

## **Active remembrance and waging peace together**

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### Introduction

Thank you for the invitation to speak here today.

It's a pleasure to be among so many friends and colleagues. And an enormous privilege to be given this chance to talk about active remembrance and what that means for us as peace activists.

I know some of you will share concerns that the annual ritual of remembering the horrors of war can sometimes seem as if it's actually become about forgetting those horrors.

That in paying tribute to those who sacrificed their lives we sometimes lose sight of the fact that too many had no choice.

That those who do have choices have all too often failed to consider the alternatives.

And that glorifying the fallen can lead to both the airbrushing of history and make it more difficult to rise up, tell the truth about war and resist.

Remembering ought to be something active as well as passive and, throughout this lecture I want to talk about ways to ensure never forgetting is something we deliberately and dynamically do – by waging peace.

### Context: Brexit

As we approach Remembrance Sunday, and particularly during this 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the Armistice, we are especially reminded of the peace that has been built in Europe since 1945.

Britain emerged from the rubble and destruction of the Second World War into a nation that's been at peace with its neighbours ever since.

It's a miracle few would have dreamed possible when the bombs were raining down on London and countless other towns and cities in the middle of the last century.

And whilst Britain itself has very definitely continued to be a warmonger, as have many European nations, we mustn't let that make us forget the remarkable achievements of the EU - for which they rightly in my opinion won a Nobel Peace prize in 2012.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee paid tribute then to the stabilising role the EU has played in transforming most of Europe from a continent of war to a continent of peace.

And it recognised the struggle for peace and reconciliation, as well as the ongoing struggles for democracy, freedom, justice and human rights.

It's fair to say that in the six years since the prize was awarded, these EU values have been sorely tested. As indeed they have consistently been throughout its history.

Easy to point to the times when it has failed to live up to its aspirations. Take the frankly unforgivable decision to abandon the families and individuals crossing the Mediterranean, often fleeing conflict zones, and the subsequent hostility towards NGO search and rescue ships.<sup>1</sup>

Or the punishment and humiliation meted out to Greece for daring to challenge austerity. Treatment which was fundamentally at odds with the "fellowship between nations" to which Alfred Nobel assigned so much importance - and was a betrayal too of the role Greece played in the forgiveness of Germany's debts in the aftermath of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War.

Easy as well to point to the rise of nationalism and far right political gains in countries from Finland to Italy to Cyprus and France.<sup>2</sup>

Part backlash against the political establishment in the wake of the financial and migrant crises, part a wave of discontent that taps into long-standing fears about globalisation and a dilution of national identity.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/08/eu-policies-to-blame-deaths-at-sea-mediterranean-amnesty-international-report>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-36130006>

There's the continued funding for military research too; the drive for member states to spend more on defence and on the procurement of military equipment; the disproportionate influence of the arms industry on EU policy making; the extent to which military and security companies have benefitted from the refugee crisis, and in particular from the EU's investment in 'securing' its borders; and the sales of arms to human rights abusers and dictators<sup>3</sup>.

And yet....

Active remembrance means not losing sight of the positives, whilst trying to change the negatives.

Not forgetting that things are rarely all good or all bad.

So whilst I have always been vocal about the need to reform the EU and move it away from neoliberalism and militarisation, I have also always been a passionate defender of our continued membership.

Europe for me has always stood as a symbol of what we can achieve when we work co-operatively together. A symbol of peace.

And one of the worst aspects of Brexit to me is the way it ignores the most powerful and engaging reasons for our membership of the European Union.

How it has helped avert war in Europe for sixty years. How it has fostered democracy and the rule of law across the whole continent. How it has provided its citizens with the freedom to travel, to study, to work. To experience the richness of the European inheritance.

During the referendum campaign, this message was difficult to get across. How many of us when we went to the ballot boxes were thinking about the courage, ambition and vision that helped create the European Union?

It is an astonishing institution, unique in human history, imperfect, of course, because of the scale of its ambition, but truly remarkable none the less. It symbolises lighting a candle rather than cursing the darkness.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://corporateeurope.org/power-lobbies/2017/12/arms-industry-lobbying-and-militarisation-eu#Funding%20military%20research>

Yet we heard so little about this in 2016 and have heard so little since as part of the campaign for a People's Vote – a say on the outcome of the Brexit negotiation process and our future relationship with the EU.

