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peace matters

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You can't nuke a virus ***It's time for real security***

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**“War is a crime against
humanity. I renounce
war, and am therefore
determined not to
support any kind of
war. I am also
determined to work for
the removal of all
causes of war.”**

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Front page photo: Supporters of the
Healthcare Not Warfare campaign: (l-r)
Ali, a nurse in Glasgow; Anya Nanning
Ramamurthy in London; Sarah Reader in
Brussels.

The Peace Pledge Union is the oldest
secular pacifist organisation in Britain.
Through War Resisters' International we
are linked with similar groups around the
world.

What makes us safe?

Symon Hill, Editor

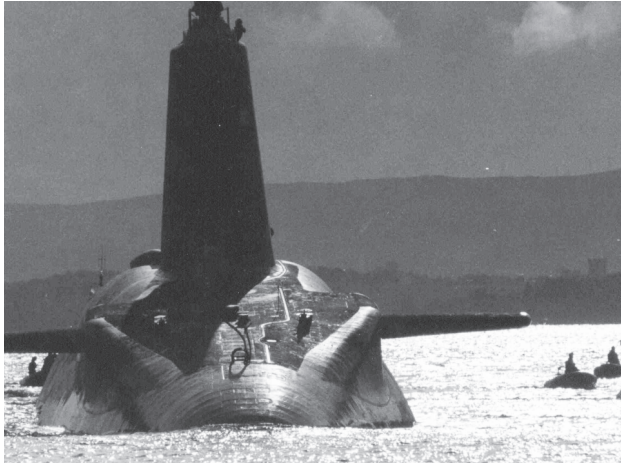
In 2017, the UK Risk Register of Civil Emergencies warned of a “high probability” of a major epidemic. It said that government departments including the Ministry of Defence were working together to be prepared.

The UK government’s last two Strategic Defence & Security Review cited epidemics as security threats, but having mentioned them, they then focused on armed force.

For people who are ill with Covid, for those who have lost jobs in the pandemic and others struggling with mental health during lockdown, it seems unlikely that security lies in fighter jets and nuclear submarines (pictured).

As if this situation were not absurd enough, parts of the right-wing media suggest that the people who threaten us the most are tiny numbers of desperate refugees turning up in dinghies.

But there are glimmers of hope. It was inspiring to see British soldier Ahmed Al-Babati bravely refusing to fight in an army involved in war in Yemen, at the



same time as Welsh pacifists defeated plans for new training base that was likely to be used by Saudi pilots (see page 5).

Meanwhile, Black Lives Matter has shown the power of grassroots resistance. I suggest that in the peace movement, we need not only to support the Black Lives Matter movement but to allow ourselves to be challenged by it and to ask uncomfortable questions about how far we are colluding with racism or resisting it. Far from erasing history, Black Lives Matter calls us to look history in the face, asking what we want to mourn and what we want to celebrate.

These are important

questions, never more so than in the run-up to Remembrance Day. See pages 8-9 to find out about our new Remembrance Resource Pack for schools, as well as other new educational resources. You can also read Sawsan Bastawy’s encouragement to support decolonisation (pages 10-11). We have various news stories (pages 4-7), as well as poetry and reviews) (pages 13-15). On page 14, you can read Albert Beale’s tribute to Chris Roper, who sadly died in July after decades of inspiring – and sometimes downright surprising – pacifist activism.

Covid reveals nonsense of military 'security'

The Covid-19 pandemic has made clear that war and militarism cannot address the serious threats that we face. That has been the message from the Peace Pledge Union and a host of other groups, who insist that we must reject militarism as we tackle the pandemic and rebuild society.

Security reviews by the UK Ministry of Defence over the last decade have listed epidemics and pandemics among the likely threats to the safety of people in the UK and the wider world, along with climate change, natural disasters and terrorism. Despite this, governments have devoted so-called "defence" budgets to preparations for war.

Ceri Dare, an epidemiologist who is a PPU member, said in March, "We could be facing this crisis, which the government's own assessments told us was coming, with the weapons we truly needed to win: a resilient NHS, local councils funded to fulfil their responsibilities in Public Health, social care for disabled and older people."

She added, "Instead of



this, we are armed only with the useless weapons of war. We cannot battle our way out of a pandemic with bombs and guns. The lies of 'defence' ring hollow now."

