‘One can argue that whilst in an operational sense the British nuclear deterrent was aimed at the Soviet Union, strategically it was aimed at Washington.’<sup>82</sup> Britain feared that the United States would turn back to isolationism and the creation of the independent deterrent should prevent such course of action.<sup>83</sup> By establishing its own nuclear program, Britain hoped to re-open nuclear cooperation halted by the McMahon Act. Moreover, through cooperative engagement (both technological and operational), Britain also wanted to exert some influence over much larger American nuclear arsenal.<sup>84</sup> Finally, the acquisition of nuclear arsenal enabled Britain to keep the track with military developments that qualitatively changed the nature of balancing of the power. During the talks about whether to engage in a nuclear option or not, cabinet ministers acknowledged that nuclear weapons ‘provided and important military supplement and offered a relatively cheap way of retaining global influence.... Nuclear weapons therefore protected Britain’s status as a global power and ensured an independent voice in international politics.’<sup>85</sup>

### ***British independent deterrent***

As has been mentioned earlier, Britain conducted its first successful nuclear test in 1952 and in 1954 started the development of thermonuclear weapons. By 1956, Britain was able to deploy its own delivery capabilities and deterrent became fully operational. By 1958, free-standing UK competence in weapon design had been demonstrated.<sup>86</sup> The strategy to provide an incentive for the US-UK cooperation proved to be successful. By the year 1958, the restrictions of McMahon Act were lifted, and the cooperation between the US and Britain under the auspices Mutual Defense Agreement has started. The nuclear part of ‘special relationship’ proved to be rather stable throughout the Cold war and practically continues up until today. Cooperation on both operational and technical levels had its specifics and actually shaped the nature and the character of British deterrent. From operational point of view, some of the UK and US

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<sup>82</sup> FITZPATRICK, Mark, NIKITIN, Alexander, OZNOBISHCHEV, Sergey (eds). *Nuclear Doctrines and Strategies: National Policies and International Security*. p.64.

<sup>83</sup> GILL, David James. *Britain and the bomb: nuclear diplomacy, 1964-1970*. p. 14.

<sup>84</sup> FITZPATRICK, Mark, NIKITIN, Alexander, OZNOBISHCHEV, Sergey (eds). *Nuclear Doctrines and Strategies: National Policies and International Security*. p.64; *Britain and the Bomb* p. 23

<sup>85</sup> GILL, David James. *Britain and the bomb: nuclear diplomacy, 1964-1970*. p.14.

<sup>86</sup> QUINLAN, Michael. *Thinking About Nuclear Weapons: Principles, Problems, Prospects*. p. 117.

nuclear deterrence were running under the principle called ‘dual-key basis’. It was a framework under which the United Kingdom operated various delivery systems (UK-provided but designated for US ballistic missiles, stationed on the British territory) to carry US-owned warheads. The custody of warheads remained with US personnel until the moment of operational release that required authorization of both governments.<sup>87</sup> The very beginning of the British nuclear arsenal thus carried the weight of operational co-dependence on its stronger ally. It pointed out to the fact how important was the contribution of the United States for success, but also for the overall sustainability of British nuclear deterrent. This notion proved to be even truer in the case of technical issues and development. The UK-US collaboration enabled Britain to design and produce its deterrent in more effective and economic manner.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, from 1960’s onwards, after the cancellation of a development of air- and land-launched missiles, the UK opted for the submarine-launched ballistic missile system (SLBM). However, the cost of its own development of delivery system was too high; therefore Britain decided to obtain the system from the US.<sup>89</sup> This was, however, not the first time when the UK chose to purchase delivery systems from the US. Since the initial nuclear capacities of the UK were based on air-launched delivery system, the creation of much more effective hydrogen bombs made the strategic operational value of current V-bombers minimal. Britain had to look for alternatives and decided to develop new missiles on its own. However, the development costs proved untenable, as well as its strategic credibility vis-à-vis fast pace of nuclear arms race. Britain therefore turned to the United States and agreed to purchase a similar missile system Skybolt, in order to extend the life of V-bomber force.<sup>90</sup> The reliance on foreign country to provide a nuclear deterrent technology made the British deterrent independency questionable. Although Britain sustained the independent control over its arsenal, from the point of manufacturing and development has been basically always dependent on the US.<sup>91</sup>

The 1962 Nassau Conference finally led to the obtainment of Polaris submarine-launched ballistic missiles.<sup>92</sup> SLBMs provided Britain with the needed second-strike capability and Polaris system became the basis of the UK’s strategic deterrent against

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid. p. 118.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p. 117

<sup>89</sup> FITZPATRICK, Mark, NIKITIN, Alexander, OZNOBISHCHEV, Sergey (eds). *Nuclear Doctrines and Strategies: National Policies and International Security*. p.65; QUINLAN, Michael. *Thinking About Nuclear Weapons: Principles, Problems, Prospects*. p. 120.

<sup>90</sup> GILL, David James. *Britain and the bomb: nuclear diplomacy, 1964-1970*. p.38.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

the Soviet Union. However, this advantage did not last for long. In 1970's, the Soviet deployment of Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) system challenged the credibility of British nuclear deterrent. Britain therefore decided to improve its Polaris system through Chevaline program.<sup>93</sup> The aim of the program 'was to ensure by technical means that... the force remained evidently capable... of defeating the BMD system which protected Moscow and wider area around it.'<sup>94</sup> Moreover, the program should supposedly guarantee that in case of any action by the Soviet Union, the UK would have a strategic leverage in deterrence regardless of the US stance. Chevaline entered in service in 1982. The same year, Government decided to replace the Polaris/Chevaline missiles with Trident D5 MIRV-ed system.<sup>95</sup>

### ***British nuclear weapons after the end of the Cold War***

However, by the time that the modernization of deterrent came into its final stage, i.e. deployment, the character of the strategic international environment has changed completely. The end of the Cold War diminished the role of the Soviet Union as an object that needs to be deterred and counterbalanced. Suddenly, the object of the sole purpose of retention of the nuclear arsenal, the same that has provided rationale for modifications that the British nuclear program undergone since the purchase of Polaris system, dissolved into multiple states none of which continued with the hostile intention of being an adversary of the West. In this light, several reductions in the structure of British overall nuclear deterrent as well as in stockpile were made – Britain eliminated all tactical nuclear weapons and cancelled Anglo-French stand-off air-launched missiles for 'theatre' nuclear tasks.<sup>96</sup> By 1998 Britain also abandoned the rest of ground- and air-based missile systems and kept only Trident system as the sole British nuclear deterrent.<sup>97</sup> At the beginning of the new millennium, not long after last of the four of the British submarines entered service, the Government announced that soon there will be need to make a decision about the replacement of the Trident.<sup>98</sup> At the end of 2006, the Government announced that it decided 'to take the steps necessary to sustain a credible

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<sup>92</sup> GILL, David James. *Britain and the bomb: nuclear diplomacy, 1964-1970*. p. 44.

<sup>93</sup> FITZPATRICK, Mark, NIKITIN, Alexander, OZNOBISHCHEV, Sergey (eds). *Nuclear Doctrines and Strategies: National Policies and International Security*. p.65.

<sup>94</sup> QUINLAN, Michael. *Thinking About Nuclear Weapons: Principles, Problems, Prospects*. p. 121.

<sup>95</sup> FITZPATRICK, Mark, NIKITIN, Alexander, OZNOBISHCHEV, Sergey (eds). *Nuclear Doctrines and Strategies: National Policies and International Security*. p.66.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> The forward leaning nuclear start: the uk and nuclear weapons in an era of Strategic uncertainties p.

deterrent capability in the 2020's and beyond... by building a new class of submarines.<sup>99</sup> The announcement was part of the published White Paper on the future of the British nuclear deterrent. In March 2007, the British parliament endorsed the project<sup>100</sup> and modernization process is currently ongoing. The approval of the so-called Initial Gate, i.e. assessment of the feasibility of the Trident modernization process was announced in May 2011.<sup>101</sup> The 'Main Gate' decision that would move the modernization process to the demonstration and manufacture phase was rescheduled and is believed to be taken in 2016 after the 2015 elections.

Today, it looks like the Great Britain will preserve its status as a nuclear weapon state well beyond the 2020's<sup>102</sup>, if the current process of modernization of delivery systems won't be halted by some unexpected change in international relations or other event that would cause a sudden shift in Great Britain's nuclear policy. However, throughout this short journey that marks the history of Britain's nuclear weapons program, the UK's deterrent has gone through what could be called a permanent state of an identity crisis. This crisis stemmed from multiple inherent aspects of the program itself and as such has shaped its character until today. The first aspect was the permanent struggle for independence, or better said, for finding the meaning of independence within the framework of the British nuclear weapons program. As mentioned above, Britain has cooperated with the United States on the creation of the very first nuclear weapon, and even participated on the decision to drop the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>103</sup> The initial operational dependence on United States suggested that the Britain's nuclear weapons were just added value of the second centre of NATO deterrent and possibly made the Soviet strategic calculations more complicated.<sup>104</sup> However, with the emergence of thermonuclear weapons and both quantitative and qualitative development of nuclear weapons, a modest British arsenal had been losing its importance. At the end of the 1950's, the British program came to the point of crisis. With questionable strategic purpose, diminishing legitimacy and

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<sup>98</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Defence White Paper: Delivering Security in a Changing World*. p.9.

<sup>99</sup> Ministry of Defence (MOD) and Foreign and Commonwealth Office (MCO). *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent*. Dec 2006. London. Cm 6994. p.7.

<sup>100</sup> BBC News. *Trident plan wins Commons support*. BBC, 15 March 2007.

<sup>101</sup> MILLS, Claire and BROOKE-HOLLAND, Louisa. *The Trident Successor Programme: An Update*. House of Commons Library Standard Note 06526, 10 March 2015.

<sup>102</sup> Current plans talks about the possibility of prolonging the lifespan of Trident missiles up until 2040's

<sup>103</sup> GILL, David James. *Britain and the bomb: nuclear diplomacy, 1964-1970*. p. 21.

<sup>104</sup> QUINLAN, Michael. *Thinking About Nuclear Weapons: Principles, Problems, Prospects*. p.118, p. 121-24.

rising cost, government as well as public<sup>105</sup> started to question the meaning of retaining the nuclear arsenal. One of the main argument of having independent arsenal was to have some sort of insurance in case of a situation in which the US would not be willing to protect the Europe from Soviet attack. This line of reasoning, however, undermined the whole principle of NATO alliance as well as the very nature of close relationship with the United States. As one member of the parliament stated, ‘if Britain was unwilling to trust the United States, no one would’<sup>106</sup>. The second aspect revolved around the fact that the British deterrent wasn’t, in fact, independent – throughout the history, the UK program would be probably cancelled during the first years of its operation if not for the US supply of technology such as Skybolt and Polaris systems. The technological dependence has also continued with purchase of the Trident system and is practically ongoing still today

It became an irresolvable clash of unbearable costs of nuclear weapons which implied necessary dependence on the US vs. struggle for the prestige, the independence and meaning of the deterrent itself. The search for the meaning even increased after the end of the Cold War. The change of the balance of power, the fall of the adversary and new emerging threats posed a challenge to the very character of the UK’s deterrent. If previous doubts about the position of Britain within the world power structure were to be silenced through retention of nuclear arsenal, the post Cold-war world made the rules of the game more complex. The power of the country was not measured only through its military power, and even if it was, then the military power could not be measured solely based on the (non)possession of nuclear weapons. The shift in power structures has been pressuring for the change of the structures that have been stable for the past couple of decades, which could be seen for example in a pressure for the change of the structural character of the UN Security Council. In this light, the pressure towards finding basic tenets for keeping the nuclear weapons as an ultimate guarantee of Britain’s place in the centre of the world politics became even more pressing issue. Therefore, the next part of an analysis is dealing with the official framework for Britain’s deterrent posture and its analysis. By focusing on the legitimization postures, construction of the mindsets and frameworks that bolster the notion of retaining the nuclear deterrent, the analysis

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<sup>105</sup> By the beginning of 1960’s, The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) had turned into mass movement

<sup>106</sup> GILL, David James. *Britain and the bomb: nuclear diplomacy, 1964-1970*. p. 37.



attempts to reveal the constructed reality frame that is presented as a 'reality' of international relations and how it is biased.

# STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK AND LEGITIMATION POSTURES

## ***Britain, post-Cold War mindset and the role of nuclear weapons – Strategic Defense Reviews and beyond***

In December 2006, the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, announced the plan for modernization of the UK's deterrent.<sup>107</sup> In his speech, he argued that 'although the Cold War is over...there is also a new and potentially hazardous threat from states such as North Korea,... or Iran,... that there is a possible connection between some of those states and international terrorism... and that in those circumstances it would be unwise and dangerous for Britain, alone of the nuclear powers, to give up its independent nuclear deterrent'<sup>108</sup>. He has defined the contemporary world situation as a state in which 'one certain thing...is its uncertainty'<sup>109</sup>. This mindset, however, was not new within the UK's official discourse. It could be argued that since the events such as that of terrorist attacks of 9/11, it was only logical that the discourse has shifted when it comes to understanding of the world – as the place where omnipresent potential threats of terrorism or acts of similar nature can and will occur practically everywhere, and that due to nature of their unpredictability, they can only be tackled by the ultimate defense guarantor – in this case nuclear weapons. Whatever the actual strategic feasibility of such a policy might be, it has been based on the assumption that while cost-benefit calculations might not work in the case of terrorists themselves, according to then Prime Minister Tony Blair: "...it is bound to have an impact on Governments who might sponsor them"<sup>110</sup>. The analysis whether such a rationalist calculations can be, or rather said, are indeed the right ones is not the purpose of this thesis. However, as it will be shown later, there are certain ambiguities as to how the potential adversaries are perceived through the optics of a dichotomy of the Western world vs. Others and how such perception affects the discourse and line of reasoning for retention of the nuclear arsenal.

Before the analysis of the above mentioned process behind the modernization of the nuclear arsenal and successive policies connected with such an act, it is important to

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<sup>107</sup> BBC News. *UK nuclear weapons plan unveiled* [online]. BBC, 4 December 2006.

<sup>108</sup> HC Deb 4 December 2006 vol. 454 c 21

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> HC Deb 4 December 2006 vol. 454 c 23

reveal the mindset(s) that ultimately led to such decision. While the previous chapter on the history of the British deterrent shed some light on the reasons for keeping the deterrent, this chapter will broaden the picture through the analysis of the main UK's official security documents that had led to the announcement of the intention to maintain nuclear weapons in 2006. For this purpose, the timeframe reference point is set to 1998 when the UK Strategic Defence Review White Paper (SDR) was published. The reasons for choosing a rather late document as a starting point (considering the end of the Cold War occurred in 1989) are following. First, the 1998 Strategic Defence Review was the first post-CW UK's official document that systematically dealt with the shift of the nature of the threats after the Cold War, and as such attempted to reflect a shift in the character and structure of UK's forces rather than just focusing on financial aspects of defense.<sup>111</sup> Second, the conduction of the SDR was an inherent part of the then recently elected Labor Party's Election Program, and as such manifested the motives and interests of the ruling party, i.e. of those in power. It can be argued that from the position of dominant power within Parliament, Labourists were able to create a dominant framework for the discourse and to some extent shape both its course and content. Moreover, the subsequent decision of maintaining a nuclear deterrent in 2006 was also the initiative of the Labour government, and therefore it was considered important to trace back the initial postures and their development since the Labour party came into power in 1997.

The SDR starts with a description of the security environment and its changes. It acknowledges the positive side that the collapse of Communism brought<sup>112</sup>, but on the other hand concludes that there are newly emerged risks that threaten both British 'security and...way of life'<sup>113</sup>. Even though there is no explicit reference as to what represents the British way of life, it might be assumed that it depicts more general Western way of life, characterized by adherence to the international norms, principles of democracy and general non-violent character of liberal democratic states of the West. Whoever threatens this way of life is more or less believed to be standing on the other side of the spectrum, even though the categories mentioned above such as democracy and Western values might, in fact, be partially incorporated in the value-system of potential adversary. The Review enumerates various subjects that might pose a danger

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<sup>111</sup> HC Deb 16 June 1997 vol. 296 c 9

<sup>112</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Strategic Defence Review: Modern forces for the modern world*. Para 3.

