

## **Fellowship of Reconciliation Annual Conference - 'Pathways To Peace' – Speech on Peace Doctrine 9th March 2019**

*Peace is a global public good.*

According to the World Economic Forum, the annual economic impact of war in 2015 was over thirteen trillion dollars. That's more than the GDP of China. Indeed, it's more than ten percent of global GDP, and of course the economic cost does not account for the lives lost, the livelihoods ruined and the physical and mental scarring that wars always cause.

Conflict exacerbates inequality and poverty and – without remedial action – can create a dangerous and self-sustaining loop that only increases misery for tens of millions of people around the world.

This is clearly a preventable waste of money and resources and is a shocking testament to ineffectiveness and bad policy. And even more so because peacekeeping and peacebuilding can be such cost effective policy tools compared to the costs of conflict – especially in the longer term.

By preserving an environment free of armed violence, prevention also minimises the indirect costs of violence, including the diversion of vast resources towards military expenditures.

Additionally, it minimises the risk of international spillovers to neighbouring countries and regions too.

Many countries today – such as Jordan and Lebanon – are simply unable to accommodate the huge influxes of refugees and migrants on their own, without help from outside. Peacebuilding also minimises the loss of physical and human capital that is all too common in violent conflict.

*Peace is not just important but vital for humanity.*

It is of course through peace that we are able to live, work, learn and trade stably. Ensuring peace is the most important priority of any government and in today's interconnected world – where the effects of violent conflict can so often reverberate far and wide – it's not just in the national interest to promote and sustain peace. There is now a new global responsibility for peace which dictates that the peace and security of people in other parts of the world should be just as much of a priority as they are nearer to home.

Indeed, in our country we often take the benefits of peace for granted. Since the Second World War, we in Britain have lived – more or less – through a period of unprecedented peace and stability. Peace seems to be almost a natural state rather than a benefit that should be cared for, nurtured and maintained. But it is also something we should be vigilant about, both at home and abroad.

Today, we live in a world of increasing inequality. We have a government riven with the effects of the EU referendum nearly three years ago, a government which is turning inward, turning its back on the world and pursuing a dangerous Brexit policy that will only damage jobs and lives and increase insecurity in Britain.

These are just a few of the reasons why we must ensure that an environment can be built for peace to grow and flourish both at home and abroad.

In 2001, the United Nations Security Council defined peacebuilding succinctly. It stated:

*“Peace-building is aimed at preventing the outbreak, the recurrence or the continuation of armed conflict and therefore encompasses a wide range of political, developmental, humanitarian and human rights programmes and mechanisms. This requires short and long-term actions tailored to address the particular needs of societies sliding in to conflict or emerging from it”*

In other words, peacebuilding is a complex mixture. It involves many and various different resources and skills and it is a long term goal. It's no longer justifiable for the UN – or any other military force – to simply go in to a conflict region, sort it out and leave when the violence is over. And it is certainly no longer justifiable to allow the conditions for violence and conflict to grow and fester, to only take action when lives and livelihoods have already been destroyed.

*Peace is something that must be cared for and nurtured over time.*

Our notions of peacebuilding need to move beyond post-conflict contexts that limit it to just maintaining peace in the short term but needs also to enhance and preserve it. Yet so often there is a lack of a greater authority to bring together more effectively the skills and resources of not just government departments, but also civil society groups and other parties involved in peacebuilding – because we now live in a far more connected world where power is far more diffuse.

### *Formulating a new approach*

This is why the Labour Party has begun to formulate a new way of thinking about peace on a national and global level. We are fortunate that as a country we have many strengths that can be harnessed to contribute towards peace and security globally. As a member of NATO, the G7, the G20, the Commonwealth and one of the Permanent Five members of the UN Security Council, we are in an almost unique position to be able to promote, influence and develop new policy on peacebuilding.

I am a member of a political party that, from its very inception over a hundred years ago, believed in co-operation and solidarity – both at home and abroad. Unlike the present government, we believe that foreign policy should be guided by the values of peace, universal rights and international law – and we've been unwavering in our commitment to a rules-based international

system to harness it in order to create a more peaceful, inclusive and progressive world.