A day of action organised by the PPU in April saw hundreds of people taking to social media to post pictures with messages such as "Fund Healthcare, Not Warfare!" and "Fighter jets won't defend us from Covid 19".

On 22 April, the head of the armed forces Nick Carter appeared at the UK government's daily briefing (pictured). Wearing combat fatigues, he took the opportunity to push a militarist agenda and talked of "defending the homeland with the nuclear deterrent".

Carter spoke of forces personnel who had built hospitals and delivered supplies. The PPU expressed gratitude to everyone doing this work.

However, Carter's figures revealed that less than 13% of military personnel were either involved in such work or on standby for it.

On the same day, 19 charities and campaigning groups signed an open letter calling for military resources to be reallocated towards tackling Covid. "Money diverted from military budgets could contribute towards NHS and social care costs, initiatives to assist those losing their jobs and support for people whose mental health is affected by isolation," they explained.

Army arrests own soldier for speaking out over Yemen

A British soldier has been arrested for daring to speak out against the UK's role in arming and training Saudi forces fighting in Yemen.

Meanwhile the RAF have backed down in attempts to develop a new training site in Wales, which was expected to be used to train Saudi pilots.

Ahmed Al-Babati, a Lance Corporal in the Royal Signals, was arrested by Royal Military Police on 24 August while standing opposite Downing Street with a placard declaring his refusal to serve in the British army while it is involved in war in Yemen (pictured).

The protest came shortly after the UK government announced the formal resumption of arms exports to Saudi Arabia. British troops continue to provide training to Saudi forces, who have been accused by the UN of deliberately targeting civilians in Yemen.

In a recording made before his arrest, Al-Babati said, "I'd rather sleep peacefully in a cell than stay silent for a pay cheque".

The Peace Pledge



Union said that the arrest undermined any claim that UK armed forces exist to uphold democracy and freedom.

Al-Babati is likely to be charged and face a court-martial. The PPU is speaking out for his right to protest against war. The PPU opposes all war and is happy to work alongside people who resist particular wars.

Meanwhile, the RAF have abandoned attempts to develop a new military training site in north-west Wales in the face of widespread opposition.

There had been outrage over the likelihood that Llanbedr Airfield would be used to train Saudi pilots. They have already been trained at

nearby RAF Valley on Ynys Môn (Anglesey).

Snowdonia Aerospace, who run the site, have "formally paused" the plans as the RAF have changed their mind.

The news was welcomed by the PPU and Cymdeithas y Cymod (the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Wales), who were campaigning against the plans in solidarity with local people. Local pacifist Pryderi Llwyd Jones said, "It is not a time to relax in our campaigning but to be vigilant in a world where the arms industry is growing and war victims increasing."

The PPU promised that any attempt to build a new military training site elsewhere in the UK will be met with similar resistance.

MPs vote to put troops beyond the law

The House of Commons has voted for a bill that will introduce a “presumption against prosecution” for military personnel accused of war-related crimes overseas after five years have passed.

In reality, UK armed forces personnel are almost never prosecuted for war-related crimes.

The Overseas Operations Bill - nicknamed the “War Crimes Immunity Bill” - may now be amended in the Commons before being sent on to the Lords.

Prior to the vote, the Peace Pledge Union pointed out the dangers of watering down the law on war crimes only months after the *Sunday Times*, BBC Panorama and the *Guardian* published fresh evidence of the abuse and killing of civilians by UK troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The bill passed its second reading in the Commons on 23 September by 331 votes to 77, after Keir Starmer instructed Labour MPs to abstain. However, 19 Labour MPs joined with other opposition parties in the “no” lobby. Nadia

Whitton was sacked from her junior front bench role for voting against the bill.

The PPU emphasised that they oppose all war, whether technically legal or illegal. However, they said the bill would put the armed forces further beyond scrutiny. The forces are already allowed to run their own criminal trials and police force.

In recent years, pro-war newspapers have whipped up a fantasy of veterans being “dragged through the courts”.

On the rare occasions when accusations of war-related crimes do make it to court, this nearly always involves relatively junior

personnel rather than those who take the biggest decisions.

The PPU said that the bill threatens the rights of all victims of the UK armed forces, including forces personnel who have been mistreated. It places a six-year time limit on personnel taking legal action against the Ministry of Defence.

In addition to the PPU, critics of the bill include Freedom From Torture, the Centre for Military Justice, Forces Watch and Reprieve.