<sup>113</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Strategic Defence Review: Modern forces for the modern world*. Para 5.

for Great Britain, and their categorization shapes the interpretation of the perceived reality of international relations. Consequently, those interpretations almost instantly shapes (recreates or challenges) identities and interests, and in turn shapes actions that construct the British nuclear policy and its practices. But, before the analysis will proceed with British perception of the ‘real’ nature of international environment, it is also important to make a side note on the characteristics of the nature of danger. The Defense Review operates with two different terms – a threat and a risk. While the former is more connected with the realities of the Cold War<sup>114</sup>, the latter is linked with newly emerged phenomena such as information warfare, environmental degradation, proliferation of nuclear weapons, terrorism etc.<sup>115</sup>. This dichotomy represents a qualitative difference – threat in a principle defines a concrete source of danger, ‘an indication of imminent danger’<sup>116</sup>, ‘someone or something that is regarded as a possible danger’<sup>117</sup>. Within international security theory, threat emerges as a combination of capabilities and intentions.<sup>118</sup> In the past, security threats could be directly linked to military capabilities and usually aroused from the aggressive intentions of the other actor(s) of international system, which brought along a sense of certainty through calculability.<sup>119</sup> On the other hand, risks are defined as ‘indirect, unintended, uncertain and...by definition situated in the future... in a permanent state of virtuality’<sup>120</sup>. The calculation of (the level of) the risk is the product of the likelihood or probability of occurrence times the expected damage of an event.<sup>121</sup> The contours of the risks are therefore more blurry, since by design, they are transcending, omnipresent and ambiguous. These characteristics, therefore, make them even more susceptible to become contested when it comes to their perception, definition and meaning.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, their unpredictable nature makes them harder to deal with by traditional security means where nuclear weapons play a crucial role. In this light, the urge towards maintaining a nuclear deterrent rationalized by its ability to deal with those risks might pose not only security, but also logical discrepancy. With the above mentioned

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<sup>114</sup> For the reference see for example *Strategic Defence Review: Modern forces for the modern world*. Foreword para 8, Review paras 1, 2, 23, 27, 28, 45, 55, 89

<sup>115</sup> See *ibid.* Foreword para 2, Review paras 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 22, 29, 32, 41, 54, 60, 83

<sup>116</sup> BRAUCH, Günter. *Concept of Security Threats, Challenges, Vulnerabilities and Risks*. p.62.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> CAVELTY, Miriam Dunn. *The Threats to Risks in International Security – and Subsequent Challenges for “Knowing” the Future*.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

differentiation of threats and risks, the Review itself embraces this dichotomy. As written earlier, the points of reference seems to copy the lines of understanding of both terms. However, the connection between challenges those threats/risks represents, Britain's role in dealing with these challenges and the meanings or ways of how to manage them is more unclear. In this case, it is the questionable ability of nuclear weapons to function as the essential guarantee against those dangers, which opens up a space for alternative interpretations within the discourse.

Britain presents itself as a country whose aim is to be 'strong in defense; resolute in standing up for [its] own interests...; a reliable and powerful ally and a leader in Europe and international community'<sup>123</sup>. As such, Britain believes that only strong 'defense can provide a wide range of tools to support these aims'<sup>124</sup>. Britain manifests a plethora of different identities – through defining itself as a major European state and a leading member of the European Union<sup>125</sup>, a permanent member of the UN Security Council<sup>126</sup>, a member of the NATO<sup>127</sup>- and as such demonstrates a will, desire and (potential) capacity to play 'a leading role internationally'<sup>128</sup>. Therefore, with the shift in the nature and span of potential security challenges, the ability to adapt to this changing nature of security environment has been considered vital for the sustaining position within the system and hence sustaining prestige. After all, the UK officials themselves recognized the need for such a reflection, which had ultimately led to the publication of the Defense Review itself.<sup>129</sup> But how does the concept of British nuclear deterrent fit into this process? In the review, the reference of potential use of nuclear weapons is limited to a case of NATO regional conflict<sup>130</sup>. Since Britain 'has always made a major political and military contribution to NATO's capability for collective defense'<sup>131</sup>, this could be perceived as the notion according to which Britain feels strong obligation towards keeping nuclear weapons in order to protect its allies. However, the explicit formulation in the Review where 'NATO', rather than Britain only, 'must...continue to provide a military capability to deter....the threat or use of nuclear weapons'<sup>132</sup> points

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<sup>123</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Strategic Defence Review: Modern forces for the modern world*. para 13.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. Para 14.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. Para 18.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. Paras 21,42.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. Paras 18, 37-38,55.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. Para 21.

<sup>129</sup> HC Deb 08 July 1998 vol 315 cc 1073

<sup>130</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Strategic Defence Review: Modern forces for the modern world*. Para 55.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

out towards more hesitating approach. One of the possible explanations of such a restrained position is the moral opprobrium that is connected with the potential use of nuclear weapons.<sup>133</sup> Since Britain alone cannot, and probably would not risk bearing the moral burden of using nuclear weapons in any situation, a shared guilt of the members of NATO in case of collective action could make their potential use more acceptable. However, Britain is also very careful in making sure that it presents itself as a country which is strongly in favor of nuclear disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. However, on the other hand, since the existence of large nuclear arsenals and risks of proliferation still persists, a minimum deterrent is still considered “a necessary element of [British] security”<sup>134</sup>. Hence, any option of unilateral disarmament is not discussed within the review, but, as will be shown later, the discussion on this matter became a part of the Parliamentary discourse on the future of Trident. Nevertheless, the fact remains that, from the very beginning, the early discussion on the future nuclear deterrent has not borne the ultimate question of whether to retain deterrent or not, but rather questions regarding strategic, technical and economic issues of the deterrent. Finally, moral considerations aside, further analysis that deal with other legitimizing aspects also shows another discrepancies in the framework such as perception of other nuclear weapons states evaluation. In case of Britain, this duality serves as an objective measurement for justification of keeping the deterrent and, consequently, keeping its important position within international system.

### ***Labor Government and Post CW environment – the need for a deterrent***

When in July 1998 then Secretary of State for Defense, George Robertson, had announced the publication of the Defense Review in the Parliament, he stressed the commitment that recently elected Government gave to the public - to retain the nuclear capabilities. In his initial statement he declared:

The Government were elected on a promise that we would retain Trident. We have kept that promise, and we will continue to keep it.<sup>135</sup>... We shall maintain the

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<sup>133</sup> See TANNENWALD, Nina. *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use*.

<sup>134</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Strategic Defence Review: Modern forces for the modern world*. Para 60.

<sup>135</sup> HC Deb 8 July 1998 vol 315 c 1076

minimum deterrent to which we committed ourselves before the general elections –  
a commitment on the basis of which my hon. Friend and I were elected.<sup>136</sup>

The Secretary was referring to the part in Labour Party 1997 Election Program Manifesto, where declaration about Britain leadership in Europe included intent of retaining of the Trident system. In the manifesto, Labourists called for a path of staying within European framework but taking a leading role, which necessarily also meant keeping a strong defense options through continuous nuclear deterrent.<sup>137</sup> The formulation of a commitment revealed two important standpoints – first, that the notion of keeping a nuclear deterrent was perceived as more or less unquestionable and taken for granted and second, that the commitment of British Government to keeping the Trident ultimately represented a commitment to public which, through elections, supported the idea. Moreover, a parliamentary discourse on whether it is reasonable to continue with keeping the deterrent was basically always based on the same premise – that if there is a possibility of multilateral negotiation and balanced reduction in nuclear weapons, the Britain hope that it will eventually lead to the nuclear-free world. However, since the situation is not quite there yet, it is important to maintain a minimum deterrent and rather continue with the plan of stockpile reductions.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, from the point of arms control and disarmament, the UK perceived itself as a leader of the initiative demonstrated by promptly ratification of Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1998. Other states – particularly India and Pakistan – were strongly encouraged to follow an example.<sup>139</sup> Practically, all the parliamentary debates on the issue of Trident concerning nuclear disarmament ended up with the declaration of the policy that embraced a combination of minimal deterrent and active participation in arms control initiative<sup>140</sup>.

### ***9/11 Syndrome – shift in rhetoric***

The events of 9/11 proved that the asymmetrical threats and potential risk scenarios cannot be underestimated. As the then Secretary of State for Defence noted, the attacks demonstrated a potential “for the use...of asymmetric action to achieve strategic effect”, which urged Britain, “...to look again at the United Kingdom’s

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<sup>136</sup> HC Deb 8 July 1998 vol 315 c 1084

<sup>137</sup> *New Labour because Britain deserves better*. Welsh Labour Party Manifesto.

<sup>138</sup> HC Deb 8 July 1998 vol 315 c 1084

<sup>139</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Strategic Defence Review: Modern forces for the modern world*. Para 70.

<sup>140</sup> See for example HC Deb 20 July 1998 vol 316 c 773; HC Deb 22 March 1999 vol 328 c 13; HC Deb 10 May 1999 vol 331 c 13; HC Deb 21 June 1999 vol 333 c 756; HC Deb 05 June 2000 vol 351 cc18-19.

defense posture and plans”<sup>141</sup>. In 2002, the government therefore decided to publish a new Chapter of Strategic Defence review that would reflect the changes of the global security environment. The Chapter confirmed the continuing role of nuclear weapons both as the means for deterring major strategic military threats and as an ultimate guarantor of the UK security.<sup>142</sup> While previously, the demonstration of the potentiality of use of nuclear weapons was handled with extreme carefulness, the rhetoric after 9/11 shifted towards more vigorous posture. The UK manifested stronger proactive approach in dealing with the asymmetric threats and showed resolve to “take all necessary measures to defend ourselves”<sup>143</sup>. This more proactive approach only reflected a demonstration of what could be called a result of the process of securitization of global terrorism. In December 2003, the Government published another important Defense White Paper under the title ‘Delivering Security in a Changing World’. In the introduction, the then Secretary of State for Defense noted that “*the threats* posed by international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction *are starker*, as are the risks to wider security posed by failed or failing states”<sup>144</sup>. The rationale for keeping the deterrent was therefore presented as more urgent. On the one hand, the unpredictable character of these threats also posed a challenge to the character of armed forces and pressurized them to make ‘significant changes to the current and future capabilities of the Armed forces and supporting infrastructure’<sup>145</sup>. However, the issue of British nuclear deterrent was not included in those considerations. In the beginning of the White Paper, there is a brief summarization of the conclusions of the paper. One of the points concludes that Britain “should maintain a minimum nuclear deterrent based on the Trident system”<sup>146</sup>. This concluding statement is later developed along the meanings of the weapons themselves, rather than on their connection with tackling of particular challenges<sup>147</sup>. The White Paper actually copies previous 1998 SDR, by putting an emphasis on potential further proliferation of WMDs and therefore a need to retain minimum nuclear deterrent *as a necessary element* of British security - *as an*

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<sup>141</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Strategic Defence Review: A New Chapter*. p. 4.

<sup>142</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Strategic Defence Review: A New Chapter*. p. 12.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Defence White Paper: Delivering Security in a Changing World*. p. 1. Emphasis added.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Defence White Paper: Delivering Security in a Changing World*. p. 2.

<sup>147</sup> Which was also the case of the 1998 Strategic Defence Review



*ultimate guarantor*.<sup>148</sup> In this case we can see some sort of a rhetorical ‘schizophrenia’ that defined the British nuclear posture. On the one hand, there is clear reluctance to even think about abolition of the nuclear deterrent while on the other Britain sends a strong signal towards the states’ community that “[it] does not believe the world community should accept the acquisition of nuclear weapons by other states”<sup>149</sup>. It is, however, quite difficult to legitimize such a posture when facing the environment where other members, including those in NATO Alliance, do not possess nuclear arsenal and at the same time are facing similar challenges. Moreover, there is no mention of how exactly the possession of nuclear weapons works in favor of dealing with those threats, but at the same time, there is a strong emphasis on proactive and flexible approach. During parliamentary sessions, the question of the role of nuclear capacities in combating terrorism – as the biggest and most imminent threat – had been raised multiple times<sup>150</sup>. The overall position of British government regarding this issue was summarized by then Secretary of State for Defence, Mr. Geoff Hoon:

As the Government have made clear on many occasions, we would be prepared to use nuclear weapons only in extreme circumstances of self-defense... But we also want it to be clear, particularly to the leaders of states of concern and terrorist organizations that all our forces play a part in deterrence, and that we have a broad range of responses available.<sup>151</sup>

To summarize, before the beginning of the real discussion on the future of British nuclear deterrent in 2006, the question whether to maintain the deterrent or not was not part of a discourse. Britain secured its position and therefore the need for the deterrent through various different legitimizing postures. The first was the declaration of a strong Britain with both leading role in Europe and globally along with allies. The second was the acknowledgment of the uncertain security environment which required ultimate guarantor of defense for Britain, especially after 9/11 with the raised possibility that terrorist organizations might acquire weapons of mass destruction. The third was connected with the previous notion of uncertain environment – the possibility of proliferation of nuclear weapons. With cases such as those of India and Pakistan, the rationale for abandoning of nuclear deterrent was perceived as potentially threatening, since newly acquired weapons and newly emerging nuclear weapon states functioned

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<sup>148</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Defence White Paper: Delivering Security in a Changing World*. p. 9. Emphasis added.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid* p.4

<sup>150</sup> See for example HC Deb 30 January 2004 vol 417 c 577W, HC Deb 10 May 2004 vol 421 c 130W

<sup>151</sup> HC Deb 30 January 2004 vol 417 c 577W

outside the normative frameworks and rules of regimes such as those of Non-Proliferation Treaty and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. All of these aspects served as a framework mindset for subsequent reasoning for the continuation of the deterrent. However, as it was mentioned earlier, the concepts based on this reasoning are not stable elements and therefore are subjected to being challenged or interpreted otherwise.

### ***The future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent – A framework for decision***

When Tony Blair announced the plan to modernize British nuclear weapon capabilities along with the publication of Defense White Paper<sup>152</sup>, little had changed in the rationale for their continuation. The White Paper, titled *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent*, defined all the legitimizing postures previously adopted and presented via official defense documents, namely 1998 Strategic Defense Review and 2003 Defense White Paper. However, while previous documents were devoted to wide range of security-related issues as well as capacity structures, 2006 Review illustrated how both vital and urgent<sup>153</sup> the topic of British nuclear weapons and their future is for the Government. In the Foreword of the document, the Prime Minister Tony Blair reiterated the role of the British deterrent, which represented ‘...an essential part of [the] insurance against the uncertainties and risks of the future’<sup>154</sup>, ‘a necessary element of the capability [Britain] need[s] to deter threats from others possessing nuclear weapons’<sup>155</sup>, and as a safeguard for UK’s vital interests.<sup>156</sup> The very definition of the image of Britain as a country in the current world was then inherently connected with possession of nuclear weapons, and this existence was deemed rightful and legitimate, confirmed by the normative framework of the NPT treaty, which ‘recognizes the UK’s status...as a nuclear weapon State’<sup>157</sup>. The document also pointed out on the aspect of historical continuity of British nuclear deterrent. UK’s nuclear weapons have served as an ultimate insurance for the Britain’s ability to affect and shape the course of

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<sup>152</sup> Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent*.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5.

<sup>155</sup> Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent*. p.17.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent*. p. 14; Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent Factsheet 3: International Legal Obligations*.

the world affairs. In the beginning of the very first section of the review, there is an emphasis on a long commitment of Great Britain as a global guardian, and the inseparability of nuclear weapons' role in this activity. The Review starts with a statement addressing more than 50 years of UK's commitment to securing the world and the fact that it was "...the nuclear deterrent [that] has underpinned [Britain's] ability to do so even in the most challenging circumstances."<sup>158</sup> The Review then observes, that although the Government agrees that 'UK's security position has changed from the Cold War'<sup>159</sup>, now there emerges a new threat of proliferation of nuclear weapons by states which are either believed to pose a threat to UK's vital interests or to sponsor nuclear terrorism from their soil – as cases such as those of Iran and North Korea.<sup>160</sup> Moreover, Britain also points out that although it stands by its 'unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear weapons'<sup>161</sup> the risk of proliferation also enclose 'most of the 40 members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group...' who have '...the technical ability and means to initiate a viable nuclear weapons program'<sup>162</sup>. Any theoretical potentiality of proliferation of nuclear weapons therefore Britain perceives as an existential threat, regardless the actual possibility or operational feasibility of the programs of NSG countries<sup>163</sup>, or North Korea and Iran<sup>164</sup>, respectively.

On the other hand, Britain is positioning itself on the other side of the spectrum, through the declaration of support and active participation on non-proliferation and global disarmament effort.<sup>165</sup> As was presented in the Review, Britain has had committed itself to 'reduce the stockpile of operationally available warheads to fewer than 160' which represents 'a 20% reduction on the figure set out in the 1998 Strategic Defence Review...almost 50 % reduction compared to the plans of the previous

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<sup>158</sup> Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent*. p. 6, 9.

<sup>159</sup> Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent*. p. 6

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent*. Box 2-1, p. 13.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. p. 14

<sup>163</sup> Most of the members of Nuclear Suppliers club are either NPT adhering nuclear weapons states, or NATO members or states that are part of NWFZ regimes – see <http://www.nuclearsuppliersgroup.org/en/about-us>

<sup>164</sup> By 2006 had been only partially successful with nuclear testing, while Iran resumed its uranium enrichment programme – source Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *SIPRI Yearbook 2007: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*.

<sup>165</sup> See for example Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent Factsheet 3: International Legal Obligations*.

