



Read Archbishop Justin's speech on the Foreign Affairs and Defence day of the Queen’s Speech Debate in the House of Lords:

My Lords,

It is a privilege to speak in this debate on the Gracious Speech after the Noble Lord, Lord Hannay with his vast experience and knowledge, and I have learned much from his speech and agree with what he's said.

The Integrated Review of Global Britain in a Competitive Age has much to be welcomed, including especially the thoughtfulness about the security implications of climate change, the strong commitment to Freedom of Religion and Belief and the commitment to restore the 0.7%. However, to speak of security, defence, development and foreign policy without a developed section on peacebuilding and peace-making, especially with competitors, is like speaking of the pandemic without mentioning vaccination.

The Integrated Review mentions security through improving conflict management in ten places or so. However, the Stabilisation Unit is not mentioned at all. How much of a priority is it with its new name, the Office of Conflict, Stabilization and Mediation?

Put another way, the Integrated Review presents a world in which we control events, as though that is normally the case in foreign policy.

The Noble Prelate, the Lord Bishop of Southwark, represented me at the installation on Ascension Day last Thursday of the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, whose cathedral is in Sheikh Jarrah. He writes "there is a growing recognition that lasting peace with justice can only be achieved if the rights of all the peoples of these lands are upheld and underlying grievances are addressed." In other words, reconciliation. The situation in the Holy Lands illustrates perfectly how little we can anticipate events.

Now more than ever, we need investment in new and visionary reconciliation capabilities and capacities which enable us to reduce the threats, and the human and financial costs of war. Much has been said rightly by all speakers about the extraordinary quality of our armed forces, but their best protection is peace, as especially noble and gallant Lords and those serving today know well. In the Beatitudes Jesus says that peacemakers are blessed and will be called the children of God. The repeated biblical visions of swords into ploughshares are not only the call of God but a blessing to those who fight, and I might comment, a blessing to the Treasury.

To misquote a former Liverpool manager who taught his lads, as he said, to get their retaliation in first, the best - and by far the cheapest - form of improved security comes from pre-emptive reconciliation, getting our reconciliation in first.

Reconciliation usually does not mean agreement, but it does mean transforming violent conflict or its possibility into peaceful co-existence and competition.

Second, it is very welcome that the 0.7% target is reaffirmed. However, the reaffirmation feels, and Lord Hannay commented on this, a bit like Augustine's desire for chastity, welcome but not yet.

People who are poorest must be dealt with generously, first for reasons of humanity from one of the richest and most powerful nations on earth, second, for our own long-term security, and third so that the world can be a place of flourishing to our trade and development here at home and for the poorest.

Third, there has been much talk about the increase in the number of nuclear warheads. That is a very serious and concerning step, but not nearly as serious, and again Lord Hannay referred to this, as the commitment to increased deliberate ambiguity in the conditions of the use of nuclear weapons and the absence of a stated commitment not to use them first. It is widely accepted that even for those who argue the moral case for having these weapons – a very contested point indeed – clarity of purpose is essential to deterrence. Ambiguity increases the risk of disastrous miscalculation.

My Lords, finally with all its many strengths this review needs to integrate a vision of peace as an alternative to destructive conflict which can only ever be a tragic last resort. The warnings in the Review are not accompanied by an integrated moral basis for actions that where at all possible will reduce violent conflict and control it.

Values are twinned in the text with words like democratic, rule of law, open societies, prosperity, soft power and culture. There is even an aspiration to universal values, combined with a realistic appreciation of the conflict of values. Values that are not anchored in any way in our history in the document and are stated as manifest truth without any moral foundations. It is in this moral argument of the document that peace making and peace building are an afterthought. That seems a profound weakness of moral imagination when we are able as a nation to do so much, in a document that argues so persuasively for our soft power and our values based interests.

4 min read

Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-writing/speeches/archbishop-justin-contributes-queens-speech-debate-house-lords>