



My Lords, I join in congratulating the noble Lord, Lord Coker and the noble Baroness, Baroness Anderson, on their appointments, and on their party's first King's speech. As a successor to the noble Lord, Lord Ahmed, the noble Baroness has a very hard act to follow indeed, as I'm sure the house will recognize. I'd also like to congratulate the noble Baroness, Baroness Goldie on her remarkable meal, which as I missed breakfast may result in me leaving quickly to have lunch, but it won't be as good as that.

My Lord as others have indicated, we're living in unstable times. The Anglican Communion and 165 countries finds almost half our members facing conflict. Issues elsewhere in the world, however, do not confine themselves to affecting us in our international policy alone. We are recognised now by the United Nations as the most diverse nation on Earth. That means every single overseas conflict or disaster has a diaspora community here.

To build a cohesive society here domestic and foreign policy must work hand in glove. That is seen with Israel and Gaza. Conflict overseas has a profound impact on our own society and our own domestic policies because of the multi-cultural nature of our communities.

Interfaith dialogue in this country has almost collapsed since the seventh of October last year, and tensions are high and that is entirely as a result of overseas matters.

The interplay is also clear in our response to questions of mass migration and climate change. Domestic challenges require cross border solutions if they are to be effective and I asked the noble Lord, Lord Coker, what structures there will be in government to ensure that coordination.

I welcome the Government's approach and intentions for foreign policy expressed so far, including its commitment to ongoing support for Ukraine, calling for a ceasefire in Gaza - a two state solution and upholding international law and investing in international cooperation and institutions.

I welcome the strategic defence review with its aims of reinvestment in our armed forces, in their effectiveness and as has already been just mentioned, by the noble Lady Baroness Smith in their wellbeing.

Noble Lords will know that the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office houses the pithily name Negotiations and Peace Processes team in the Office for Conflict, Stabilization and Mediation. Established by the Conservative government by the noble Lord, Lord Howe. It has been enormously effective.

The cost financial, human and every other of trying to prevent conflict is far smaller than the cost of war once it's broken out and can happen in many places where we would never intervene militarily, but our interests are deeply at stake.

Further investment in making peace should be considered alongside the necessary and urgent increase in spending on our military force both are insurance premia and they need paying. Peacebuilding in the DRC for example, where China and Wagner are active and which is the worst area for sexual violence and conflict is also essential for the world's green ambitions.

Secondly, and I am beginning to wind up, it is essential that our foreign policy is religiously literate. 85% of the world's population identifies with a faith to engage with foreign policy without doing so is madness.

I welcomed the intention, for example, to develop a strategy for Africa, however, to do so without consideration of religious faith makes absolutely no sense at all. The Labor manifesto said Government is at its best when it is working in partnership with business, trade unions, civil society, faith groups and communities. But without a shared project, it went on, these partnerships barely get off the ground – close quotes.

In Mozambique, Anglicans in partnership with the UN have played a significant part in building groups to undermine the hold of ISIS in Catholic, Cabo Delgado. There are innumerable faith groups and NGOs that will wish to deploy their ability and local knowledge similarly, we look forward to working this with this government as with the last.

4 min read

Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-writing/speeches/kings-speech-debate-archbishops-speech>