Government<sup>166</sup>, resulting in overall reduction of 75%.<sup>167</sup> Britain puts itself into the pole position of global nuclear disarmament effort with nuclear stockpile accounting for ‘less than 1% of the global inventory of nuclear weapons’ which makes UK’s stockpile ‘the smallest of those owned by the five nuclear weapon states recognized under the NPT’<sup>168</sup>. These exact figures presented by Government pointed out to the significant reduction in compliance with the strong adherence to the principles of NPT treaty obligations and were believed to confirm a strong position within the NPT regime. But, the numbers presented in the Review omitted two aspects – quantitative and qualitative. In 2006 figures the numbers of deployed warheads of the UK were indeed the smallest among NWS, but the states outside the NPT regimes had even smaller arsenals, putting the Britain more to the position of middle-sized arsenal rather than quantitatively weakest state – India was believed to have between 40 and 90 warheads, Israel between 75 and 200, Pakistan between 30 and 50 and estimation for the North Korea was just a handful of devices.<sup>169</sup> However progressive the discussion around British disarmament effort might have been, the fact remained that the Britain’s ‘minimum deterrent’ consisting of 160 deployed warheads and based on modern SSBNs represented a vast military power that was considered quantitatively unnecessary based on the justification and regarding potential threats.<sup>170</sup> Moreover, by constant reiteration of the uncertainty and potential risks that might emerge, Britain has created the illusion of a permanent threat to its existence that is omnipresent, inherent part of the current world, with potentially detrimental effects. This culture of creating the fear and insecurity through uncertainty created a rationally unbreakable mindset which was then subsequently used as a justification of motion in favor of the modernization. However, as it is going to be shown further in the analysis, these legitimization postures failed to explain certain discrepancies in the ‘objective’ aspects of the nature of international relations and therefore became challenged by contesting viewpoints.

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<sup>166</sup> Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *The Future of the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent*. p.8.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* p. 12.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> TAYLOR, Charles et al. *The Future of the British Nuclear Deterrent*. House of Commons Library Research Paper, 06/53, 3 November 2006. p. 21.

<sup>170</sup> JOHNSON, Rebecca. Still Punching Above Our Weight; TAYLOR, Charles et al. *The Future of the British Nuclear Deterrent*. House of Commons Library Research Paper, 06/53, 3 November 2006. p. 22.

## ***Modernization vs. disarmament – Britain on the verge***

The announcement of the plan to modernize nuclear arsenal in December 2006 had established a new level of the debate on the British nuclear weapons. For the next 4 months (until the 14 March 2007 - a moment of the actual vote on the issue), the discussion went beyond the issue of modernization of the Trident missile system towards more substantial one – whether or not to retain Britain’s nuclear weapons state status, and what potential implication can this have for the Britain, and, at the end, its identity. However, a general line of discourse had been set from the very beginning with the announcement by then Prime Minister Tony Blair. In his Parliament Statement, he declared that ‘it would be *unwise* and *dangerous* for Britain, alone of the nuclear powers, to give up its independent nuclear deterrent.’<sup>171</sup> The implication between rationality and therefore righteousness and maintaining of the nuclear deterrent was obvious. The United Kingdom as a country that embraces traditional notion of rationality could not choose otherwise but to continue with keeping the weapons. This notion was also endorsed later in the debate by Conservative strand of Parliament, which historically, leaned towards maintaining the deterrent. In the reaction to the announcement, Sir Malcolm Rifkind asked: “[I]t is not the *duty of responsible and democratic nuclear powers* – not only the United States but Britain and France – *to work together* so that the countries of Western Europe can make their full contribution *towards our collective defense*?”<sup>172</sup> The notion that giving up the nuclear deterrent would not only put Britain in the danger, but it would turn it into irresponsible and weak member of the Western community, were the scenarios which Britain was not willing to accept. Any alternatives to the nuclear deterrent were thus presented as an unacceptable cost. In the words of Prime Minister:

There are perfectly respectable arguments against the judgment that we have made. I both understand them and appreciate their force. It is just that, in the final analysis, the risk of giving up something that has been one of the mainstays of our security since the war, and, moreover, doing so when one certain thing about our world today is its uncertainty, is not a risk I feel we can responsibly take. Our deterrent is *the ultimate insurance*.<sup>173</sup>

However, the analogy between British nuclear weapons and insurance was perceived as inaccurate by some of the members of parliament. Again, the debate put an extreme

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<sup>171</sup>HC Deb 4 December 2006 vol 454 c 21. Emphasis added.

<sup>172</sup>HC Deb 4 December 2006 vol 454 c 28. Emphasis added.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid. Emphasis added.

pressure on what was believed to be taken-for-granted conventional perception of Britain as a Western country – as the one whose actions are based both on rationality and morality. As one Conservative member noted “Nuclear weapons are good in the hands of democracies faced with dictatorships in the world; they are bad in the hands of dictatorships, as are other potential means of war.”<sup>174</sup> But the category of good and bad was not believed to be so solidly constructed, as another member Conservative party, Mr. James Arbuthot, remarked during the final debate right before the vote:

[To] talk of an insurance policy is simply wrong. If someone destroys a house, the purpose of an insurance policy is to pay to rebuild the house; it is not to destroy the house of the person who destroyed it. Let us find a better analogy. The best one I can think of is a booby trap. [Then] if someone walks into our “house”, there is a likelihood that that devastating booby trap... will go off. [Then] in what circumstances could the horribly high rate of collateral damage caused by a nuclear weapon be justified? It is hard to deter those who have a religious conviction that death is better than life, or who are irrational, so the weapons are aimed at a tiny proportion of the threat against us – those from rationally led states.<sup>175</sup>

The overall government position was practically based on four aspects that were subsequently challenged by opposing mindsets – the strategic utility of the weapons versus current security challenges (the rationale for deterrent), the moral aspect of keeping and potential usage of nuclear weapons, the implication of Trident modernization on the role of Britain in the process of global disarmament within NPT framework, and finally, the role of nuclear weapons in Britain’s relative power over world politics. While all of them have affected the discourse on the future of British nuclear weapons, it was mostly the question of strategic utility and security challenges, along with the British role within NPT regime, which appeared to be the central points of the discussion. These two aspects ultimately framed the essential contours of the debate and as such shaped the construction of structural framework that defined *raison d’état* of British nuclear weapons. Both of these aspects concerned the global position of Great Britain within the system and thus had a strong effect on the overall perception of Great Britain from the viewpoint of international community.

Before the analysis will continue with legitimizing postures, it is also important to note, that while Labour Government introduced the motion of modernization, the element of party affiliation was not in fact influential enough to restrain the debate

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<sup>174</sup> HC Deb 8 March 2005 vol 431 cc 404-5WH.

<sup>175</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 cc 332-3.

within the framework of traditional Government vs. opposition battle. A plurality of attitudes ranged across the political spectrum, with only exception of the Scottish National Party, which represented strong anti-modernization posture. This showed that the debate on the future of nuclear deterrent had been one of the most complex considering the role of the Great Britain in general, and British nuclear deterrent in particular, within a wider framework of globally changing environment. Moreover, it was widely understood that the decision would set the course of British defense policy for several decades ahead, at least in the principal (non)commitment of keeping the status of nuclear weapon state with all the implications that stems from this role, and as such would have a great influence on the future image and identity of Great Britain.

### **Trident modernizations within NPT regime – legal rights vs. morality**

Since 1970, when Non-Proliferation Treaty came into force, the Britain became part of its regime from the very beginning. As one of the original signatory states, according to the treaty, Britain was claimed a nuclear weapons state (NWS) status. Britain therefore became part of an exclusive club of NWS, and its prominence was recognized by the international community. But what was even more important, the creation of the NPT regime created a very rigorous division of countries - those which rightfully possessed the nuclear weapons and those who did not, and under the NPT, committed themselves not to pursue armament. However, this duality was later violated by the emergence of countries which acquired nuclear weapons, but started to function outside the NPT framework, and therefore deviated from the international order. This process thus ended up in formation of another division which has dominated the discourse on nuclear weapons for the past decades. This dichotomy was also adopted in the Governmental posture. The then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Margaret Beckett, stated in her speech before Parliament voting:

The NPT created two distinct categories of states. Those that had already conducted nuclear tests...were designated nuclear weapons states and could legally possess nuclear weapons. All other states-signatory were designated non-weapons states... All nuclear weapons states have taken steps to maintain their deterrent. The decisions on which we are seeking agreement today are no different. But the UK has been more open and transparent than any other state in explaining the basis of our decisions in advance to our people and to the international community... We have been disarming... We have the smallest nuclear capability of any recognized nuclear

weapon state that relies on a single nuclear system...That is more than any other nuclear weapon state has done.<sup>176</sup>

The emphasis on the rightfulness of maintaining of deterrent vis-à-vis NPT obligation was essential to the process of legitimization, so there was a strong attempt to detach the issue of modernization from the idea of rearmament, which might create a picture in which Britain as a country would become part of the same discursive framework as countries such as North Korea or Iran. Therefore, then prime minister stressed the fact that "...[a]t the heart of the [Non-Proliferation] treaty is the recognition that there will be major nuclear power states, of which Britain is one... What we are doing fully consistent both with the treaty and with not increasing, or indeed upgrading, our system, but maintaining the level of deterrence we have at the moment"<sup>177</sup>. Therefore "...maintaining nuclear deterrent capability" was considered to be "...fully consistent with all international obligations [of the UK]"<sup>178</sup>. This notion was then further supported by David Cameron (Con), who endorsed the Government position and continued by declaring that "Britain is not part of a nuclear arms race. Trident is our only nuclear weapon; it is a minimum deterrent and *we have the right to replace it*"<sup>179</sup>. Similar postures were also endorsed during the course winter 2006/7 by the then Secretary of State for Defense Des Browne<sup>180</sup>, Minister of State Kim Howells<sup>181</sup>, Secretary of State Margaret Beckett<sup>182</sup>, but also members of Conservative party<sup>183</sup>.

On the other side of the spectrum, there were two different framework opinions. First was based on the assumption that decision on modernization would undermine the British role in disarmament negotiations during oncoming 2010 NPT Review conference. Some of the MPs were worried that the final decision would cause "enormous damage to Britain's role and the part that [it] can play at the 2010 conference...", and would basically dismiss "...any opportunity whatever to play a leading part at that conference and *be a force for good.*"<sup>184</sup> The second opinion group pursued more radical change of the image of Great Britain - the one that would portray it as a true leader of global nuclear disarmament. By being the first official NPT nuclear

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<sup>176</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 cc 299-300.

<sup>177</sup> HC Deb 4 December 2006 vol 454 c 36.

<sup>178</sup> HC Deb 4 December 2006 vol 454 c 23.

<sup>179</sup> HC Deb 4 December 2006 vol 454 c 25. Emphasis added.

<sup>180</sup> HC deb 11 Dec 2006 vol 454 c 570.

<sup>181</sup> HC deb 5 Feb 2007 vol 456 c 674W.

<sup>182</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 cc 302-303.

<sup>183</sup> See for example HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 c 311. Emphasis added.

<sup>184</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 c 325.



weapons state that would give up its nuclear arsenal, Britain would acquire new identity, based on total endorsement of the ultimate idea of Non-Proliferation treaty, following the examples of South Africa, Libya and Ukraine, and place the idea of the world without nuclear weapons to the very centre of the global attention. The proponents of this motion, such as MP Nigel Griffiths, embraced the idea with the claim that British deterrent simply ‘has no future’<sup>185</sup>; then he continued:

[T]his country has to become a country for peace, not a country for war. We have led the world in campaigning to meet the Kyoto targets. We have led the fight to eradicate global poverty. Now we must lead the world in campaigning for the eradication of the nuclear threat – *and we must lead example...* The world is watching us now. *Let us be leaders for peace.*<sup>186</sup>

The idea of Britain as the global pioneer on the road towards complete disarmament was also based on the negative moral aspects stemming from the very nature of nuclear weapons. The argumentation was based around two points. The first was a principal attitude, the feeling of pure animosity toward the nuclear weapons in general, pointing to their enormous destructive force and inherent destructive character that presupposed the use against civilian population automatically immoral. Furthermore, the responsibility of the nuclear weapons states in general, and Great Britain in particular, was to make sure to set the example for other countries not to pursue armament. Britain was perceived to hold a moral obligation towards world society and this obligation could be thwarted if the UK would continue with deterrent and as such fundamentally declared support for proliferation.

If proliferation is a problem, what moral justification is there to say that we are entitled to possess nuclear weapons, but others, such as North Korea and Iran, are not?.... [M]odernizing Britain’s arsenal will put the Non-proliferation treaty under strain and will increase the likelihood that non-nuclear states such as Iran will want to join that nuclear club.<sup>187</sup>

The second attitude was based on normative stance and stressed the importance of advocating of humanitarian law and its principles. The point of contest were two principles – that in a state of conflict there must be distinction between the civilian population and the combatants and that the use of force must be proportional regarding achievement of a legitimate military objective.<sup>188</sup> This notion challenged the image of

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<sup>185</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 c 320.

<sup>186</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 cc 320-1. Emphasis added.

<sup>187</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 cc 356-7.

<sup>188</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 c 377.

Britain as the one that adheres to principles of international law and law on war conduct; the one that respects the ICJ advisory opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, the one that would not act in an unlawful way.

Both Governmental and opposing attitudes presented above are claimed to be based on rational assumptions. However, both of them are based on qualitatively different normative frameworks – while the first one in favor of modernization is claiming the right based on the legality of its status as a nuclear weapons and on the right to the continuance of the deterrent, the second one is based on the moral norms. Both embraces different normative clusters – legal and moral– and put them into opposition of the two principles: the rationality of peace, and the rationality of security. Although in general, peace and security are believed to be complementary aspects of wellbeing, in this case, the discourse is putting those two principles in opposition. Either Britain can be responsible country that protects its citizens and in wider range protects the Europe and supports global peace and security, or it embraces moral principles of war conduct that civilized nations are based on. Both of these elements are relative to the perception of what is considered as right of wrong for both Britain and the global community. As it is going to be shown below, this differentiation between what is in Britain's interest and what is the interest of global community shapes the way of thinking about the role of the British nuclear capabilities.

### **Trident modernization and strategic utility – British deterrent vs. security threats**

The second central argument revolved around strategic utility of the Trident missile system. The line of argumentation was followed by the reasoning based on the perception of threats – from the point of view of the nature of the threat and the source of the threat. The concept of deterrence played a crucial role in the argumentation, as deterrence was believed to be the sole purpose of nuclear weapons, since their actual use has been practically denounced by the majority of global community. The issue at stake was the relevance of the nuclear weapons as a tool of security within current world from the traditional viewpoint of security and power. It was not the issue whether nuclear weapons possess ability to deter a potential adversary per se, but whether there is an adversary whom the concept of deterrence could be applied to, based on the rational calculation, and, if there is indeed an adversary who needs to be deterred. The construction of the adversary, the imaginary 'Other' represented the important concept

for both definition of the ‘Self’ as an object that needs to be protected, and also for securing the meaning of tools for its protection. The ‘Self’ in this case was not only represented by Great Britain, but it was rather based on wider understanding of the Western identity, particularly the “[W]estern tradition of culture, civilization and democracy, at the heart of which is Christianity,...values of humanity, well-being, tolerance, freedom of worship for every religion, justice, the rule of law and freedom itself.”<sup>189</sup> A constructed image of nuclear weapons was supposed to give the notion that these weapons carry higher mission as protectors of the values rather than just protectors of the physical well-being. Moreover, from the Britain’s point of view, another important value was at stake – the value of prestige, of the Britain’s role in the international power game. According to the Government, a possible refusal of modernization of Trident “...would send...the wrong message – a message of weakness when we [Britain] need to project strength”<sup>190</sup>.

So, within the realms of the official discourse, in order to secure the meaning of nuclear weapons, Great Britain attempted to shape the discourse by ascribing their nuclear arsenal a status of deterrent. This effort could be seen in the very explicit naming of Britain’s nuclear arsenal, when officials tend to almost exclusively refer to the British arsenal as ‘(nuclear) deterrent’<sup>191</sup> which helped to lock the discourse within the deterrent structural framework. The other step was to create a framework of threats that would support the legitimization of deterrent. This framework was based on the need to construct the ‘Others’, and then construct the notion that those ‘Others’ by nature of their existence threatens the security and identity of the ‘Self’. This differentiation therefore became a central tenet of argumentation in the case of decision on modernization of Trident missile system. As it was mentioned earlier, the differentiation was based on the West vs. Others dichotomy and also on the difference between those countries who complied with the principles of nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty and those who did not. Britain stressed the notion that both North Korea and Iran ‘...which have stood or stand in clear breach of their obligations as non-nuclear weapon

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<sup>189</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 c 361.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> In 2006 Strategic Defense review, the world ‘deterrent’ is used more than 150 times, while words such as ‘arsenal’ and ‘nuclear weapons’ are together used around 30 times. Also the Governmental positions represented by Prime Minister or other members of Government were mostly based on the utterance of the term ‘deterrent’ rather than to any other alternative.

states under the NPT...<sup>192</sup> therefore must be deterred ‘from pursuing their present course of action’<sup>193</sup>. As the Secretary of State Margaret Beckett explained:

Why does this country need to retain its nuclear weapons? I am inclined to...ask instead whether this is the time for us to abandon our nuclear deterrent... It is true that the cold war has ended... It is also true that, as of today, we do not identify an enemy with both a nuclear capability and the ability and intent to use it against our vital interest. However, significant nuclear capabilities and nuclear risks remain. There are still substantial nuclear arsenals; the number of nuclear-armed states increased... and there is a significant risk of new nuclear-armed states emerging... So, there is the potential for a new nuclear threat to emerge or re-emerge.<sup>194</sup>

From this standpoint, both ‘traditional’ and ‘newly’ emerging countries had posed a risk for the Western world in general, and Britain in particular. This focus on both the mixture of potential old and newly emerging threats was presented through East-West dichotomy. This tendency towards ‘Othering’ was also visible in the later argumentation by shadow Foreign Secretary William Hague who stated:

[I]t remains a case today that laudable idealism must be leavened with gritty realism... There have been large reductions in the American and Russian arsenals, but within the last 10 years we have also seen the Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons tests, the modernization of China’s nuclear arsenal, North Korea’s proliferation, the discovery of Iran’s covert nuclear programme and the evolution of Russia’s nuclear doctrine, placing increased emphasis on nuclear weapons to offset its conventional weakness. All that demonstrates that the nature of the long-term threat to the peace of the world from nuclear weapons has changed but has not necessarily diminished.<sup>195</sup>

The argumentation stressed the potential risks rising not only because of so-called rogue states such as North Korea, but also by states such as Russia and China. The construction of the threat is therefore based on the Western bias rather than on the rational calculation, and creates a sort of legitimizing schizophrenia. On the one side, there are countries such as Russia and China, whose progress with nuclear weapons technology is considered as a potential risk, even though they are, according to NPT, rightful owners of nuclear weapons technology; on the other, there are countries such as Great Britain, who vehemently defend its program continuation on the very same principle of the right to own and modernize nuclear arsenal based on the rules of NPT regime. Also countries such as Pakistan and India are considered as potential challenge

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<sup>192</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 c 303.