PPU members and allies are continuing to write to their MPs about the bill.

Everyday Militarism: Youth week of action

British pacifists in their teens and twenties will join with other anti-militarists around the world for the International Week of Action Against the Militarisation of Youth from **9th to 15th November**.

There are plans for actions in countries including Colombia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Russia and South Korea. Many actions will this year be online due to the pandemic.

To find out more about actions in the UK, or for support in planning your own action, please email mail@ppu.org.uk or keep an eye on the PPU website or social media.

Peace Pledge Union: News in brief

Tear gas for Trump

The use of tear gas and other anti-protest equipment against peaceful Black Lives Matter protesters in the US has triggered a campaign against the export of such equipment from Britain. Over 800,000 people have already signed a petition. You can sign at ppu.org.uk/action.

Court win for Ed

There was good news in August for pacifists and other supporters of civil liberties when a court ruled that South Wales Police had acted unlawfully in their use of facial recognition technology. The case was brought by PPU Council member Ed Bridges (below), after the technology was used against him during an anti-arms trade protest.



Ready to resist

With many face-to-face events on hold, an online gathering in September brought together people from around the UK and beyond to share ideas and plans for resisting everyday militarism. Speakers included author Azariah France-Williams (right) on the links between militarism and racism. There was passionate discussion on ways to challenge militarism in schools, politics and local communities.

MoD "diversity"

The Ministry of "Defence" has been recruiting someone to promote inclusion, just as new information reveals their role in training the forces of homophobic regimes. The MoD's Director of Diversity and Inclusion will receive £110,000 per year and "inspire Defence to root out inappropriate behaviours". Queer PPU supporter Zenab Ahmed said, "The tone here is that the most one should do is make institutions more 'inclusive', regardless of what those institutions do, and their impact on people and their lives".



Bomber Harris statue

In response to questions from the *Daily Telegraph*, the PPU have restated their opposition to the statue of Arthur "Bomber" Harris, known for colonial bombing and later the mass bombing of German civilians. The PPU has welcomed the growth in debate about the reality of the British Empire, brought about by Black Lives Matter and discussion over statues of figures linked with slavery and war.

Arms trade shame

UK governments have licensed nearly £100bn worth of arms exports in the last decade, according to figures published in October. Saudi Arabia was their largest customer. The Campaign Against Arms Trade described the situation as a "source of great shame".

Schools: new resources in a time of change



Saffron Gallup introduces the PPU's latest educational resources, including a new Remembrance and White Poppy Pack for schools.

Saffron is the's PPU Education Services Manager.

As I was writing this piece I received an email from a retired teacher stating, "I wish I had known about the Peace Pledge Union whilst I was teaching".

This was not only a timely reminder of the importance of the PPU as a source of information for educators. It was also a strong motivator to keep engaging with schools, colleges, staff and students as we negotiate this new educational context.

This year has put unprecedented demands on educational organisations and staff, and has had a huge impact on the learning and social development of children and young people. At the same time, we have recently seen the mobilisation of

young people in response to the climate emergency, the Black Lives Matter movement and government plans for A-level results. Young people are increasingly recognising and using the power of their voices. We have seen this too in the increasing numbers of young people joining the PPU.

Pacifist principles of critical questioning, challenging authoritarian structures and engaging in conflict resolution without violence fit into this dynamic framework. We have a rich history to draw on at the PPU, with real examples of activism and dissenting voices that pushed for positive change. Our educational resources aim to use this heritage and perspective to inform and engage young people.

Last month we published a new Remembrance and White Poppy Resource pack for schools. As well as suggestions for activities, such as assemblies and curriculum-linked lessons, the pack has a section on starting conversations around alternative remembrance in order to support those facing resistance within their community. We believe that young people should hear a range of perspectives on war and



peace, allowing them to form their own views as they grow up; as such the resource promotes an alternative approach to remembrance that focuses on remembering all victims of war, with a view to creating a more peaceful world.

The pack emphasises the importance of exploring diverse experiences of war, of questioning common assumptions and avoiding euphemistic or militaristic language. White poppies foster an understanding of the value of a peaceful society and alternatives to armed force.

Other educational resources produced by the PPU focus on telling untold or little-known stories, such as the experiences of individuals around the world in the last few months of World War Two. We also recently collaborated on an article in the National Education Union magazine describing the experiences of a number of teachers who were Conscientious Objectors in World War One.

