

Nuclear Attack? We Must Support Corbyn's Refusal to Murder Millions

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This week's Labour conference sent the party and its new leader, Jeremy Corbyn, soaring in popularity. So better get the knife in quick, writes Oliver Tickell. His refusal to commit mass murder in a nuclear attack gave his enemies just the cue they needed – including those who should be his loyal allies. We must not let them succeed.

This was a deliberate, coordinated, pre-emptive attack, an attempt to weaken, undermine and destabilise Labour's most popular party leader in a generation, elected with an overwhelming mandate.

Jeremy Corbyn's first Labour Conference as party leader and Leader of the Opposition was looking like an overwhelming success – the best in many years.

Delegates were inspired by his speech, rapturous in their applause, and reassured by the calm 'bank manager' image projected by the shadow Chancellor John McDonnell.

Even more important, opinion polls were showing that Corbyn popularity in the country was on the rise. [In a Sky poll](#), more than half thought he would make a credible prime minister, 66% liked his leadership style, and 59% felt more likely to vote Labour in a General Election. Disaster!

Disaster, that is, for his enemies who are determined to bring him down. Remember [Churchill's political saw](#): 'the other side are your opponents. Your enemies are sitting behind you.'

And so it proved to be. Labour mayoral candidate for London Sadiq Khan kicked it off on the BBC's Today programme by stubbornly refusing to find anything positive to say about Corbyn's leadership when pressed to do so. Condemnation, not by faint praise but by a total absence of praise of any kind.

But the real attack kicked off last night after an [interview with the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg](#).

Petition: '[Support Jeremy Corbyn: No to nuclear weapons! No to Trident!](#)'

'I will not commit mass murder of innocent millions' – Shock Horror!

Asked about nuclear weapons, Corbyn had nothing terribly surprising to say. After all we all know he is against nuclear weapons, and would not renew the UK's Trident nuclear missile system. That's the basis on which he was elected party leader.

LC: *"Would you ever push the nuclear button if you were prime minister?"*

JC: *"I am opposed to nuclear weapons, I am opposed to the holding and usage of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are the ultimate weapons of mass destruction that can only kill millions of civilians if ever used. I am totally and morally opposed to nuclear weapons. I do not see them as a defence and do not see the use of them as a credible way to do things"*

LC: *"So yes or no you would never push the nuclear button?"*

JC: *"I have told you perfectly clearly its immoral to have or use nuclear weapons, I have made that clear all my life."*

LK: *"But Jeremy Corbyn do you acknowledge there is a risk that you would put your own principles before the protection of this country?"*

JC: *"It looks to the voters I hope that I am someone who is absolutely committed to the spread of international law, spreading international human rights, bringing a nuclear free world nearer."*

LK: *"And that is more important to you than the protection of this country? Some voters might think that."*

JC: *"We are not under threat from any nuclear power. We are under threat from instability, yes, there is a terrorist issue around the world. Listen, the nuclear weapons that the United States hold, all the hundreds if not thousands of warheads they've got , were no help to them on 9/11."*

In other BBC interviews he referred to the UK's legal duties to pursue nuclear disarmament under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, adding: *"I want to see a nuclear-free world. I believe it is possible. I do not think we should be renewing Trident ... I think we should be promoting an international nuclear weapons convention which would lead to a nuclear-free world."*

There are five declared nuclear weapon states in the world. There are three others that have nuclear weapons. That is eight countries out of 192; 187 countries do not feel the need to have nuclear weapons to protect their security. Why should those five need them to protect their security? We are not in the cold war any more.

"I don't think we should be spending £100bn on renewing Trident. That is a quarter of our defence budget. There are many in the military that do not want Trident renewed because they see it as an obsolete thing they don't need. They would much rather see it spent on conventional weapons.

And as he pointed in his own speech to the conference, this is the position that he took in the leadership election, and on which he was elected with a massive popular mandate.

The snakes come out of their holes

It was only to be expected that Corbyn's anti-nuclear weapons stance would arouse widespread indignation in the UK's predominantly right wing media. More shocking is the fact that it was also roundly denounced by members of his own shadow cabinet.

Lining up to condemn Corbyn's position on nuclear weapons were shadow defence secretary Maria Eagle, shadow foreign secretary Hilary Benn, shadow home secretary Andy Burnham, and shadow justice secretary Lord Falconer.

In the face of this open rebellion Corbyn stuck to his principles – but said that he would be [prepared to live with a Labour Party decision to renew Trident](#).

So what was going on? The apparently coordinated rush to condemn in belligerent terms by those who should be Corbyn's loyal political allies makes the truth clear. This was no mere disagreement among colleagues to be debated in a reasoned manner as part of Labour's policy making process.

This was, rather, a deliberate, coordinated, pre-emptive attack, an attempt to weaken, undermine and destabilise Labour's most popular party leader in a generation, [elected with an overwhelming mandate](#).

Corbyn's principled refusal to make himself a mass murderer and war criminal is legally, strategically and militarily correct, and in accordance with the UK's international treaty obligations to pursue nuclear disarmament. We should give him our unconditional support in his quest for a nuclear-free world.

And we must not let them get away with it!

Petition: '[Support Jeremy Corbyn: No to nuclear weapons! No to Trident!](#)'

Action:

- [Contact the Labour Party](#) to tell them of your position, and your disgust at the disloyal attacks on Corbyn from within his own party and shadow cabinet.
- [Contact your Labour MP](#) (if applicable) calling on them to give Corbyn their full support. Especially if your MP is Andy Burnham, Angela Eagle or Hilary Benn"

Oliver Tickell edits The Ecologist.

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