<sup>193</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 c 304.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

for the international community, in this case represented by the Western world. As officials argue, the unpredictability of the international environment have evolved to the state where countries such as North Korea, India and Pakistan have a nuclear capability, which came as an unpredicted surprise to international community. Therefore, the nature of current world is defined by both unpredictability and uncertainty, and those aspects will necessary shape the international relations in the future.<sup>196</sup> So, the future of the international community is unclear, and any point of destabilization might serve as a basis for a threat to British (Western) security. Nuclear weapons must serve as a natural protection against the threat of instability and as such, the abandonment of nuclear deterrent cannot be considered rational. Concept of irrationality was stressed also by Prime minister, who noted on this issue, “It is possible to say, “Let us get rid of our independent nuclear capability and rely simply on conventional forces.””, but, “In the end, *I do not think that that is sensible*”<sup>197</sup>. This position was later reiterated by claims that abandonment of nuclear deterrent “would be extraordinarily ill advised, and, indeed, *a national act of folly*”<sup>198</sup>. Also another MP Julian Lewis in his article in Foreign Affairs stated that:

[T]he current enmity towards Britain on the part of near-nuclear regimes like Iran suggests that unilateralism would be fraught with danger... The notion that they will abandon such a course indefinitely in response to unilateral British nuclear disarmament is totally unrealistic. Those who subscribe to it continually make the error of projecting civilized values onto extremist governments which actually hold such values in contempt.<sup>199</sup>

So, in its effort to secure the identity through the discourse, Britain attempted to secure the position of the British nuclear weapons through various legitimizing postures. Government argued in favor of keeping the nuclear deterrent by claiming a strategic necessity, legal rights and global responsibility as the main factors that work in favor. The line of reasoning was based on the characteristics of the current structure of international relations based on the principles of uncertainty, omnipresent threat and dichotomy of (ir)rationality of the members of international community. The legal framework of NPT regime was used for the legitimization of modernization of the deterrent and at the same time securing the position of the Great Britain as the

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<sup>195</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 c 30.

<sup>196</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 c 348.

<sup>197</sup> HC Deb 4 December 2006 vol 454 c 32. Emphasis added.

<sup>198</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 c 314. Emphasis added.

<sup>199</sup> LEWIS, Julian. Nuclear Disarmament Versus Peace in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

responsible member of international society and global proponent of multilateral global disarmament. The alternative approach of unilateral disarmament was considered as irrational and therefore in clash with British identity, as was reiterated by Governmental postures of Prime Minister and Secretary of State.

### ***Changing world but Britain unchanged – implications for the future***

The official vote on the issue took place on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2007, and resulted in the decision that Great Britain would retain its nuclear deterrent through modernization of the Trident missile system.<sup>200</sup> Although it might seem that the ‘battle was won’ by initial approval of beginning of the process of modernization, the actual fate of British deterrent was still uncertain, facing a variety of challenges ranging from still contested strategic feasibility, through economic profitability, to moral responsibility towards global prospects of peace and security. Moreover, another threat to both Britain’s identity and its nuclear weapons program arose - the Scottish vote on its independence that would result in a clash between the rest of the United Kingdom and Scotland, which served as the harbor of British nuclear deterrent. With these challenges ahead, and further decisions to make about the progress of the Trident modernization program<sup>201</sup>, Britain had no option but to continually reproduce the legitimacy of nuclear deterrent in order to secure its own identity. As it will be argued, this constant forced reproduction of the British identity defined through deterrent gradually became less and less tenable from the point of wider discourse, although the debates on the official level seem to be not sufficient enough to undermine the nuclear aspect of British identity to the level that would result in a substantial change of Britain’s nuclear policy.

The official posture was represented by two subsequent defense documents, the 2008 National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom and the 2010 Strategic Defense and Security Review, which supported the structural framework of previous documents and essentially copied the previous versions. They both stressed the UK’s commitment

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<sup>200</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 c 408.

<sup>201</sup> So-called ‘Initial Gate’ – a decision to move ahead with early stages of the work involved - was approved in 2011 while ‘Main Gate’ – a decision to start building the submarines – is scheduled around 2016

to maintaining nuclear deterrent<sup>202</sup>, while putting emphasis on the compliance with the Non-Proliferation treaty obligations and active approach towards disarmament.<sup>203</sup> Both documents also shared the same legitimization posture as previous strategic papers - by putting emphasis on the uncertain nature of the strategic environment<sup>204</sup>, potential risk of re-emergence of direct nuclear threat from NWS states<sup>205</sup> and, in the case of 2010 SDSR, also the case of potential proliferation of nuclear weapons.<sup>206</sup> The official posture of both documents stated that although “no state currently has both the intent and the capability to threaten the independence or integrity of the UK...Britain cannot dismiss the possibility major nuclear threat to the UK might re-emerge”<sup>207</sup>.

The official legitimizing posture thus still operated with the same line of reasoning as previous documents. This concept, however, has become increasingly challenged by not only domestic, but also global perspective. On the global scale – in the United States, the nature of the discourse on nuclear weapons started to shift the attention towards the nuclear weapons-free world initiative. Proposal of former high-ranking U.S. officials called for the world free of nuclear weapons<sup>208</sup>. This notion was later endorsed by President Obama during his official visit in Prague in April 2009. In his speech, president supported the initiative and embraced the vision of the world free of nuclear weapons.<sup>209</sup> The 2010 NPT Review conference only strengthened the initiative further, with five nuclear weapon states declaring in joint statement: “[W]e reaffirm our enduring commitment to the fulfillment of [the] obligations under Article VI of the NPT and our continuing responsibility to take concrete and credible steps

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<sup>202</sup> Cabinet Office. *The national security strategy of the United Kingdom: security in an interdependent world*. p. 31; Cabinet Office. *The strategic defence and security review: securing Britain in an age of uncertainty*. p. 38.

<sup>203</sup> Cabinet Office. *The national security strategy of the United Kingdom: security in an interdependent world*. p. 44; Cabinet Office. *The strategic defence and security review: securing Britain in an age of uncertainty*. p. 37.

<sup>204</sup> Cabinet Office. *The national security strategy of the United Kingdom: security in an interdependent world*. p. 12; Cabinet Office. *The strategic defence and security review: securing Britain in an age of uncertainty*. p. 37.

<sup>205</sup> Cabinet Office. *The national security strategy of the United Kingdom: security in an interdependent world*. p. 31, Cabinet Office. *The strategic defence and security review: securing Britain in an age of uncertainty* p. 37.

<sup>206</sup> Cabinet Office. *The strategic defence and security review: securing Britain in an age of uncertainty*. p.37.

<sup>207</sup> Cabinet Office. *The national security strategy of the United Kingdom: security in an interdependent world*. p. 12, Cabinet Office. *The strategic defence and security review: securing Britain in an age of uncertainty*. p. 37.

<sup>208</sup> SCHULTZ, George P., PERRY, William J. et al. *A World Free of Nuclear Weapons*; SCHULTZ, George P., PERRY, William J. et al. *Toward a Nuclear-Free World*.

<sup>209</sup> *Remarks by President Obama*. Washington: The White House – Office of the Press Secretary.

towards irreversible disarmament.”<sup>210</sup> States thus committed themselves “to undertake further efforts to reduce and ultimately eliminate all types of nuclear weapons... through unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures”<sup>211</sup>. These steps put the United Kingdom into an awkward position of hypocritical actor – the one whose ideological principles and official commitments are supportive of the global nuclear disarmament initiative, but the actual governmental policies are still pursuing the policies that results in prolonging the lifespan of the British nuclear arsenal, and therefore inhibits the global disarmament progress.

The global developments have also shaped the character of domestic official discourse. After the initial vote on the modernization of the Trident system, the discrepancy between two aspects of the British identity, which were based on either retaining or giving up nuclear weapons, only deepened with the rising of disarmament trend. The official Government position stressed the resolve of Britain to the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, but has still emphasized a broader multilateral framework as a platform for disarmament negotiation, ignoring the option of unilateral action.<sup>212</sup> However, suggestions considering unilateral disarmament were labeled as “born on myriad of tradition such as faith, passivism, political commitment or concerns about cost”<sup>213</sup>, which implied that the unilateral disarmament option was based on irrational and therefore wrong mindsets. In other words, “[i]t would be an act of supreme folly”<sup>214</sup> to give up the British arsenal. Conservative MP Paul Flynn argued against the unilateral disarmament, calling it “simply unattainable”<sup>215</sup>. But on the other side, opposing arguments were also claiming the irrationality of decision to maintain the deterrent. Nuclear weapons purpose was believed to be diminishing, since Trident was considered “...neither independent, nor... any kind of deterrent, because we face enemies... who cannot be deterred by nuclear weapons. So we have nonsense when they are in power, when they can do something, and the truth comes out with their realization afterwards.”<sup>216</sup> There was clearly a dichotomy of different perception what does it mean to pursue rational conduct in relation to British nuclear weapons policy.

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<sup>210</sup> See *Joint statement from the Nuclear-Weapons States at the London P5 Conference*.

<sup>211</sup> *Final Document: Volume 1*. 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. p. 18.

<sup>212</sup> See written statements on the issue - HC Deb 16 Jul 2009 vol 496 cc 78-9WS; HC Deb 14 Jun 2010 vol 511 c 42WS.

<sup>213</sup> HC Deb 18 May 2011 vol 528 c 353.

<sup>214</sup> HC Deb 17 Jan 2013 vol 556 c 1123.

<sup>215</sup> HC Deb 17 Jan 2013 vol 556 c 1110.

<sup>216</sup> HC Deb 17 Jan 2013 vol 556 c 1109.



While Government stressed the need to secure Britain's citizens and Allies, opponents questioned both the credibility of the deterrent and its practicality vis-à-vis still changing nature of international security environment.

In July 2013, the Trident Alternative Review study was released, representing the most recent among the official documents. The purpose of the study was to evaluate credibility of the alternatives to the agreed structure of the future nuclear systems, platforms and deterrent postures. The study concluded that there is no real alternative to the current SSBN platform since none of the alternatives offered "the same degree of resilience and flexible response"<sup>217</sup>. However, the document was showered with widespread criticism. Proponents of the modernization criticized the notion that the UK could adopt a 'part time' deterrent, while the advocates of disarmament criticized the absence of the unilateral disarmament as a possible alternative.<sup>218</sup> With another important vote decision scheduled for 2016, the possibility of even deeper split of the discourse suggests that Britain's identity is indeed going through one of the deepest crisis since the 1980's. It seems like although the Government is pushing the decisions forward, the alternative voices has started to get more intense, and are getting more attention. Also, the global disarmament movement is also helping to strengthen the power of alternative discourse. But still, so far any attempt to break the chains between Britain and its deterrent ended up as a failure, with no significant effect on the substantial issues of Britain's nuclear policy.

## **Summary**

This chapter dealt with the structural framework that served as a basis for legitimization of the continuation of British nuclear weapons program. Through the analysis of the UK's official security and defense documents, the analysis pointed out to the constant reproduction and recreation of a specific framework that was used in order to secure the meaning and position of nuclear weapons within Britain's security discourse. Since the first comprehensive post-Cold War Strategic Defense Review, the advocating of the inherently uncertain nature of the current international relations was given into the opposition with the certainty of the function of nuclear deterrent. This notion was later reiterated over the course of all subsequent major UK documents and

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<sup>217</sup> MILLS, Claire and BROOKE-HOLLAND, Louisa. *The Trident Successor Programme: An Update*.

p.8.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid p.9

supported by further delimitations of the constructed 'Others'. These 'Others' were based on the construction of Western and non-Western dichotomy that was subsequently put within the other characteristics of these actors and their action – responsible vs. irresponsible, rational vs. irrational, stable vs. unstable, secure vs. dangerous. These categories were later also used in the domestic framework where Government argued against the proposal for unilateral disarmament by the same line of reasoning, ascribing such policies with categories of irrationality and mistake.

The analysis also pointed to the contrasting tendencies in declarations of the aspects of British identity connected with nuclear weapons. The most visible was the clash between Britain's right to keep and exist as a legitimate nuclear weapons state and Britain's role as a leader in the world disarmament initiative. These counteracting tendencies lead to the state of identity crisis that is continuing till today. However, paradoxically, since the approval of Britain's Trident modernization project, the dominant position of Government within the discourse has started to be gradually undermined by both the global changes of the discourse as well by the rising tendencies of domestic opposition. This progression pushes the Government towards constant need of recreation of the British identity as inherently connected with nuclear weapons. The 2016 'Main Gate' decision will serve as the important milestone for the British identity and the meaning of nuclear weapons for supporting that identity.

## **EXTERNAL ACTORS AND MODERNIZATION OF THE BRITISH NUCLEAR PROGRAM – THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES, FRANCE AND NATO**

This chapter is dealing with three influential actors that have significant effect over certain aspects of Britain's identity that in turn shape its nuclear policy. To some extent, all of these actors have been affecting the shape of both past and relatively current nuclear policy decisions, and as such contributed to the creation of discursive reality that favorably influenced the rationale for modernization of Trident systems, and therefore secured a continuation of Great Britain as a nuclear weapon state. This chapter devotes the attention towards three different actors – the United States, France and NATO and analyzes how their relationship with Britain's affects the not only the Britain's policy outcomes and decisions, but how their particular presence with relevance to British identity affects the thinking about British role in international relations in general, and nuclear weapons policy and its meaning for securing these role for Britain. The chapter commences with the role and effect of the United States as the 'closest ally' on Britain's policy mindset and its connection to nuclear weapons, then will continue with France as currently representing antagonistic postures of both 'a prestige rival' and 'a potential partner' and will finish with NATO as the encompassing structure that connects all three actors and serves as a platform for reinforcement of British identity as a 'guardian' of the European security and also secures the relationships vis-à-vis both the United States and France in positive and negative way, respectively.

### ***United States and British nuclear weapons – special relationship from the beginning***

Since the beginning of the cooperation during the Second War, Britain has been considered as the US strongest ally in Europe. For more than 70 years the 'special relationship' has been shaping the UK's foreign policy formation, with nuclear policy being particularly sensitive to this union. In general, the US-UK long-term security relationship has been based on Atlanticism. This term incorporates the notion of "the presence of the US as a significant actor within the European security system, but can also be extended to refer to American-European cooperation on other security problems

that they share outside Europe, ... a state of political mind as well as policy, ... a tendency to regard the US security connection with European security as, to one extent or another, an end in itself<sup>219</sup>. Atlanticism has served as an important constituent of the British identity, as Smith argues in his article. He defined Britain as the country being “Atlanticist, conscious of a strategic role beyond Europe, and committed to remaining a nuclear weapon state”, while at the same time pointed out on the very essentiality of the Atlanticism framework being “the irreducible element without which the others [parts of the identity] are prohibitively difficult<sup>220</sup>. Therefore the subsequent part of an analysis looks at the US-UK relationship with regard to how the role of the US shapes the UK both in its policy frameworks and actual outcomes with regard to the long-term nature of the structure that Atlanticism plays in UK’s nuclear policy.

Historical continuity of the US-UK relationship represents a strong aspect within the UK’s nuclear policy framework. Since 1943, Quebec agreement between both countries established a platform for collaboration in building nuclear weapon<sup>221</sup>, and stories of both American and British bomb merged. After the adoption of the US Atomic Energy Act in 1946<sup>222</sup>, it took another 12 years to revive the close nuclear relationship. Finally, the new Bilateral Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defense Purposes (Mutual Defence Agreement - MDA) was signed on 2 July 1958<sup>223</sup>. The agreement, called ‘the great prize’ by the then Prime Minister Harold Macmillan<sup>224</sup>, was the result of the progress of the UK nuclear programme and continuing diplomatic effort aimed to bring back the US closer to Britain in order to strengthen national security and Great Power status<sup>225</sup> and favorable external aspects such as launch of the Sputnik in 1957. On the other side, the United States also saw benefits of a potential support of the UK independent nuclear programme. British nuclear deterrent allowed the US to decrease their conventional

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<sup>219</sup> SMITH, Mark. *Instinctive Atlanticism*. p. 448.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.* p. 450.

<sup>221</sup> *Quebec Agreement: Agreement Governing Collaboration Between The Authorities of the U.S.A. and the U.K. in the Matter of Tube Alloys*.