Children and young people face a challenging and complex future. Re-

cent research by Protection Approaches indicated a growing wish from educators for interventions that support emotional wellbeing and resilience.

The story of the PPU has many examples of people coming together and using their skills to foster resilience and

manage conflict. As peace educators, we have a responsibility to share these alternative voices and stories of resistance, with the aim of engaging creativity and hope in our work towards positive peace.

**Find out more at
ppu.org.uk/education.**



Remembrance during the pandemic

The Peace Pledge Union is as usual distributing white poppies in the run-up to Remembrance Day.

They represent remembrance for all victims of war, a culture of peace and a rejection of militarism.

Covid means that we're working without the usual buzz of a crowded PPU office. We owe many thanks to everyone who is packing and distributing poppies as we follow strict safety policies in the office.

The message of white poppies is as vital as ever. In Yemen, the daily horrors of war make it impossible to follow measures to restrict the spread of Covid. Meanwhile, the Black Lives Matter movement reminds us of the need to decolonise Remembrance and ensure that we remember the realities of colonial wars in the past and present.

Order your white poppies - or see a list of outlets - at shop.ppu.org.uk.

Decolonisation: a challenge for peace activists

Sawsan Bastawy suggests that to resist militarism we must resist colonialism - and she offers ideas for how to do so.

Sawsan Bastawy is a British human rights activist.

The US invasion of Iraq - in international law.

or rather the world's response to the US invasion of Iraq - was perhaps the most widely-observed trial in recent memory of a new norm: which is that a global power can deploy considerable lethal violence against challenges to its hegemony.

It is well-documented that the preoccupation with 'developing' and 'underdeveloped' States is a manifestation of colonialist thinking. Many of these States are controlled through military and cultural imperialism, private colonisation of land and the slavery of unjust debt and conditional aid.

When this hegemony is challenged, imperialist governments have established norms that are not grounded

With this in mind, we cannot limit the project of decolonisation to exposing and eradicating harmful and fictitious legacies only. It is essential that we identify and contest such legacies in the curriculum, in popular cultural motifs, on our bookshelves and in our family histories, and in the violence meted out by the police against Black people in this country; but colonialism persists in one form or another, and these legacies are often deployed for the continuation and creation of colonial projects and practices.

Below, a few suggested counter-practices.

Support the reconstruction of histories and the production of culture.

British cultural memory, in particular, is immersed in apocryphal stories not of colonies occupied by violence and then hastily abandoned, but of the benevolent transfer of power to nations populated by insolvent debtors who have since been unable to establish and maintain democracies.

(Below) Statue of Arthur 'Bomber' Harris', colonial killer in Iraq and bomber of civilians in Germany.





And yet, it's not enough to reject attempts by colonising countries to reconcile their fraudulent national identities with the facts. You can actively support efforts to reconstruct national histories and identities with your money; by protecting existing projects and spaces run by and for people of colour and indigenous people; by inviting local people to meet regularly at your space; by sharing their histories when you're calling out erroneous and jingoistic narratives.

You can likewise support the production and propagation of culture by colonised peoples in the same ways. If they ask you to, pay for colonial histo-

ries and access to cultural products by indigenous writers and artists and people of colour; visit their spaces, local and abroad, if they invite you to; let them tell you some things about yourself that are going to sting.

Reverse the legacy of inequality by disrupting imbalances of power at your school and at work.

This doesn't mean reading your company's equality policy. It means actively disrupting conscious and unconscious manifestations of power and privilege by people around you. One way to do this is to make and sustain new agreements with yourself and other peo-

ple. I knew a woman working at a trade union who made a verbal agreement with every other woman in her office that they would verbally recognise and back each other's contributions in every meeting, even if they disagreed with each other. I've since made an agreement with myself and others to do the same where, whether as women or as people of colour, we are the least represented in the room, and it works.

Organise around long-standing programmes of colonialism and imperialism, not just singular incidents or constituent parts.

If you can, show up for the long-haul. While you're there, connect allies, platform people representing a broad range of intersecting struggles and share histories.

I hope this is a helpful and practical start for PPU members who want to incorporate anti-colonial practices into their activism.

Chris Roper 1937 - 2020

Albert Beale looks back at the life of his friend and comrade Chris Roper - pacifist troublemaker, community activist and award-winning aeronautical engineer.