I am also delighted that we in this country have been at the forefront of policies to help stop – or at least mitigate – the worst effects of climate change. We were also world leaders in legislation and treaties to abolish the use of landmines, chemical and biological weapons, and this has not only been achieved through great political will and determination but also through our diplomatic excellence.

We have one of the most outstanding and far-reaching diplomatic services globally, having representatives in 85% of the world's nations and at all major multilateral organisations. We are one of the few countries in the world to reach the 0.7% GDP target for spending on overseas development aid, and we are the second largest global aid donor.

We therefore have the institutional capacity to formulate, influence and implement international strategies in order to promote peace and indeed I believe it is our duty to do so. We have the ability to be innovative and bold in our strategy.

We should use these resources together with our influence to protect and strengthen the liberal values of human rights, democracy, poverty reduction and global governance. When we see an erosion of the multilateral system across the world, when we see countries such as the United States retreating inwards, it is up to us to make a stand.

But we must also be more aware of the negative consequences of our own past. We cannot forget the impact of our colonial legacies and their contribution to the dynamics of many conflicts where we were once a colonial power. It is therefore incumbent upon us to put right some of the wrongs of our past.

The current government – in considering our future role in the world post-Brexit – seems far too preoccupied with trade, and indeed, trade quite often with some highly dubious regimes.

We believe that to protect our people and values at home, we must ensure that we create a global environment that secures and enhances peace. And that we must lead by example. Peacemaking should be a fundamental aspect of political decision-making since it affects so many corners of society and so many government departments.

Clearly, a new vehicle for peace is needed that understands the world we live in today. We need to support the increasing global demand for more effective, efficient policies to uphold peace and thereby improve security.

### *The Peace Doctrine*

All this forms the foundation for Labour's Peace Doctrine.

As I have previously mentioned, we seem all too often to take peace for granted. Indeed, peacebuilding remains a field that

receives miniscule investment compared to the vast sums spent globally on warfare. Peace is frequently an afterthought, but conflict prevention and resolution, post-conflict peacebuilding and justice for the victims of war crimes should be the issues which deserve far greater investment and far higher priority.

Sustaining peace is also a shared responsibility that involves work in prevention, peacekeeping, post-conflict recovery, reconstruction and institution-building. It involves multiple agencies and departments working more closely with one another in a deeper, more consultative process than we have ever achieved. It will involve a whole range of actors, at home and with indigenous actors in conflict-prone regions working together. It will acknowledge the importance of groups in society so often ignored in peacebuilding, such as women and children who are vital contributors to peace.

It will therefore promote a shared ownership in the agenda for peacebuilding. We cannot have peace if we do not all work together more effectively – surely we all have a stake in this? I see our Peace Doctrine as an open, consultative document which is not just owned by the Labour Party, but is something in which we all have a vital stake.

Sustaining peace also requires a fully integrated approach at not just the strategic but also the policy-making and operational levels. The Peace Doctrine envisages bringing together resources from all of the of the externally-facing departments within

government and will be placed at the heart of the government's activities.

It will be an adaptable and transferrable policy which will bring together various departments of state, including the FCO, Defence, DFID, International Trade and the British Council, among others, and will fundamentally overhaul how we as a country go about responding to conflict as well as our capacities and approaches to building and maintaining peace. For too long, many of these important departments of state have been neglected and starved of funding by ruinous austerity which not only threatens our security but also our obligations in the world. We *must* therefore harness our resources and work better together, to let these institutions reach their full potential and flourish.

As our first Shadow Minister for Peace and Disarmament, I already work between different departments, and I'm a member of the Shadow FCO and Defence teams. The Peace Doctrine sees a role for a Minister for Peace and Disarmament that could highlight what resources from each department will be needed for each specific issue and will tirelessly pursue an agenda for peace. There is currently a lack of joined-up thinking between government departments about peacebuilding, where the "silo" mentality often still prevails.