<sup>222</sup> BAILYS, John. *The 1958 Anglo-American Mutual Defence Agreement: The Search for Nuclear Independence*. p. 427.

<sup>223</sup> *Agreement between Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Government of United States of America for Cooperation on Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defense Purposes*.

<sup>224</sup> BAILYS, John. *The 1958 Anglo-American Mutual Defence Agreement: The Search for Nuclear Independence*. p. 425.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.* p. 455.

military presence in Europe and at the same time share the burden of extended deterrence that stemmed from NATO obligations.<sup>226</sup>

Since then, the MDA has served as a symbol of US-UK nuclear cooperation and as such has significantly shaped the character of British nuclear deterrent to this day<sup>227</sup>. This interdependent relationship has proceeded continually during and beyond the Cold War – in 1963 with the UK’s purchase of Polaris system through Polaris Sales Agreement, then in 1980 with the UK decision to upgrade to Trident system, and most recently in 2006 with modernization of Trident<sup>228</sup>. It is perceived that although the US-UK special relationship has been based on reciprocity, “the balance of advantage in the exchanges was necessarily in Britain’s favor”<sup>229</sup>, sometimes even enforced by emotional blackmail<sup>230</sup>. Although in the course of history Britain did pursue its own Chevaline program, in a principle, it has always been at least partially dependent on American willingness to provide service, technology and knowhow needed for manufacture and therefore maintaining of UK’s nuclear capabilities.<sup>231</sup> The technical aspects of the relationship speak strongly in favor for understanding why is Great Britain eager to maintain the special relationship that has been integral part of their nuclear policy thinking for several decades. However, in order to understand the picture completely, one has to also look at the broader context of the meaning of nuclear weapons in British policy formation and their connection to the United States outside the realms of technical dependency and conventional (realism-based) security thinking about the issue.

## **Post-Cold war Britain and the special relationship**

The normative framework for cooperation itself, a general perception of the US within British foreign policy framework, and the role of Britain and its self-perception vis-à-vis United States, all of these aspects have both shaped and co-constructed the basic tenets of the British nuclear policy. If Cold War kept the United States actively

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<sup>226</sup> BAILYS, John. *The 1958 Anglo-American Mutual Defence Agreement: The Search for Nuclear Independence*. p. 457; and *the bomb: nuclear diplomacy, 1964-1970*. p. 33.

<sup>227</sup> The MDA is currently prolonged until 2024 - see *Amendment to the Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defense Purposes*.

<sup>228</sup> LINDBORG, Chris and CARR, Christopher. *What’s next with Trident in the United States?* p. 1.

<sup>229</sup> See ARNOLD, Lorna. *Britain and the H-Bomb*. Chapter 14.

<sup>230</sup> As was the case of the purchase of Polaris missiles - see GILL, David James. *Britain and the bomb: nuclear diplomacy, 1964-1970*. p. 45.

<sup>231</sup> On the effect on technical dependency see for example CHALMERS, Hugh. *The Bang Behind the Buck: Replacing the UK’s Nuclear Warheads*.

engaged in Europe, the dissolution of the Soviet Union has disrupted the long-term rationale for this engagement. However, the initial euphoria of breaking the Cold War structure was interrupted by events such as Gulf War and the conflict in Balkans. Newly emerged threats posed a challenge for the international community and United States as its self-proclaimed de-facto leader, but at the same time enabled Britain to cement its role as the US closest ally, as was proved by assisting in both conflicts during 1990's and later in operations in Afghanistan and Iraq . Although there is no direct role of nuclear weapons in these policies apart from being a strategic tool of deterrence, this wider framework of active US-UK security cooperation, through either NATO Alliance or coalition of willing, has become an integral part of British identity framework and as such also has been shaping not only the route of UK's broader security policy, but nuclear policy as well.

### **US and the official nuclear policy framework**

When we come back to the story of British nuclear weapons, by 1994, the UK's Trident system has been finally brought into service<sup>232</sup>. However, Britain was in the position when the modern technical aspects of the nuclear weapons were in contrast with Cold War mindset that defined their potential use. The need to adapt security policies to the newly emerging threats was evident with a change of the government in 1997, which opened up an opportunity to assess those changes. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, new Labour published new Strategic Defense Review in 1998, which had set the course of British foreign policy for the decades ahead. The Review stressed the change in security environment, its uncertainty and instability, and the need for British defense to adapt to those circumstances. Moreover, as the then Secretary of Defence George Robertson did emphasize in the beginning of the Review, these changes should have enabled Britain "to achieve a "lot more" in the 21<sup>st</sup> century"<sup>233</sup>. A desire for more proactive role of the Britain as set in the new Labour party Manifesto<sup>234</sup>, however, needed some sort of supporting structure through the enhancement of both capabilities and alliances. According to the Review, British forces "must be able to back

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<sup>232</sup> CHALMERS, Hugh. *The Bang Behind the Buck: Replacing the UK's Nuclear Warheads*. p. 1.

<sup>233</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Strategic Defence Review: Modern forces for the modern world*.

<sup>234</sup> *New Labour because Britain deserves better*. Welsh Labour Party Manifesto. 1997.

up our [British] influence as a leading force for good in the world”<sup>235</sup>. This notion was later reiterated through 2003 SDR Defence Aim which aspired:

...to deliver security for the people of the United Kingdom and the Overseas Territories by defending them, including against terrorism; and to act as a force for good by strengthening international peace and stability.<sup>236</sup>

Moreover, the 1998 Review stated that it is the British minimum nuclear arsenal that serves as a deterrent for “any threat to [British] vital interest”<sup>237</sup>. The 1998 SDR also stressed the notion that British “fundamental interest in the security and stability of the continent as a whole... depends on the transatlantic relationship and the continued engagement in Europe of the United States”<sup>238</sup>. There are three important tenets of British identity that are manifested here – the self-perception of Britain as one of the leaders in global community and as a promoter of right values, which, in turn affects the constitution British interest; the indispensable role of armed forces and nuclear weapons in particular in this process, and the importance of the US-UK relationship for security assurance while Britain is pursuing its global ambitions.

However, as much as Britain was aspiring to gain the voice in the world affairs, the government understood that the ambition of getting a position of the global superpower became unreachable. Rather, Britain was pursuing the role of ‘pivotal power’ at the centre of world events.<sup>239</sup> The new Labour Government stressed the collective international approach that countries need to apply when dealing with conflicts and human rights violations<sup>240</sup>. These ad hoc coalitions thus created a framework for outside Europe operations, mostly led by United States and supported by Britain on the basis of strong bilateral (special relationship) and multilateral (NATO) attachment<sup>241</sup>. After the events of 9/11, Ministry of Defense published in 2002 a new Chapter of Strategic Defence Review, where then Secretary of Defence stated that “...11 September and its aftermath underlined the importance of the transatlantic relationship. From the outset, we demonstrated by our actions our wish to work closely with our most important ally, the US.”<sup>242</sup> The Chapter recognized the potential strategic

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<sup>235</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Strategic Defence Review: Modern forces for the modern world*. Para 201.

<sup>236</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Defence White Paper: Delivering Security in a Changing World*. p. 4

<sup>237</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Strategic Defence Review: Modern forces for the modern world*. Para 61.

<sup>238</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Strategic Defence Review: Modern forces for the modern world*. Para 18.

<sup>239</sup> RITCHIE, Nick: Trident and British identity. p. 4.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> See for example Ministry of Defence. *Defence White Paper: Delivering Security in a Changing World*. p. 7; Cabinet Office. *The national security strategy of the United Kingdom: security in an interdependent world*. p. 8.

<sup>242</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Strategic Defence Review: A New Chapter*.

effect of terrorism and proliferation of WMDs<sup>243</sup> and pointed out the need “to deter any use of weapons of mass destruction against us, our interest, or our Allies, but also any other attacks that cause (or intend) mass casualties or grave damage to economy, the environment, government or the fabric of society”<sup>244</sup>. This policy was later reiterated through 2003 Strategic Defence Review, as was the importance of transatlantic relationship being *fundamental* for British security and defence policy.<sup>245</sup> Britain have also presupposed, that active participation in US-led coalition would bring the UK into the position that would “secure and effective place in the political and military decision-making processes”<sup>246</sup>. If the policy mindset was to be sustainable, British forces required the prospect of catching up with US military capabilities. This also included potential modernization and continuation of the UK nuclear arsenal.

The 2006 announcement and subsequent publication of 2006 Defence White Paper on modernization of British nuclear weapons modernization sustained previous rhetoric. But, the White Paper mentioned the role of the US in a very limited technical manner, only reiterating the operational independence that UK has as it comes to the potential use of nuclear weapons.<sup>247</sup> This notion was reiterated in Parliament speech by the then Prime Minister Tony Blair when announcing a plan to modernize Trident. There he noted that although the US-UK cooperation is “very close...the independent nature of the British deterrent is again an additional insurance against circumstances where [Britain is] threatened but America not”<sup>248</sup>. The same line of reasoning was applied again in 2008 National Security strategy. However, the emphasis on the ‘operationally independent’ aspect of British nuclear arsenal came into contrast with a broader strategic context of how Britain has attempted to deal with potential use of nuclear weapons. As was noted in Foreign Affairs Committee report on the US-UK relationship, this independence is “purely notional”<sup>249</sup>. The practice of collective response, as mentioned above is basically the only viable and preferred option in those cases. The UK is not a lone-wolf hero, but rather one of the few, an important member of the party based on a “continued commitment to strong bilateral defence and security

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid p. 7.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid p. 12.

<sup>245</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Defence White Paper: Delivering Security in a Changing World*. p.4. Emphasis added.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid. p.8.

<sup>247</sup> Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *The Future of the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent*. p. 22-23

<sup>248</sup> HC Deb 4 December 2006 vol 454 c 24.

<sup>249</sup> House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. *Global Security: UK-US Relations*. p. 47.



relationships... [with] leading role in the NATO and the EU and other key alliances”<sup>250</sup>. The strategy several times mentions the importance of US-UK relationship and its relation to British security<sup>251</sup>, and also with relation to US plan of deployment of strategic defense system in Europe<sup>252</sup>. The same policy framework was also used in the most recent official defense documents – the National Security strategy and the Strategic Defence and Security Review that were both published in October 2010. The security strategy provided a more general framework when stating, “[the] relationship with the US will continue to be essential to delivering the security and prosperity”<sup>253</sup>, and emphasizing that “[British] strong defence, security and intelligence relationship with the US is exceptionally close and central to [the UK’s] national interest”<sup>254</sup>. The 2010 Review supported the framework further by defining the US-UK relationship as being “deeply-rooted, broadly-based, strategically important and mutually supportive”<sup>255</sup>, while committing to “maintain our nuclear relationship based on the 1958 Mutual Defence Agreement”<sup>256</sup>.

## **US and the British nuclear policy – outside the official framework documents**

The official governmental documents have continually embodied the idea of the vital importance of the United States for British defense, while stressing the fact that UK’s role is to be the US closest ally - in the joint military engagements outside Europe, in wide support for applying the principles global security and prosperity, and in spreading the Western norms and values. British nuclear weapons’ role regarding these commitments has been two-fold. First, they are considered an ultimate guarantor against potential threats and as such enable Britain to actively support and engage in operations like those in Afghanistan and Iraq along the United States, and in general to enable UK engagement in world affairs without fear of being imperiled. A modernization of British nuclear deterrent thus serve as a tool for cementing the British commitment to

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<sup>250</sup> Cabinet Office. *The national security strategy of the United Kingdom: security in an interdependent world*. p. 44.

<sup>251</sup> See for example Cabinet Office. *The national security strategy of the United Kingdom: security in an interdependent world*. p. 8, 47.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.* p. 44.

<sup>253</sup> Cabinet Office. *A Strong Britain in the Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy*. p. 15.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22.

<sup>255</sup> Cabinet Office. *The strategic defence and security review: securing Britain in an age of uncertainty*. p. 60.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

assistance along the US in potential conflicts that might emerge in the future. Second, nuclear weapons are perceived as an opportunity to hold some value to British opinion when it comes to affecting US politics, although the actual effectiveness of the notion has proved to be rather limited.<sup>257</sup> Finally, the UK's deterrent is considered an essential aspect of securing of the UK strongest ally interest in Europe, as a "vital ingredient in our [British] relationship with the United States"<sup>258</sup>. This gravitation quality is very well understood among US officials. During the 2013 parliament discussion on the Trident Alternatives Review that dealt with the alternative possibilities to UK Trident modernization, a Conservative MP noted:

Our continuous-at-sea deterrence is an important contribution to NATO. It is a pay-back to the United States for being the ultimate guarantor of European security. We should not imagine for a minute that if we start downgrading our deterrent, the United States would remain as interested as it is now in maintaining security in Europe, with all the benefit for this country.<sup>259</sup>

The British nuclear deterrent, therefore secure the US place in Europe and gives the UK the image of credibility in the eyes of the Washington, the image of "powerful, reliable and responsible allied power"<sup>260</sup>. The delicate nature of TAR document was evident. Although not dealing with the alternative of giving up the British deterrent completely, nor representing the Government official stance to the issue<sup>261</sup>, TAR caused some MPs to question the strategic comprehensiveness of the Review. One Labour MP observed:

There was no discussion with the United States about the role of CASD. Secretary quoted President Obama at length, but he did not even have the courtesy to approach the United States embassy, the Pentagon, the State Department or the White House.

This understanding of the relationship therefore goes way beyond the technical cooperation since it is inherent part of a strategic thinking about UK nuclear deterrent. Although operationally independent, there is a clear understanding that the UK's nuclear weapons cannot be comprehended without US role in them. The pattern was also identified earlier in the Whitehall by Nick Ritchie. He noted that the sensitivity to the issue of maintaining the deterrent tends to revolve around an irrational fear of risk of

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<sup>257</sup> RITCHIE, Nick. Trident and British Identity: Letting Go of Nuclear Weapons. p.14.

<sup>258</sup> HC deb 17 July 2013 c 1243

<sup>259</sup> HC deb 17 July 2013 c 1262

<sup>260</sup> RITCHIE, Nick. Trident and British Identity: Letting Go of Nuclear Weapons. p. 8.

<sup>261</sup> According to Malcolm Chalmers there were certain confusion among allied governments about the document see CHALMERS Towards the UK's Nuclear century p.20

not being perceived as a credible partner, which would at the end undermine Britain's core identity.<sup>262</sup>

## **Discrepancies in the UK-US nuclear policy and their implications**

Outside the official framework, the harmonization of the US-UK relationship is more ambiguous than it may seem at the first look. The explanation is simple, policies of both states are evolving and as such create certain points of discrepancies along the way, which recurrently portraits onto their mutual relationship and policies reflecting those relations. Moreover, discrepancies are also the result of clashes of various aspects of British identity confronted with the individual routes of the US (nuclear) policy tendencies. Since the existence and stability of the US-UK relationship is deeply embedded in the British identity, these turbulences can also have influence on the co-constructed patterns of cooperation within both ideational background and practices. Mindsets that are believed to be relatively stable and taken-for-granted can be challenged more easily when certain part(s) of identity structure are challenged by another. Especially, when the control over identity aspect requires influence over external factor which, in the case of the United States, is rather limited.

Turbulences can be seen in the case of a nuclear modernization versus disarmament split that has been also present within domestic policy discourse. While the UK has been committed to preserve its nuclear deterrent, part of its identity is also closely related to the role of the pioneer among the nuclear weapon states as it comes to arms control and disarmament progress. The UK has put a great emphasis on the fact that it ratified the Comprehensive test-ban treaty as the first NWS and that its stockpile is the smallest among the P5, and ascribed themselves a role of a “disarmament laboratory”<sup>263</sup>. On the other side the United States did not ratify the CTBT treaty until today.<sup>264</sup> The UK officials regularly called for the formal adherence to the treaty, for example during the then UK Secretary of State Margaret Beckett speech in June 2007<sup>265</sup>, the former Secretary of Defence Des Browne speech in February 2008<sup>266</sup> and

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<sup>262</sup> RITCHIE, Nick. Relinquishing nuclear weapons: identities, networks and the British bomb.

<sup>263</sup> *A World Free of Nuclear Weapons?* Keynote Address by Margaret Beckett, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Washington D.C., 25 June 2007

<sup>264</sup> See *Status of Signature and Ratification*. CTBTO Preparatory Commission.

<sup>265</sup> *A World Free of Nuclear Weapons?* Keynote Address by Margaret Beckett, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Washington D.C., 25 June 2007

<sup>266</sup> *Laying the Foundations for Multilateral Disarmament*. Speech by Des Browne to the Conference on Nuclear Disarmament. 5 February 2008

the former Prime Minister Gordon Brown speech in March 2009.<sup>267</sup> The same was the case of the US-Russia continuation of formal disarmament process through START Treaty.<sup>268</sup> Brown was a stark critic of the previous Government absolute compliance with US policy. He did not want to become another US Administration ‘poodle’<sup>269</sup> and his term as a Prime Minister had been accompanied by series of criticism towards the US from Cabinet members, including the issue of nuclear disarmament.<sup>270</sup>

However, the shift in the US nuclear policy came with the arrival of the President Obama into the White House. His May 2009 Prague speech set more proactive course towards global disarmament effort, later reiterated in official 2010 Nuclear Posture Review declaring fulfilling of NPT obligations, including pursue of ratification of CTBT.<sup>271</sup> This change also reflected on the UK nuclear policy, both within the official framework of above mentioned 2010 NSS and SDSR, but also within parliamentary discourse on the future of nuclear deterrent. The support for global nuclear zero became directly linked with Obama’s administration, and global nuclear disarmament effort was presented as “inextricably linked with the position of the United States”<sup>272</sup>. The shift in the policy brought the harmonization back on track and at the same time lessened the tension among multiple identity aspects. In the end, this shift enabled Britain to secure what Malcolm Chalmers calls ‘middle-ground’ position – where “necessary force modernization needs to be balanced by renewed commitments to both international arms control and unilateral restraint”<sup>273</sup>. However, even the change in the administration did not allow the CTBT regime to be completely integrated into the US legal framework. The same could be seen in the recent US nuclear policy towards India.<sup>274</sup> The declarations and actual outcomes of the United States’ nuclear policy therefore still hold a potential for tensions in the future.