I got to know Chris 45 years ago when we were amongst a group of 14 pacifists and anti-militarists who spent nearly three months in the Old Bailey facing conspiracy charges over the distribution of leaflets to servicepeople, encouraging them to "down tools". Facing evidence of his possession of one of the leaflets, Chris insisted that particular copy was not one of his, as it "wasn't folded properly". Reaching into his pocket, he produced another copy to demonstrate the proper way to display a folded leaflet, producing laughter from the public gallery.

Chris excelled in things mathematical and mechanical. At school in Reading he built himself a canoe to commute to school across the Thames. While still in his

mid-teens he built himself something a bit bigger, and - unannounced - paddled himself across the Channel. The first anyone knew was when he phoned his mother from Calais.

After school he gained qualifications in mechanical and aeronautical engineering. His brief time in the RAF was sufficient for him to become an enthusiastic member of Veterans for Peace in later years. In the 1960s, he worked day and night on designing a person-powered aircraft. His craft, Jupiter, for a time held the record for achieving the longest person-powered flight.

After moving to Covent Garden, Chris was active in community struggles while continuing to work on human powered flight. His peace activism continued in parallel. For a time, he ran the PPU's printing press in the basement of our former offices. Just a few years ago he put me out of my misery when I was failing to assemble flat-pack furniture.

Chris died on 30th July. He is survived by his brother Geoffrey and his sisters Margaret, Jenny and Patsy.

You can read a longer version of this obituary at ppu.org.uk.

(Below) Chris Roper shortly before his last arrest, for blocking the road to the DSEI arms fair in 2017.



Healthcare Not Warfare: A poem

Healthcare not warfare,
Bombs can't defend us,
You can't nuke a virus,
So please don't pretend
it makes sense to be spending
our hard-earned cash
on weapons that cripple
and weapons that kill,
There's enough death already;
We just need the will.

It's a choice that we make,
Not a matter for greed,
For we face the same threats
And we share the same needs,
We're all in this together,
We must find a solution,
Tackling threats like pandemics, pollu-
tion,
inequality, poverty, our own inhumanity
to our brothers and sisters,
We just need some sanity.

Imagine – Just for one moment, if you
will,
If we diverted the money we use
to make weapons that kill,
to make medicines that heal

Can you imagine a world
Where we all worked together for
mutual aid,
A world where we were no longer
afraid,
A world where we played and prayed
and celebrated in mutual love
of our shared humanity?

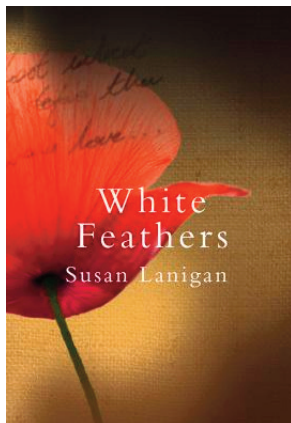
Oh, you may say it's insanity,
But sometimes it takes a crazy dream
to create a new reality,
And if I must, I'll keep on screaming
from the rooftops til I make it real
Because, this is the real deal,
A question of basic morality,
This is the moment we all decide
where our priorities lie –
In spreading the hatred
Or saving lives,
And I will not be silent
Whilst people die,
So, we need to raise our voices
and make it clear:
Healthcare, not warfare,
Love, not fear.



Rebecca Lowe is a journalist, poet, Quaker and peace activist, based in Swansea in South Wales. She wrote and performed this poem in March 2020 in support of the PPU's Healthcare Not Warfare campaign.

A collection of her poetry, Blood and Water, will be published in November 2020 by The Seventh Quarry. You can find her on Twitter: @BeckyLowePoet.

Review: *White Feathers*



**Reviewed by
Beccy Talmy**

Beccy Talmy is a secondary school English teacher in Cambridgeshire and a member of the Peace Pledge Union.



White Feathers by Susan Lanigan is published by O'Brien Press, priced £13.99.

This is a novel about how the First World War damaged people psychologically and wasted lives, but it feels strongly driven by its fiery (yet at times defeated) protagonist and her sensitive, thoughtful (yet at times childish) love interest.

Part family drama, part coming-of-age novel, part love story, it gets you to think about anger and violence and how they can affect both interpersonal relationships and wider politics, but without ever feeling like it is moralising, or like the characters and plot are secondary to a message.