Furthermore, there is also a lack of joined-up thinking and action between the government itself and NGOs. Through my consultations with various organisations and academics, I have been deeply impressed by the expertise and dedication of so

many in pursuit of peace and I am eternally grateful for their contribution. I see greater opportunities to utilise more effectively the resources of government, NGOs and faith communities in order to pursue our common goals.

A Minister for Peace is also a role that envisages an integrated service which is not only reactive to crises but also involves long-term projects to prevent further crises from happening in the first place. It is a field in which civil society has been exemplary, in areas such as climate change, disarmament or human rights. Better and more universal early-warning systems could be developed with the help of government and civil society that will strengthen data monitoring and gathering in the future. This will create greater transparency, accountability and policy promotion.

Governments already spend vast resources on predicting changes in the economy, through statistical predictions and theoretical projections. These often determine how resources are used and where money is spent. A similar position could be taken in relation to peace and security where governments should be able to do far more to predict future crises that may affect peace and security – just as they do on the economy. There should be annual statements on peacebuilding and reviews of government policy made to Parliament.

I have great respect for the military who are often the first responders in a crisis situation. Our brave men and women have proven adept in their actions to crises around the world and are

renowned globally for their excellent training, incorruptibility, professionalism and expertise.

What the Peace Doctrine proposes is a larger, more efficient and faster humanitarian response capability that will could be deployed in the event of natural or man-made disasters. Climate change and increasing population in areas prone to flooding, drought and earthquakes necessitate the rapid deployment and assistance of professionals.

We should see our military as not just defenders of the realm, not just first responders to a crisis situation but as a professional, highly regimented but adaptable force that is ready to prevent a crisis from happening in the first place. Indeed, our armed forces need to move from a reactive posture, dealing with crises after they have started, towards a more proactive role in preventing future crises. We see our armed forces being the physical backbone of this integrated approach.

A peace doctrine will go beyond the traditional aid budget system as a means of promoting development in regions with weak institutions that are prone to conflict. There is a greater need to integrate peace impact into development and humanitarian programmes, especially in fragile states and so it's vital that we increase the contribution from indigenous peoples and women. This is where we think that preventative diplomatic strategy will be essential in the process of conflict prevention.

And the Peace Doctrine moves beyond the three main departments of DFID, FCO and Defence and sees possibilities for greater co-ordination among other organs of the state and wider society. We now live in a far more connected world, where there are more spaces in which to connect to people and for them to be more engaged in vital issues. Today's social and conventional media open up new opportunities to support peace and security globally by providing populations with essential information.

For example, in Sierra Leone, it was community radio that was vital to the consolidation of peace and in that country over the last fifteen years. We are blessed with having the world's greatest and largest international broadcaster in the BBC – broadcasting in almost 50 languages. It has a global audience of over 201 million ... and counting. It reaches some of the most remote places on earth and, as part of its global mission to educate and inform, the BBC plays a crucial role in disseminating the factual information that helps to protect peace in potential conflict zones and save lives in times of crisis — educating people on issues ranging from women's rights to climate change. A Labour government will both encourage that role, and – just as importantly – ensure that it is properly funded. We will enhance its ability to bring people together around the world as part of our global community.

Within Britain's world-renowned universities, we are also deeply fortunate to have some of the world's best departments in war studies and peace studies at King's College London and next door at the University of Bradford. The Peace Doctrine would learn from the very best in the research and analysis being conducted

by our universities, and ask those departments to assist us in creating better tools to monitor new trends in peacebuilding, as well as helping to train our civil servants and military personnel.

And, perhaps most importantly, the Peace Doctrine will involve you. The Peace Doctrine is an inclusive, consultative and deliberative document. It is something we feel would benefit from the input by individuals, faith communities and civil society.

### *Conclusion*

So Let's work together to fight the challenges we face as a human race. Let us combine our resources and work for a better future for all living creatures on this unique planet earth, because I strongly believe that when we work together, we can achieve extraordinary things. Together we *can* overcome the threats that affect us as a global community and together we *can* create a better future for ourselves and our children.

Finally, I am reminded of what the great philosopher Bertrand Russell once said: "*the only thing that will redeem mankind is co-operation*".

That has never been more appropriate than it is today.