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<sup>267</sup> *UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown Speech on Nuclear Energy and Proliferation*. Acronym Institute or Disarmament Diplomacy. 17 March 2009.

<sup>268</sup> See for example *A World Free of Nuclear Weapons?* Keynote Address by Margaret Beckett, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Washington D.C., 25 June 2007

<sup>269</sup> House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. *Global Security: UK-US Relations*. pp. 63-4.

<sup>270</sup> DUNN, David Hastings. The double interregnum: UK-US relations beyond Blair and Bush. p. 1135.

<sup>271</sup> See Executive Summary of *Nuclear Posture Review Report*. Washington D.C., April 2010.

<sup>272</sup> HL Deb 24 Jan 2013 vol 742 c 1227

<sup>273</sup> CHALMERS, Malcolm. *Towards the UK’s Nuclear Century*. p. 20.

<sup>274</sup> Despite being non-official nuclear weapon state, India managed to sign the deal United States-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Non-proliferation Enhancement Act on October 8, 2008

## **Summary**

All above issues remain central points of friction between both actors' nuclear policies and also demonstrate that the notion of any British influence over the US nuclear policy is almost non-existent. This, however does not seem to undermine the basic framework of the UK-US nuclear relationship and its two-line operation. On the one hand, there is a strong need for retention of UK nuclear deterrent with the US technical assistance in order to confirm the reliability of the UK as a responsible and, indeed, strong partner; on the other hand, there is a need to pursue the policy of disarmament both for the sake of personal prestige of Britain as the leader in disarmament process and as a supporter of the Obama's policy towards absolute global disarmament. Both these aspects are important integral part of the UK-US relationship and as such continue to affect the self-perception of the United Kingdom vis-à-vis its most important partner, its identity as the connection between the US and Europe, as a strong military partner and as a strategic sharer of the nuclear burden. It seems that these aspects remains a strong integral part of the British identity regardless of minor discrepancies in actual policies and were seen during past couple of years and it looks like Obama's administration enabled to bring Britain's interest closer to that of the US which, in turn, strengthened the special relationship.

## ***France and British nuclear weapons – from rivalry to cooperation?***

In the previous case of the US as an external actor shaping the British nuclear policy, the point of historical continuity was one of the holding tenets of why the relationship has settled deeply in Britain's identity and strategic culture. In case of France, one could talk about relationship with similar time frame but of rather different nature. Hence, while Britain's identity has been strongly connected to the UK-US cooperation for several decades, it has also been connected to what Ritchie calls "[a] historical competition with France to be Europe's pre-eminent military power".<sup>275</sup> Therefore, with regard to nuclear weapons policy, Britain has shown strong reluctance to give up its nuclear program in order to avoid letting France to be the only nuclear weapon state in Europe.<sup>276</sup> As it is explained below, although this competitive mindset holds a strong historical significance, there has also been a shift towards its overcoming. This points out to the tendency of transformation of certain parts of British identity. However, due to the very recent nature of this transformation, it is questionable whether the shift might point to any substantial change in British identity, and, at the end, in British nuclear policy, or whether it is just a temporary convergence of countries' interests that could wither within the next few years.

## **Britain and France in history – from antagonism to collaboration**

Although both countries became nuclear weapon states within less than a decade from each other<sup>277</sup>, their respective attitudes were far from collaborating. With Britain's strong Atlanticist attachment and French Gaullism to dominate policy mindsets; France striving for nuclear forces solely for its own defense purposes and dissociation of France from NATO integrated military structure in the late 1960's circumscribed the possibility of cooperation. The contrast between responsible Britain holding its deterrent for the sake of the ultimate defense of Europe and "selfish" and irresponsible France has created a Self – Other framework where giving up a British nuclear deterrent would mean leaving the European defense primarily in the hands of a reckless neighbor. However, the end of the Cold War brought an opportunity for revival of mutual relations. To a limited scale, the collaboration was established through Anglo-French Joint Nuclear Commission that was supposed to serve "as the main forum for strategic

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<sup>275</sup>RITCHIE, Nick. Relinquishing nuclear weapons: identities, networks and the British bomb. p. 472;  
RITCHIE, Nick. Trident and British Identity: Letting Go of Nuclear Weapons. p. 9.

<sup>276</sup> RITCHIE, Nick. Relinquishing nuclear weapons: identities, networks and the British bomb. p. 473.

co-operation between both countries in the nuclear sphere”<sup>278</sup>. Yet, the different approaches to the operational context of nuclear weapons – deterrent under NATO structure vs. outside/Europeanization option – rendered the cooperation options narrow.<sup>279</sup> This platform, therefore, had no substantial effect on the overall perception of the France and its nuclear weapons policy.

The official UK post-Cold War defense documents made also little or no mention of France with regards to any strategic importance up until 2010. Then, the Green Paper published in February identified France as “a potential first partner of choice” alongside the US<sup>280</sup>, while 2010 Strategic Defence Review declared the urge to “intensify our [British] security and defence relationship with France”, labeling France as “one of the UK’s main strategic partners”.<sup>281</sup> The subsequent Defence and Security Co-operation Treaty signed in November 2010 created a normative framework for long-term military cooperation<sup>282</sup>, with Nuclear Treaty signed for cooperation on the safety and security of nuclear weapons<sup>283</sup>. Moreover, in 2009, France re-entered the NATO integrated military command, which gave Britain the assumption of French preference for defense within NATO rather than purely European structure. This enhanced the credibility in British eyes and only facilitated the nascent collaborating project. In the words of Downing Street statement: “Working together with France on defence *makes good, practical sense*.”<sup>284</sup> Although this cooperation has meant a substantial shift in both practice and discourse about the French role, still, it is questionable whether a long term partnership can be achieved, due to previous experiences of lack of political will to carry out joint projects from a long-term perspective.<sup>285</sup>

## **France, unilateral disarmament vs. cooperation – Issues for Debates**

Within parliamentary discourse, the shift in rhetoric reflected political outcomes. The question of the relevance of France and its nuclear deterrent was raised first during

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<sup>277</sup> Britain tested its first nuclear weapon in 1952, while French nuclear missile test occurred in 1960

<sup>278</sup> TAYLOR, Claire. *Franco-British Defence Co-Operation*. p. 4.

<sup>279</sup> See CROFT, Stuart. *European Integration, Nuclear Deterrence and Franco-British Cooperation*.

<sup>280</sup> TAYLOR, Claire. *Franco-British Defence Co-Operation*. p. 7.

<sup>281</sup> Cabinet Office. *The strategic defence and security review: securing Britain in an age of uncertainty*. p. 60.

<sup>282</sup> The plan for shared facility is stated for 50 years - see article 5.5 of the Treaty

<sup>283</sup> HARRIES, Matthew. *Britain and France as Nuclear Partners*. p. 13

<sup>284</sup> *Downing Street press release*. 2 November 2010 in TAYLOR, Claire. *Franco-British Defence Co-Operation*. p. 8.

<sup>285</sup> TAYLOR, Claire. *Franco-British Defence Co-Operation*. pp. 14-7.

committee sessions on the future of UK's deterrent in 2006. The preliminary session's attitudes were later reproduced during the Parliamentary discussions before voting in March 2007. A change in perception and argumentation about France and the possibilities of nuclear sharing occurred in 2010, mostly after signing of treaty on Franco-British defense cooperation.

In 2006 SDC session Conservative MP Robert Key rendered the idea of British unilateral disarmament with regards to France politically absurd:

If we looked at it from European point of view... we might do so [give up the nuclear deterrent], which would leave only France with a nuclear deterrent. Do you think United States would ever allow that to happen? That they would sit back... knowing that France would be the only European country with one?<sup>286</sup>

The similar line of reasoning was also adopted by other MP, Mike Hancock with regard to the UK potential disarmament:

Would it ever be politically acceptable for any government in this country of any political persuasion to abandon the nuclear deterrent all the time the French maintained one?<sup>287</sup>

The answer by Michal Quinlan only reiterated the general mindset behind the perception of France as an actor that cannot be relied on:

To leave the French as the only people with this [nuclear weapons] would twitch an awful lot of very fundamental historical nerves. I am not arguing about the *logic* of it; I just think it would be that gut feeling that we cannot.<sup>288</sup>

Later in 2007, during discussion before the initial vote on the matter, Conservative MP Michael Mates noted negatively on the issue of shared deterrent patrols, while another Conservative MP used a more satirical rhetoric:

I immediately hear objections that one cannot rely on the French and that their priorities might be different from ours, but I do not believe that those form an insuperable barrier to co-operation.<sup>289</sup>

Three weeks ago I was in Paris... and I raised various issues, including possible collaboration over nuclear submarines... however... my impression was that the French were longing for us to give up our nuclear deterrent, and I cannot help

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<sup>286</sup> Defence Committee. *The Future of the UK's Strategic Deterrent: the Strategic Context*. 20 June 2006, HC 986 2005-06, EV 27.

<sup>287</sup> Defence Committee. *The Future of the UK's Strategic Deterrent: the Strategic Context*. 20 June 2006, HC 986 2005-06, EV 11.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added in RITCHIE, Nick. Trident and British Identity: Letting Go of Nuclear Weapons.. p. 9.

<sup>289</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 c 338



recalling that the last time the destiny of the United Kingdom was in the hands of the French, William the Conqueror paid us a visit.<sup>290</sup>

On the other side, only few years later during discussions on 2010 Strategic Defence Review, the Secretary of State for Defence Dr. Liam Fox stated:

We spend considerable time discussing with the French what we would want to do in terms of greater co-operation. ... It is *rational* and *reasonable* simply to want greater co-operation with our biggest military ally in continental Europe... It is not a drastic threat to UK sovereignty, but a *common-sense* use of both our nations' resources.<sup>291</sup>

Clearly, there has been a change in the rhetoric and practice of the British Government, both in their policies and public statements and within parliamentary discourse. The rhetorical shift has occurred mostly along the dichotomies of rational/irrational, responsible/irresponsible with regards to perception of France in the eyes of UK officials. The previously negative image of France made any option of nuclear co-operation inconceivable; on the other hand, it was precisely this negative stance that constructed the French aspect of British identity and has been reproduced over the years and now might be changing. However, there are certain limitations to the impact those changes can have on the British identity and subsequently its nuclear policy. First, the scope of the cooperation is nowhere near the UK-US collaboration, and the fact is well acknowledged by the members of Cabinet<sup>292</sup>. The declaration of French proposal for joint UK-French submarine patrol proved the point by being deemed to cause an "outrage".<sup>293</sup> Second, the legacy of more than 50 years of US-UK cooperation create substantial "psychological and practical legacy"<sup>294</sup> that Britain would be unwilling to sacrifice for the sake of French relationship. Third, the potential continuity of now-close cooperation depends on the political will of future Governments and therefore might be only temporary.

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<sup>290</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 c 361

<sup>291</sup> HC deb 4 Nov 2010 vol 517 c 1061.

<sup>292</sup> See for example Dr. Fox remark on the scope of the UK-French co-operation in HC Deb 18 May 2011 vol 528 c 355.

<sup>293</sup> The Guardian. *France Offers to Join Forces with UK's Nuclear Submarine Fleet*.

<sup>294</sup> HARRIES, Matthew. Britain and France as Nuclear Partners. *Global Politics and Strategy*. p. 22.

## ***British nuclear weapons and the NATO structure – an important contribution?***

The last part of the analysis deals with the third important external actor that shapes the contours of United Kingdom's identity, and in turn its nuclear policy. The history of British nuclear weapons is connected with NATO structure since the very beginning of its existence, when Britain, already a member of NATO community, became nuclear weapon state back in 1952. Nuclear weapons have been inherently an integral part of the NATO defense concept during Cold War and constituted a counter-value to Soviet nuclear forces. Nowadays, nuclear weapons still has a significant position within its defense strategy. As 2010 Strategic Concept stated, "NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance"<sup>295</sup>, while ensuring that "deterrence... remains a core element of our [NATO's] overall strategy"<sup>296</sup>. As such, the NATO has shaped the British nuclear policy; or rather it was Britain's selective language and construction of identity of British deterrent vis-à-vis NATO that dominated the content of a discourse. Britain's nuclear weapons are believed to play a significant role within NATO framework, by contributing to the "overall deterrence and security of the Allies."<sup>297</sup> The British strong attachment to NATO has been repeatedly reiterated through the UK's official strategic documents<sup>298</sup>, and the last UK Strategic Defence Review only confirmed this notion when declaring that "nuclear deterrence plays an important part in NATO's overall strategy and the UK's nuclear forces make a substantial contribution."<sup>299</sup> Although this contribution is, in practice, operationally limited<sup>300</sup>, the NATO-based rationale for retaining nuclear deterrent based on the notion of 'second centre' of nuclear decision-making developed in the 1960's<sup>301</sup> has endured, though with questionable future.<sup>302</sup> As concluding report of the Trident commission remarks, the actual strategic significance of UK's deterrent is marginal and deemed only symbolic<sup>303</sup>. On the other hand, this de

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<sup>295</sup> NATO's *Strategic Concept 2010: Active Engagement, Modern Defence*. p. 5.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid. p. 14

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Strategic Defence Review: Modern forces for the modern world*. Para 18; Ministry of Defence. *Defence White Paper: Delivering Security in a Changing World*. p. 4; Cabinet

Office. *The national security strategy of the United Kingdom: security in an interdependent world*. p. 44.

<sup>299</sup> Cabinet Office. *The strategic defence and security review: securing Britain in an age of uncertainty*. p. 37.

<sup>300</sup> British nuclear forces are 'earmarked' rather than 'assigned' to NATO - see SMITH, Martin A. *British Nuclear Weapons and in the Cold War and Beyond*.

<sup>301</sup> SMITH, Martin A. *British Nuclear Weapons and in the Cold War and Beyond*. p. 1393.

<sup>302</sup> The Trident Commission. *Concluding Report*. p. 16.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

facto ameliorates the consolidation of connection between British nuclear weapons and NATO when put into framework when its actual strategic utility is irrelevant..

With regard to Trident modernization, 2006 Defence White Paper stated that “UK’s nuclear deterrent supports collective security through NATO for the Euro-Atlantic area”<sup>304</sup>, while stressing the importance of “retention of an independent centre of nuclear decision-making”<sup>305</sup> to enhance overall deterrence credibility. The then Secretary of Defence Des Browne in his speech on nuclear deterrent defended the rationale for keeping the nuclear deterrent with automatic attachment to NATO.<sup>306</sup> The similar rhetoric was used in July 2010 by Minister of Defence Liam Fox when stating that “transatlantic Alliance is the UK’s most important strategic relationship” and “it is important to consider the role of NATO in the context of nuclear deterrence”.<sup>307</sup> The declaration of a strong strategic attachment to NATO is supposed to work in two ways. First, it works as a connection between historical involvement of Britain in NATO strategic framework and current modernization process in order to reproduce the image of Britain as an important, responsible contributor to European defense. Second, this connection also works as insurance for Britain that its active involvement reflects positively on its relationship with the United States. As final report on Trident argues, “If the UK renounced its nuclear responsibilities to NATO this could have a significant impact to US confidence in the UK and Europe, and could undermine the cohesion of the Alliance as a whole.”<sup>308</sup>

## Summary

With regard to previously analyzed external actors, the Atlantic Alliance provides a unique position. It is a multilateral platform, rather than single actor, with Britain being its integral part, and as such represents inherently different kind of inquiry when it comes to its externality. NATO represents a unique platform where all three actors – Britain, the United States and France – meet and affect the defense policy of NATO and, through this, their respective defense policies. NATO has contributed to the construction of a basic line of delimitation of the relations towards both the United States and France with regard to nuclear weapons – the former being a crucial partner in

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<sup>304</sup> Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent*. p. 18.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Des Browne speech on nuclear weapons at King's College. 25 January 2007.

<sup>307</sup> *Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Speech by Dr. Liam Fox Secretary of State for Defence. 13 July 2010.

<sup>308</sup> The Trident Commission. *Concluding Report*. p. 16.

sharing the ‘nuclear burden’, the latter being selfish and reluctant to contribute to the structure of NATO deterrent and therefore considered unreliable. The NATO enabled the creation of dichotomy within UK policy mindset that was subsequently reproduced through the duration of the Cold war and to some extent works still today. Therefore, besides providing of the rationale for the continuation of British nuclear deterrent, the alliance also enabled a creation of “significant other”<sup>309</sup> versus “self-other” identity within UK policy mindset, ascribing these roles to the United States and France, respectively. As was argued earlier, the issue of France might be more complicated right now with its return to NATO structures in 2009, although still, France did not become part of Nuclear Planning Group and therefore remains independent nuclear deterrent.<sup>310</sup> The long-term NATO attachment therefore remains a support pillar of the UK-US cooperation rather than unique opportunity for Franco-British conjunction, with nuclear weapons ‘sealing’ the position of importance of the United Kingdom both within Alliance and in global politics.