The character at the heart of *White Feathers* is Eva who, when left money to attend finishing school by a prominent suffragette, has seized the opportunity to escape her awful step-mother. Whilst there she is briefly happy, and there is a fun interlude where the reader and her best friend can see that she is falling in love, but she can't. Just as that love is finally

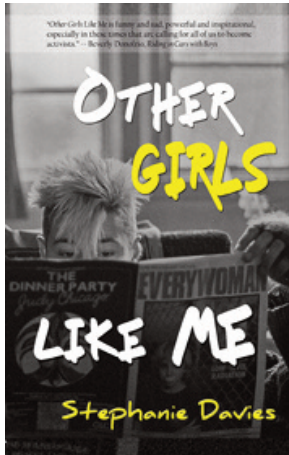
openly declared, however, Eva is forced to choose between her beloved and her unwell sister. Eva's step-sister is convinced that if she were able to fight, she would do so enthusiastically, and does not look favourably on men like Eva's beau, who could be fighting but chooses not to.

A question that the novel raises is whether someone who shames someone else into going to war can be held responsible for that person's fate. And if they in turn weren't acting freely, where do responsibility and blame begin and end?

This is a powerful and enjoyable, if at times distressing, read - Eva's time at school falling in love is quite charming and idyllic, but there is already a shadow of violence hanging over her family, and she ends up witnessing and experiencing various different kinds of violence and destruction as well as profound love. The ending, which I won't spoil, I was not so happy with, but I could see how the plot demanded it.

I urge you to check out this haunting, evocative novel, and see what you think!

Review: *Other Girls Like Me*



**Reviewed by
Jess Amy Dixon**

Jess Amy Dixon lives in the East Midlands and is a writer, pacifist, and feminist. Find her on Twitter and Instagram, @JessAmyWrites.



Other Girls Like Me by Stephanie Davies is published by Bedazzled Ink, priced £13.70.

When Stephanie Davies was 11 years old and living in rural Hampshire, she experienced her first taste of gendered injustice. She loved football, but was forbidden from going on the school trip to see England play West Germany, because football was “for the boys.” At 15, she was confronted with the horrors of apartheid when she read a newspaper report about Hector Pieterse, who was shot dead by police for a peaceful protest.

These were just two of the defining incidents from Davies’ childhood that set her on the path to becoming an anti-apartheid campaigner, feminist, and peace activist.

Davies’ memoir charts her life from the village of St Mary Bourne to the Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp, to defending herself in court against the charge of breaking into a nuclear research facility.

This is a moving and resonant coming-of-age

tale. In between daring acts of protest and civil disobedience, the young Davies learns that she is gay, falls in love with a woman and grapples with complex dynamics and deep loss within her family.

Each chapter’s title is named after a song. I found myself tearing up with happiness for 22-year-old Stephanie as she recounts leaving her abusive boyfriend to the soundtrack of Joan Armatrading’s *Me Myself I* – a poetically karmic end to the relationship. The Greenham Women sing together in times of joy, sorrow, or protest, and it is her friend Zephyr teaching her how to sing that helps Davies get her “Stephness” back amidst grief and exhaustion.

This is Davies’ story, but it is just as much the story of all the women she meets and befriends along the way. Through her eyes, we get an intimate view of the lives, loves, and friendships of the Greenham Women.

Other Girls Like Me is both an evocative rendering of an extraordinary moment in history, and a powerful telling of a remarkable life. I devoured it in two days.

War and pandemics: *a question of security*

2008

The UK Risk Register of Civil Emergencies lists epidemics and pandemics as likely threats to the UK.

2019

Following the general election, the Queen's Speech promises an increase in "defence" spending.

2010

The Strategic Defence and Security Review lists epidemics, pandemics and climate change among the greatest threats to the UK - before concentrating on preparations for war.

2020

The Covid 19 pandemic reaches the UK. Several ministers say that it was impossible to see it coming.

The NHS struggles to cope with insufficient Personal Protective Equipment.

British ministers confirm that they will go ahead with plans to spend £10.4bn on new fighter jets.

2015

The Strategic Defence and Security Review *again* lists epidemics and climate change among the greatest threats to the UK - before *again* equating "security" with preparations for war.

2017

The UK Risk Register of Civil Emergencies warns of a "high probability" of a major epidemic. It says the MoD is involved in preparing for this possibility.

2018

The UK government's National Security Capability Review states that major outbreaks of disease are among the most likely threats to people in the UK.

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