

British Military Attitudes to Nuclear Weapons and Disarmament

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Project Scope and Purpose

- Exploring the views of ex-military personnel on the UK's nuclear weapons and related issues.

Why?

- To fill a gap in knowledge and networks.
- To stimulate and inform a wider debate.
- Topical issue: important decisions; international tensions; political salience.

Research Methods

- Research sample: 35 people; 20 ex-military. No currently serving military personnel.
- Data collection: July 2014 – February 2015.
- Semi-structured interviews: conducted by phone or in person; varied in length.
- Nature of Study: qualitative; small sample size; sensitivities of wording / questions
- Potential to access complicated insights, and bypass ideological barriers.

Overview of Research Findings

- Should the UK have nuclear weapons; if so, what form?
- How are the costs of nuclear weapons perceived?
- What role do nuclear weapons play in the UK's security strategy?
- Are the UK's nuclear weapons political or military?
- How is the UK's nuclear weapons decision-making process perceived?
- What risks are associated with nuclear weapons?
- Is global nuclear disarmament seen as desirable and realistic?

Conclusions

- Large – but not universal – support for Trident submarine replacement.
- Lack of clarity on the purpose of nuclear weapons.
- Concern about the attention and understanding given to nuclear weapons decisions.
- Global nuclear disarmament is seen as desirable, but there is scepticism, esp. about current possibilities.
- Decisions about the UK's nuclear weapons and defence should be based on full analysis.

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Nuclear Education Trust and Nuclear Information Service

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