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<sup>309</sup> SMITH, Martin A. *British Nuclear Weapons and in the Cold War and Beyond*. p.1387.

<sup>310</sup> MEIER, Olivia. *NATO Revises Nuclear Policy*.

## **CONCLUSION – ASSESSMENT OF THEORETICAL AND ANALYTICAL FINDINGS**

The last part of the thesis concludes with reconnection of the theoretical assumptions with analytical claims in order to highlight and verify the hypothesis presented in the introduction part. The hypothesis presupposed that the construction of the British identity as a strong international actor connected with preservation of its world power status will strongly push its nuclear weapons policy towards maintaining of nuclear deterrent. In this matter, the role of the US was mentioned as one of the aspects that is supposed to shape the identity and strengthen the reproduction of Britain's role as a pivotal power. Both of above-mentioned aspects of British identity were analyzed throughout dominant levels of discourse in order to point out how the construction of both the image of the Britain and the image of the rest of the world, the Self and the Other, the inside and the outside, has been constituted and reproduced deliberately as social constructs in order to secure the prestige and relative position of the United Kingdom through the retention of nuclear arsenal. Also other aspects, namely the role of France and the NATO Alliance, were considered with regard of their potential effect on the shaping of British identity and its nuclear policy in relation with modernization of Trident. The purpose of subsequent assessment of analytical findings is to put the analytical outcomes into the analytical framework in order to clearly set out the main tenets of British identity and the discourse both from the structural and contextual point of view as well as with regard to socio-cultural framework of the outside world.

### ***Britain's identity, interest and the role of nuclear weapons in their reproduction***

As it was noted in the theoretical part of the thesis, identities and interests are mutually interconnected. Through their constitution, and subsequently through the constant process of their reproduction they work as a mutual complementary attributes to their respective existence. In Wendt's words identity is "a property of intentional actor that generates motivational and behavioral dispositions"<sup>311</sup> that in turn functions as a basis for understanding of what is meant behind the definition of Self. He also describes states as purposive actors with a sense of 'Self'<sup>312</sup>. It is the generation of the

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<sup>311</sup> WENDT, Alexander. *Social theory of international politics*. p. 225.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid* p. 194

purpose based on the perception of the Self that constitutes interest in the end, but at the same time reconstitutes Self. Interest is therefore a product of social construction – “a *meaningful object* out of shared meanings through which the world is understood.”<sup>313</sup> The change is then defined “in terms of an actor’s (re)construction of its identity, and the meaning that an actor attributes to this identity, which determines an actor’s interests and interactions”<sup>314</sup>.

With regard to Great Britain and its collective identity, there were four important identities that shaped the perception of the Britain as a country and therefore shaped the Britain’s nuclear policy:

1. Britain as a strong international player
2. Britain as the closest ally of the United States
3. Britain as an indispensable source of European defense
4. Britain as a crucial member of NATO community

All of the above mentioned identities were to some extent interconnected and represented the complementary aspects that worked in harmony with each other. For Britain, the idea of being a strong international player was tenable only when all of the subsequent identities were secured as well. In other words, the British role of ‘pivotal power’ has been inherently connected with the role of being the closest US ally, as well as with the idea of being the guarantor of the European defense and important member of NATO community. The role of the United States proved to be indispensable for both the actual continuation of the British nuclear deterrent but also for greater British engagement in world affairs, that, in turn, has supported the Britain’s self-perception of a strong actor of international relations as well as the closest US ally. The role of the France has been transforming from irresponsible rival, whose unreliability could be used for justification of retention of nuclear deterrent in the hands of rational Britain, towards potential strategic partner that can share the burden of European defense. Finally, the role of NATO has been two-fold – it has provided an encompassing platform for all of the three actors – the UK, the US and France, and has served as a

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<sup>313</sup> WELDES, Jutta. *Constructing National Interest*. p. 277.

<sup>314</sup> Van WYK, Jo-Ansie, KINGHORN, Linda, HEPBURN, Hollie et al. *The International Politics of Nuclear Weapons: A Constructivists Analysis*. pp. 24-5.

strengthening platform for UK-US relationship while creating self-other disposition vis-à-vis France.

The British nuclear weapons have worked as enablers for reproduction of those identities, but at the same time the constant reproduction of those identities created an ideational framework that became taken-for-granted rationale for the existence and continuation of British nuclear deterrent. Two aspects contributed to relative long-term stability of the framework – a historical continuity of Britain’s possession of nuclear weapons and normative legitimacy of NPT regime that has ascribed the UK a nuclear weapon state status. A notion of historical continuity has been stressed in 2006 SDR where the linguistic constructions directly locked the role of nuclear weapons with more than 50 years UK’s commitment to securing the world.<sup>315</sup> The case of the NPT treaty was perceived to provide even wider legitimacy, since it has represented an international normative framework that regarded Britain as a rightful owner of nuclear weapons. With Western mindset based on the adherence to international norms, the very existence of NPT regime facilitated the legitimization postures that claimed the retention of nuclear deterrent being “fully consistent with all international obligations”<sup>316</sup> and that Britain simply “[had] the right to replace it[the current weapon system]”<sup>317</sup>. On the other hand, the same normative framework was responsible for challenging of the shared constructed meaning of Britain’s nuclear weapons. Based on the dichotomy between legality and morality of both the retention and potential use of nuclear weapons, the NPT framework had formed the discourse along the lines of what could be defined as normative rationality versus moral emotionality. This dichotomy instantly shaped the contours of the discourse with creating dominant/right rational path versus submissive/moral path.

Hence, due to the complex structure and various discursive clusters, the securing of the meaning for Britain vis-à-vis its nuclear weapons in the process of constant reproduction of shared meanings through interpretation of reality has become an inherent part of legitimization of retention of nuclear weapons. The dominant power structures has attempted to secure the discourse through several clusters that were supposed to attach the meaning to UK’s nuclear weapons and legitimate their existence and modernization – such as unpredictable security environment, significant role of

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<sup>315</sup> Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *The Future of the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent*. p. 6.

<sup>316</sup> HC Deb 4 Dec 2006 vol 454 c 23

nuclear weapons with regard to the relations with the United States and NATO, rightful ownership of the nuclear weapons within NPT framework, the ultimate defense of Europe etc. The creation of a positive image of Great Britain as a responsible nuclear power that promotes and protects not only physical well-being of the country and its residents, but also wider Western values and Western way of life, has recreated a deliberate concept of higher meaning of nuclear weapons that has transcended their primary military purpose. Through official discourse, the British nuclear weapons were ascribed the role of the guardian, of the “*ultimate guarantor*”<sup>318</sup> against potential threats to Britain and its way of life. This, in turn, gave them sense of both urgency and absoluteness, of being an indispensable aspect whose absence would seriously threaten the very basic premises of the existence of British culture and identity. Nuclear weapons therefore not only became “a safeguard for UK’s vital interest”<sup>319</sup>, but they became inherent part of Britain’s vital interest per se. The notion of rationality has been another aspect that has dominated the legitimating mindset and has been frequently used in order to secure the meaning of British deterrent. United Kingdom has represented one of the fundamental parts of the Western socio-cultural context, which has been based on the embracement of rational conduct. Therefore, as a part of that context, Britain has manifested its identity of a rational actor through repeated legitimization of continuation of the course of Britain’s nuclear weapons policy towards keeping and modernizing nuclear arsenal. By attaching the meaning of irrationality and irresponsibility to the possibility of non-modernization and relinquishing of nuclear weapons, Britain has created binary oppositions, which helped the Government to secure the meaning of the deterrent.

### ***Self versus Other – Securing the Meaning of British deterrent***

In order to reveal the relationship between particular linguistic constructions and meanings that are attached to them, it is important to understand them through the framework of binary oppositions. It is argued that by definition through difference, the meanings within Western thinking are stabilized through this opposition, with opposing

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<sup>317</sup> HC Deb 4 Dec 2006 vol 454 c 25

<sup>318</sup> Ministry of Defence. *Defence White Paper: Delivering Security in a Changing World*. p. 9. Emphasis added.

<sup>319</sup> Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. *The Future of the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent*. p.17.



terms being dependent on their respective existence.<sup>320</sup> Therefore, in order to secure the construction of the Self, the actor must secure the construction of Others, to create the boundaries that would demarcate “an “inside” from an “outside”, a “self” from an “other”, a “domestic” from a “foreign.””<sup>321</sup> The reverse process of tracing back the securing of the meaning enables to challenge its declared non-changing character of the meaning per se, and opens up a possibility for alternative interpretations through challenging the fixed meanings of language structures that are used as a rationale for particular policies. In the case of Britain and its rationale for modernization and actual retention of nuclear weapons, the creation of those opposing structures turned out to be vital for continual reconstruction of the meaning of nuclear weapons with regard to British identity needs.

There were three main binary oppositions that were mechanically created and used as a legitimate natural basis for keeping the deterrent

1. The rationality of keeping the deterrent regarding security of Britain versus irrationality of its abolition
2. The Western rationality and responsibility of democratic nuclear states versus Eastern foolishness and non-reliability of Eastern WMD holders
3. Atlanticist UK-US relationship based on a strong attachment to NATO versus French independent selfish pro-European nuclear policy

As Weldes notes, through “[a] wide array of already available cultural and linguistic resources, state officials create representations”<sup>322</sup>, which in turn, “create self and others” with particular identity. This creates a rigid structure of shared meanings considered to be taken for granted, “a quasi-causal arguments... [that] put reason and justify actions.”<sup>323</sup>

With regard to the first constructed opposition, as it was mentioned earlier, the notion of rationality and responsibility was connected with retention of nuclear deterrent. As the then Prime Minister Tony Blair noted, an abandonment of nuclear deterrent “would be unwise and dangerous for Britain”<sup>324</sup>. This notion was later reiterated with the same rhetoric that considered giving up the arsenal as something that

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<sup>320</sup> KRAUS, Keith and C WILLIAMS, Michael. *Critical security studies: concepts and cases*. p. 64.

<sup>321</sup> CAMPBELL, David. *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. p.9

<sup>322</sup> WELDES, Jutta. *Constructing National Interest*. p. 281.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

is not “sensible”<sup>325</sup> and “would be extraordinary ill advised, and, indeed, a national act of folly”<sup>326</sup>. The same line of argumentation was also used in the second case, where there was an opposition of “responsible and democratic nuclear powers”<sup>327</sup> versus other countries that were perceived as a source of danger, and as such served as a source of legitimacy for Britain’s nuclear weapons. The third analyzed opposition was constructed with regard to external actors that have been shaping British perception of the Self and its nuclear weapons policy. The principle Atlanticism embraced by Great Britain with combination of British strong attachment to both the United States and NATO created a dichotomy between Britain and its closes Ally versus France, where relationship towards the United States was constructed on the basis of “significant other” while relationship with France was kept within the “self-other” framework. This notion, however, has been slightly changing with regard to France’s comeback to NATO structures as well as due to start of an official nuclear cooperation under mutual nuclear agreement in 2010.

Finally, categories of good and bad, as used with regard to Western vs. Other nuclear weapon states, were challenged by the proponents of unilateral nuclear disarmament. They reversed the connection between construct of rationality and (non)possession of nuclear weapons and created a counter discourse with its own binary oppositions. However, because of lack of the (political) power, proponents were unable to overpower the dominant official Governmental framework. The initial appeal on the contested justification on the basis of rational rules of war conduct<sup>328</sup> later moved towards previously mentioned legal versus moral battle, where moral attributes held a little power facing the rationalization of fulfilled legal obligations with reference to the NPT regime. Nevertheless, these discrepancies pointed out to the ongoing tendency of contestation of the logic behind dominant discursive frameworks of British nuclear deterrent and attempts to creation of alternative binary oppositions. Although the strength of the alternative discourse has not yet evolved, the potential, especially in combination with wider public discourse support, could broke the chains of domination and bring a shift in Britain’s overall nuclear policy.

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<sup>324</sup> HC Deb 4 Dec 2006 vol 454 c 21.

<sup>325</sup> HC Deb 4 Dec 2006 vol 454 c 32.

<sup>326</sup> HC Deb 14 Mar 2007 vol 458 c 314.

<sup>327</sup> HC Deb 4 Dec 2006 vol 454 c 28.

<sup>328</sup> HC Deb 14 Mar 2007 vol 458 cc 332-3.

## ***Outside the dominant discursive framework – masculinity and limits of public debate***

In this regard, the final part will be dealing with the effect of the connection between language and power. From the position of power, British Government attempted to secure the discourse along above mentioned binary oppositions and through the implicit attachment of nuclear weapons to wider understanding of British identity based on the Western thinking, values and relations. However, the non-dominant parts of the discourse, represented mostly by public opinion, were either largely omitted in declaration of legitimizing postures or brought into opposing framework with regard to modernization of the British nuclear Trident systems. With regard to the connection between discourse and power, a critical feminist analysis provides an interesting insight onto understanding of how the imagery of masculine and feminine has reflected on the discourse and how this affected the visibility and ability of alternative interpretations to challenge the dominant framework.

A central focus of gendered analysis presupposes that “certain ideas, concerns, interests, information, feelings and meanings are marked in national security discourse as feminine and devalued” and consequently silenced and sidelined as ‘irrational’ and ‘weak’.<sup>329</sup> Therefore, “[d]iscourses about nuclear weapons... are infused with a series of conceptual dichotomies which flow from and underpin the primary signifiers of masculine/feminine, with the masculine side of dichotomy favoured over the feminine.”<sup>330</sup> These mechanisms could be seen in the Britain’s discourse on the future of Trident against the proposition of unilateral nuclear disarmament. As was mentioned above, the idea of disarmament was ascribed the category of irrationality and irresponsibility. Moreover, Government explicitly connected feminine imaging with non-possession of nuclear weapons when stated that the refusal of modernization of Trident “...would send... the wrong message – a message of weakness.”<sup>331</sup> This connected an ethical categorization of right and wrong with potential strength or weakness implicitly attached to the retention of nuclear arsenal, which provided additional moral justification value to modernization of UK’s nuclear weapons and reiterated the masculine construct of strong Britain that responsibly protects its citizens. On the other hand, even Britain as a country partially embraces feminine aspects within

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<sup>329</sup> COHN, Carol, HILL, Felicity, RUDDICK, Sandra. *The Relevance of Gender for Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction*. p. 5.

<sup>330</sup> DUNCANSON, Claire and ESCHLE, Catherine. *Gender and the Nuclear Weapons State: A Feminist Critique of the UK Government’s White Paper on Trident*. p. 546.

its own identity. According to Duncanson, there exist tension “between the government’s wish to maintain its masculinised pre-eminence as a nuclear state and its concurrent desire to claim the moral high ground with an ethical dimension to its foreign policy”<sup>332</sup>, but concludes that “such considerations... cannot be allowed to trump the arguments for Trident renewal.”<sup>333</sup> The other categories of irrationality with regard to definition of Others might stem for example from portrayal of “a deficient gross masculinity in contrast to the rationality and restraint of “ourselves””<sup>334</sup>, as was the case, for example, of the portrayal of enemy images of terrorists or state-sponsored terrorism.

Finally, the question of non-visibility of public debate with regard to overall must be addressed. Although the extensive amount of official reports and work had been published in Parliament<sup>335</sup>, the non-official discourses were rarely their dominant part. The explanation for this might be that this absence reflects the perception of the state as a “protector” and civilians within the state as “protected”, which subsequently creates a gender biased dichotomy.<sup>336</sup> This dichotomy of masculine state versus feminine public also reflects the roles that are ascribed – the state being an active creator of security policy while civilians being passive acceptors without voice. Also, as was presented in the chapter that dealt with structural frameworks, the public approval of the modernization was directly connected with the electoral outcomes. As the then Secretary of State for Defence noted “the Government were elected on a promise that we would retain Trident”<sup>337</sup> and that ... “[w]e shall maintain the minimum deterrent to which we committed before the general elections – a commitment on the basis of which [we] were elected.”<sup>338</sup> The voice of public thus has been limited to participation in the elections, whose results then automatically gave the Government legitimacy for its decisions. Other public communities such as Churches or Campaign for Nuclear

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<sup>331</sup> HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 c 361.

<sup>332</sup> DUNCANSON, Claire and ESCHLE, Catherine. *Gender and the Nuclear Weapons State: A Feminist Critique of the UK Government’s White Paper on Trident*. p. 550.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.* p. 554

<sup>335</sup> See MILLS, Claire and BROOKE-HOLLAND, Louisa. *Future of the British Nuclear Deterrent – Suggested Reading on Trident*.

<sup>336</sup> DUNCANSON, Claire and ESCHLE, Catherine. *Gender and the Nuclear Weapons State: A Feminist Critique of the UK Government’s White Paper on Trident*. p. 553.

<sup>337</sup> HC Deb 8 July 1998 vol 315 c 1076.

<sup>338</sup> HC Deb 8 July 1998 vol 315 c 1084.