All too often the campaigns seem to be about generating fear.

But if remembrance has taught us anything, it's that fear rarely creates the conditions for positive change. More frequently it begets violence and conflict.

Unfortunately, the scare stories were not all fiction. If Brexit goes ahead, we will indeed pay a high economic price.

But I think the greatest cost of all will be in Britain's retreat into a narrow, inward-looking isolation. Where weapons and money can go anywhere, but refugees are vilified, and compassion chased out of town.

And I worry too about the harm done to the development of a Europe that whilst flawed is, nonetheless, committed to the principle that we must pursue peace and progress.

As wagers of peace, I believe we have a responsibility not to throw this all away. To stand by the principle that nations who share resources are more likely to value peace above war.

I believe too we have a responsibility not to exacerbate the divisions and differences that have riven our nation – and a duty to help the country heal, unite again and embark on the next stage of this journey with an approach based on democracy and truth.

I called for people to continue to be involved in the decision making process just days after the 2016 referendum. That has snowballed into well over ½ million people taking to the streets earlier this month in support of a People's Vote

It's an amazing and growing movement, bringing together people of all ages, backgrounds and party political allegiances.

What it hasn't done yet, despite best efforts, is create space for a narrative that's much more about hope rather than fear. About the values we treasure rather than the country's economic balance sheet. Or that encourages building bridges with those who voted Leave.

We face very different and new challenges today from those which the architects of the EU were dealing with. From climate change and the refugee crisis to international terrorism and rampant inequality.

What hasn't changed is that these cross borders and affect us all. I continue to believe that we are stronger and safer if we work with our European neighbours to rise to these challenges. And that we have to work equally hard with the neighbours in our streets too, if we are to start to address some of the feelings of being ignored, trapped and hopeless that contributed to both the divisive nature of the referendum campaign and its outcome.

I'm struck by the evidence of the Commission on Social Mobility which reported last year that the 30 places which are the worst cold spots for social mobility in the UK all voted to Leave. I don't think that was a coincidence.

Which brings me to the first actions that I want to call on you to undertake as acts of remembrance.

Firstly, to spread the word about what the EU has achieved in the name of peace and human rights. That doesn't mean being uncritical but I hope it might mean making the case that we can better change the things which need to change if we are still in the room, round the table and actively engaged.

Secondly, to join and support the campaign for a People's Vote. Because democracy didn't end on June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016 and because peace and democracy go hand in hand, no matter how you voted then.

And thirdly, for those who voted remain and still want to remain, to reach out to anyone you know who disagrees. Listen to them, hear what they are saying and recognise that many had very legitimate concerns that led them to vote Leave. The status quo is unacceptable, they're quite right. Ours is a country of grotesque inequalities, and we urgently need to address that.

## **Northern Ireland**

I cannot talk about Brexit without also saying just a few words about Northern Ireland – where the cause of peace is particularly at stake again today.

When Martin McGuinness died last year, there was a long debate about his legacy. Whether he should be remembered as a terrorist or a peace -maker.

I said earlier about the EU that there is no such thing as all good or all bad – the same applies to individuals.

And for me waging peace must embrace the possibility that we can each individually become better versions of ourselves, be allowed to move on from the past.

Believing the best of people is how we create the conditions for reconciliation.

Brave individuals took enormous risks to deliver a peace settlement in Northern Ireland. Some have won awards for doing so, while most will not even become footnotes in history.

So let's pay tribute to all who played a role in ending the conflict – whether it was by bringing together political leaders or simply being a friend to someone that was supposed to be an enemy.

And let's ensure that their contribution to peace is not undermined by Brexit.

The way this Government has played politics with peace in Northern Ireland is reckless and indefensible.

Sacrificing the Good Friday Agreement on the altar of Brexit is nothing short of criminal and it must not be allowed to happen

So as wagers of peace, I call on you to do what you can to help people remember recent history. The way families were divided and destroyed during the Troubles. The violence, the stigmatising, the despair.

And again, the fear that allowed hatred and nationalism to take hold – and conflict to flourish.