Disarmament has spoke openly against the modernization of nuclear deterrent, but with no significant result.<sup>339</sup>

However, the recent public polls have been showing the growing discrepancy between the official line of pursuing of Trident replacement and public vote on the issue. If we look on the general public attitudes towards nuclear weapons and their potential use, the polls show that there is a decrease in the support for the use of weapons even against the nuclear weapons attack<sup>340</sup>. In case of Trident replacement, several public polls showed a growing tendency to oppose the Governmental position by either supporting cheaper alternatives<sup>341</sup> or by support of a complete abandonment of deterrent<sup>342</sup>. This, however, does not seem to affect the official discourse to the level that would be sufficient for challenging the actual contours of British nuclear weapons policy. The 2016 Main Gate decision could bring a new wave of challenging, but with Conservatives major win in recent elections<sup>343</sup>, which historically represented a pro-retention base, the chances of switching towards unilateral nuclear disarmament are indeed very limited.

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<sup>339</sup> See for example HC Deb 14 March 2007 vol 458 c 350, c 360.

<sup>340</sup> 1955 approval versus 2005 dropped from 76% to 55% while opposition doubled from 16% to 32 % see BYROM, Andy. British attitudes on nuclear weapons. *Journal of Public Affairs*.p. 75.

<sup>341</sup> See Reuters UK. *Britain should rethink nuclear weapons policy – poll*. 13 July 2010; DailyMail Online. *Here's £37 bn of cuts to get you started, voters tell PM*. 13 June 2010.

<sup>342</sup> The Guardian. *Voters want Britain to scrap all nuclear weapons, ICM poll shows*. 13 July 2009; The Guardian. *Should the UK renew the Trident nuclear missile system?* 8 April 2014.

<sup>343</sup> Conservative party assured itself a majority in Parliament

## SUMMARY

This thesis dealt with the issue of identity with relation to the process of modernization of Britain's nuclear deterrent. Through constructivist analysis of the discourse, the author attempted to reveal the social constructions of legitimizing and delegitimizing postures that served as justifications for the continuation or abandonment of British nuclear deterrent. The author has focused both on the analysis official framework embedded in norms and practices, as well as on the actual discourse connected with the long-term debate on the future of the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons and tried to reveal the meaning and mindsets behind the language used by official Government and Parliamentary representatives.

The first part of the analysis focused on the legitimization postures that were used in order to secure the meaning of nuclear weapons as an important and inherent part of British strategic culture, which, in turn, were supposed to secure the British identity based on the position of 'pivotal' power. The strategy of the Government laid in the creation of the image of indispensability of nuclear weapons. Through the construction of the image of uncertain security environment, the role of the British nuclear weapons as an ultimate guarantor against potentially omnipresent threats has been repeatedly reconstructed in official documents. This process enabled the reproduction of Britain's identity of a strong, responsible, and active member of the international community. The dominant part of the identity, however, started to be contested by other identity aspect, namely Britain's primacy in global nuclear disarmament effort. Still, the discrepancy between Britain's identity of a strong international player, connected with Britain's interest in retention of the Trident, and potential newly emerging identity of the first NWS to pursue unilateral disarmament, did not disrupt the dominant identity framework.

The second part of the analysis dealt with the external actors that has contributed to the construction of the British identity and therefore has also been shaping its nuclear weapons policy. The chapter analysis focused on three actors – the United States, France and NATO – and their role in reproduction of Britain's identity and their reflection on British nuclear policy. In case of the United States, the principle of Atlanticism has played an important role within British identity. The strong historical attachment to the United States as the most important partner served as an enabling element for continuation of the British deterrent, through the securing of the framework

for cooperation on nuclear as well as wider defense issues. The sharing of the common Western mindset and perception of the outside world strengthened the harmonization of nuclear policies and bolstered the notion of USA as “significant other” in the British mindset.

On the other hand, the UK’s relationship with France has been reproduced along the lines of ‘prestige rivalry’ for the position of an ultimate guarantor of European defense throughout the Cold War. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the window of opportunity for potential co-operation has been opened, and to a limited extent there has also been a shift in the perception and the policy towards France. While previous discourse stressed the impossibility of leaving the Europe in the hands of an irresponsible and selfish neighbor, the recent British rhetoric has shifted towards perception of the France as one of the most important of strategic partners.

Finally, the role of the NATO was analyzed in regard to Britain’s nuclear weapons. It has been concluded, that NATO has been providing a continuous rationale for British nuclear deterrent through Britain’s integration into NATO defense structures and subsequent creation of the second centre of decision, although with certain operational limitations. Moreover, NATO has also served as a platform for the maintaining and deepening of the UK-US cooperation while recreated the alienation between the United Kingdom and France. But, as was noted, this situation is believed to be slowly changing.

To conclude, all of the above mentioned aspects of Britain’s identity have worked as complementary structures that have enabled the reproduction of the British identity inherently connected with the possession of nuclear weapons. Although being challenged in the process, the dominant framework for legitimization of nuclear deterrent and its modernization wasn’t severely damaged, partially also because of the major ignorance of a wider public discourse on the issue. The 2016 Main gate decision, however, might show some turbulence that might potentially endanger the future of the Trident system.

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## MASTER THESIS PROJECT

Topic:

The Issue of Identity: Great Britain's Need for  
Nuclear Re-armament – The Case of Trident  
Missiles

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**Specification and delimitation of the topic**

The world in these days when it comes to the nuclear weapons is circling around couple of important topics. First, and probably foremost, is the issue of nuclear disarmament (mostly connected to the United States and Russia) and possibility to go further and probably in a multilateral way. Another issue is case of so-called "rogue states" going nuclear, which other states see as a threat to their security, and therefore they are keeping and legitimizing possession of nuclear weapons. These two things are kind of contradictive as it comes to the policies that result from them. So the question that arises is connected to Great Britain's attitude. Where it stands in these two poles of possible nuclear policies? Well, the answer is that Britain is going kind of its own way. It has been steadily one of the most supportive members of international community towards the United States as it comes to the war on terror and other activities. Surely, this is due to the special relationship, which evolved but endured since the mid of WWII and has strongly contributed to creating shared norms and values, which definitely contribute to mind-set of decision-making politics. On the other way, there is also strong wow towards NATO membership and protection of members through collective security organization. These two attributes heavily contributed to shaping Great Britain's foreign policy and as such are also shaping Britain's nuclear policies.

The agenda that has been keeping the attention in recent years is connected to modernizing weaponry systems with all kind of political, financial and security issues that need to be taken into count. What is not so obvious, and definitely not so stressed within the official framework, are actual policies or better said processes and mind-sets behind this policies. What makes Britain so eager to continue on modernizing its nuclear weaponry and what makes it so important? That kind of questions are normally set within security framework, but for purpose of this paper it is important to have a look on connection between state's identity and pursuing specific nuclear weapon policy, in this case policy of modernizing Trident nuclear weapon systems. In December 2006 the British government announced via their defense White paper to begin process of replacing their current Trident nuclear systems which meant retaining of nuclear weapons at least until 2050. This poses a great question towards reliability of global nuclear disarmament efforts. And we are asking again why is Britain so desperately trying to modernize their weapons and how they legitimize their vertical proliferation?

It is definitely creating some normative questions and in case of nuclear weapons it will always be that way.

### **Choice of topic**

I chose this topic for number of different reasons. Firstly, I have always been fascinated by nuclear weapons, not so much by the policies or frameworks behind it, but by weapons and their destructive powers as such. However, it is always better to understand what mind set and framework is constructing reality to put these weapons onto graveyard of some state's history or keep it modern and capable enough to actually show something else than military capability and strength. Secondly, because in my opinion, the literature of nuclear disarmament is overwhelmingly full of cases out of concrete Europe's nuclear armament, or re-armament projects, in this case British nuclear armament project. Thirdly, although there is a lot of literature on nuclear weapons and states' identity, not so many scholars have been trying to put it together with case of British Trident missile systems. World politics is seemingly overpowered with current disarmament issues and also with rogue state issues, but small, yet still seemingly powerful Britain is just slipping through the fingers of general attention. Last but not least, I have been strongly influenced and inspired by papers and articles written by Nick Ritchie, who is currently scholar and researcher at the University of York and who has been steadily devoting his attention towards UK nuclear policies and Trident missile system issues in particular. Through his work, Ritchie is putting strong and firm opposition against re-armament of British nuclear arsenal and as such it inspired me to take critical look on the topic and made me interested in all of above mentioned questions of mind-set, framework and identity issues.

### **Research questions**

As it comes to the research questions, there are two important ones. Firstly, through analysis of the part one and two I would like to answer the question how the construction and recreation of Britain's identity (mostly focused on preserving important place and status in world politics) shapes its nuclear weapons policy and its practices. The other question will be also how the relationships with France and US shape Britain's identity in this issue. The last question is how the public opinion is contributing to issue of collective identity, and what causes such strong discrepancy between the level of public understanding of British identity and understanding on the official levels.

### **Hypothesis**

Hypothesis is derived from the concept of socially constructed reality. I assume that constructed notion of British identity connected to preserving world power status with combination of special relations with US (as one of the leading power) and Britain's need to preserve their status as undeniable part of their state's identity is creating strong pressure towards retaining and modernizing its nuclear capabilities. This notion of great power and responsibility as well as vital interest is to keep up the pace for modernizing and thus fully and truly create strong Britain's picture. This is why the output of practices and attitudes on official levels is heavily in favor of modernizing their nuclear arsenal. However, this process can only slow down the ongoing drop of Britain's prestige and role as a world power.

## **Methodology**

### **Overall methodology**

The main methodology that is going to be used will be focused on critical constructivism. This specific approach stresses the importance of creation of norms and shared values, which build constructive reality as solely subjective level of perception. So-called social facts are created by actors that give them specific meaning and significance through giving of social purpose. These norms then create social practices and identities based on mutually constructed norms, rules and institutions to engage with social facts. States' identities are not stable and simply vary and differ through time. The key concept is to challenge these norms and values with challenging the framework within which they are created as social facts. Critical constructivism therefore looks at constructivism within social and cultural environment and adds a critical dimension of analyzing these environments. Taylor for example describes critical constructivism as social epistemology that addresses socio-cultural context of knowledge construction and serves as a referent for cultural reforms. It also shows relativism and restriction of possibility to objectively learn within social and cultural construct that is already created.

With application to Great Britain's nuclear re-armament it is important to focus on issue of identity within above mentioned framework. States are committed to their constructed social purpose by maintaining their power and prestige, which form their identities.<sup>344</sup> These identities do not exist as itself, but rather serve to demarcate an

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<sup>344</sup> Van WYK, Jo-Ansie et al. *The international politics of nuclear weapons: A constructivist analysis*. South African Journal of Military Studies, vol. 35, No.1, 2007. p.23



“inside” from the “outside”, a “domestic” from a “foreign”.<sup>345</sup> They are simply shaping states’ uniqueness and distinction from other players and as such create specific meaning to state’s role in international politics. In order to function within changing international framework, identities of states are never given, but (re)produced in relation to other states through repetitive practices that code, constitute and discipline boundaries on which the identity/difference problematic depends.<sup>346</sup> It means that states’ interactions to some extent shape their own identities and as such it is important to understand particular identity within wider framework than state’s itself.

As it comes to particular state (actor), Wendt distinguishes three state identities: corporate identity – referring to state’s intrinsic qualities like norms, beliefs and resources; social identity(roles) – referring to set of meanings that state attributed to itself, and state’s collective identity – established when a social identity generates collective interests.<sup>347</sup> All these three different types of identities play important role in creating and shaping state’s interests and policies. According to some scholars, ideas and identity play even greater role in defining interests than material forces.<sup>348</sup> In case of Great Britain and its identity issue, it can be true more than ever. The main focus thus will be on state’s social identity on one hand and collective identity which would be given on opposite pole to Britain’s social identity.

### **Research strategy**

The whole research is planned to be divided into three parts which are partially interconnected. The first part and aim of research is to critically analyze major defense and security documents to show structural framework and mindsets which are connected to the creation of Britain’s own identity and its preservation in their own foreign policy context. This is important, because it serves as an output of share values, beliefs and attitudes towards possession and use of nuclear weapons, and it also shows strong bonding with concept of modernizing nuclear arsenal which might not have been the most credible as it comes to facing new security challenges. Through deconstruction of basic set of legitimizing posture and challenging it by current world state I would like to argue, that it is not concept of deterrence that is crucial for Great Britain to keeping and modernizing nuclear arsenal, but it’s rather notion of preserving their identity, more

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<sup>345</sup> PEOPLES, Columba, VAGHUAN-WILLIAMS, Nick. *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*. London: Routledge. 2010. p. 68

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Van WYK, Jo-Ansie et al. *The international politics of nuclear weapons: A constructivist analysis*. South African Journal of Military Studies, vol. 35, No.1, 2007. p.24

concretely their status as nuclear weapon state as well as status of major power, that plays important role and shapes actual decision-making policy as it comes to legitimizing and modernizing its nuclear arsenal. The main part of analysis of the first part will be focused on official documents that are officially presenting UK foreign policy and as such are creating framework of their own identity. For delimitation of documents, main part will be dealing with UK Defense White Paper on United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent from 2006 and Strategic Defense and security review from 2010 as they were considered the key documents and National security strategy as basic strategic document considering security and foreign policy.

The second part would be focused on analysis of two important players in the realm of shaping Britain's policy towards nuclear weapons, who have strong impact on shaping Great Britain's own identity. The first player (actor, state) will be United States as long-term partner of Britain especially in the field of foreign policy and military issues. The special relationship has been over more than last 50 years one of the crucial attributes of accommodating British foreign policy. It has dramatically contributed to keeping British nuclear arsenal and therefore needs to be analyzed as a specific aspect of Britain's identity. The key focus would be on analyzing Britain's perception of its own role in this relationship and also on the connection between this special relationship and Britain's world power status. The aim is to get the view on how is this relationship shaping decision-making and practices towards (in this case) modernizing nuclear arsenal, and what is the role of the United States in this process as well in the process of preserving Britain's own identity. Also the analyses would be partially dedicated to role of British nuclear weapons in NATO structure as part of a pillar for NATO nuclear deterrence ability. The second player will be France as one of the traditional opposing power on European continent and its role in reshaping Britain's identity, which has impact on above mentioned policy towards modernization of nuclear arsenal with Trident missile systems. The aim is to find if and to what extent are Franco-British relations connected to nuclear weapons influencing Britain's identity and what role have British attitudes towards France in shaping this identity.

The third part would be focusing on qualitative analysis of some of many public polls and media releases on the question of Trident modernization. The aim is to show the contradictory attitudes of public as it comes to spending money on modernization rather

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

than disarmament, and also on negative results of polls as it comes to possible nuclear attack or retaliation. The main point is to understand, that however the polls are showing negative results, it does not change the politics and this is probably because it is not primary issue of internal politics of the Great Britain. However, on the other hand, it is not possible to neglect the fact, that shared values and issue of collective identity is in this case not so well established and qualitative analyses of these polls are proof of this state. Last but not least, analyses will also try to pinpoint that identity and values may differ from different levels of analysis and that collective values and identity and social identity of Great Britain are separated via position in decision making and bureaucracy process and public opinion views.

### **Research techniques**

Basic research technique as was mentioned above is analyses of three different aspects that are shaping Britain's identity and affecting the ongoing process of modernization of Trident nuclear weapons systems. The first part will be analysis of basic documents covering the issue of British foreign policy and nuclear weapons with focus on depicting Britain's role in the world politics and role of modern and capable nuclear weapons in it. The output then will be extended by analysis actual decision-making process and ongoing practices as well as legitimizing postures of representatives backed by subjective perception of Britain's role as nuclear major power. The whole construction of identity then will be challenged by putting it into global framework of politics and trying to show that credibility, power and capability of Britain and its nuclear arsenal is very limited.

The second part will be dealing with two above mentioned important actors (states) that are both shaping British attitudes and identity differently. Through analysis of their relationship and mutual interactions as well as established frameworks for cooperation/rivalry in area of preserving particular power status on the one side and nuclear weapon policy on the other, it will be important to take a closer look on couple of issues. Firstly, extended analysis of special relationship between United States and Great Britain will be needed especially in cooperation on nuclear weapons and building coherent coalition of powerful and capable states. Secondly, there will be analysis on Britain's view of France as unstable and irrational partner in preserving security of Europe and world as a whole, and therefore importance of strong British nuclear weapon arsenal to keep the Europe secure and at the same time keeping Britain's own status secured.

Opposition and different approach to the issue of incoherency of British identity will be presented by comparing results of various public polls on question of Trident missile system with above mentioned perception of British identity. The key is to show different approach towards same issue of modernization Britain's nuclear arsenal, which have been shown to some extent been as a practical output of perception of own British identity. In addition to this, there will also analysis of public opinion towards theoretical retaliation/attack towards other states in order to show, that public sphere does not support any possible nuclear attack. This is also important, because possible negative approach of public sphere resulting in Britain's inability to fulfill its own created purpose can somewhat have detrimental consequences for their own collective identity. In addition, the purpose is also to show that even if practices and propagation of British identity seems somehow united, public support is showing opposite results.

### **Structure of thesis**

- I. Introduction
- II. Theoretical Background
- III. British nuclear forces and its development
- IV. Official document analysis
- V. British relationships with other states
  - a. British special relationship with U.S.
  - b. British relationship with France
- VI. State vs. public opinion analysis
- VII. Conclusion

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