For whole generations alive today, this is ancient history. They have no memory of being at war with ourselves. But peace founders when people forget what its absence looks and feels like.

We must resist the way in which war is consigned to the history books or something played out on our TV screens. Sanitised and distant.

We must actively remember by sharing the reality and encouraging others to do the same.

## **The global perspective**

We engage today in active remembrance not just as citizens of the EU but as global citizens too, of course. Of a world that continues to be riven by war.

In the Middle East, in Afghanistan, in the former Soviet Union and in Africa.

Millions of lives wasted, millions more maimed, traumatised, forced to flee.

The seemingly endless cycle of terrorism and repression, one feeding off the other.

World leaders have not only created war, or fuelled it for their own reasons.

They have also blamed the victims.

They turn their backs on the refugees, or pander to the xenophobes who claim that those seeking asylum are some kind of threat to our way of life, rather than fellow humans who deserve our compassion and our help.

We've also had to witness the corruption and waste of the arms trade. Billions of pounds spent on unnecessary weapons, keeping whole nations in poverty and debt. So that even when those weapons remain unused, they still blight too many lives.

And yet we can also point to progress.

Fewer children growing up in poverty.

Progress on controlling major diseases.

International action to protect the ozone layer.

Democracy taking root in Latin America, and in Eastern Europe. The resolution of seemingly intractable conflicts - none more so than in Northern Ireland.

We have the proxy war in Ukraine; but we have also seen a fragile form of peace endure in the former Yugoslavia.

We've seen the disaster of the invasion of Iraq; yet we've also seen full-scale war averted between India and Pakistan.

## **Public Pressure**

For those of us who are committed to the path of peace, and who understand that peace can only come through addressing issues such as social justice and climate change, we must bear witness to what is wrong and try to change it; but also draw encouragement from what has been achieved.

The lesson, I think, is this.

We can and do make a difference.

We help shape public opinion. We influence the thinking of the elites.

We can, some of the time at least, provide the setting in which world leaders make the right choices.

There is the example of Harold Wilson.

As Prime Minister during the Vietnam War, he was under huge pressure from the Americans to commit troops to that conflict, as Australia did.

Yet Harold Wilson refused. Maybe not for the right reasons.

It may have been political calculation, or pressure from Labour MPs and party members. But the result was the same.

And contrast that with Tony Blair's decision in Iraq.

More recently, public opinion helped persuade MPs to reject David Cameron's call for armed intervention in Syria.

That intervention did in the end come - albeit at a different target - but there was at least time for reflection. And we have at least established the principal that Parliament should vote on the decision to begin military action.

We have seen this same mix of progress and regression on arms control.

Biological weapons were banned in 1972. Chemical weapons in 1993.

Landmines in 1997. Cluster munitions in 2008.

In each case, politicians and their advisors doing the right thing - even if they needed huge pressure to make them do it.



## **Nuclear**

For our movement, where we most want to see change is nuclear disarmament – and that has so far proved near-impossible.

Those nations with nuclear weapons are intent on upgrading them – with the UK amongst the chief culprits. And not surprisingly, non-nuclear states are encouraged to pursue their own ambitions too.

The UK is spending up to £200bn on a weapons system that will be redundant before it is even delivered. Developments in underwater technology will likely uncloak our submarines within decades<sup>4</sup>.

Trident is not much use against today's threats and it fuels the threat of nuclear proliferation.

Globally there are at least 16,000 nuclear weapons in existence<sup>5</sup> – and the US and Russia hold 90% of them.

And now President Trump has withdrawn from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

Kate Hudson, Chair of CND, warns that this will “mark the end of the restraints on nuclear arsenals achieved in the 1980s”.

That it “will open the way for the return to Europe of cruise-type missiles that can have only one purpose – that a US nuclear war against Russia will be fought in Europe.”

It's bleak and yet maybe – just maybe – even here perhaps there might be signs of hope.

On Remembrance Sunday, Presidents Trump and Putin plan to meet in France to discuss the INF further – and we know from Trump's past record that just because he announces something one day, it doesn't mean he won't later deny doing so, or announce exactly the opposite.

And whilst the US, UK and Russia are amongst those countries that have not yet signed the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, 19 have already

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<sup>4</sup> BASIC, 2016. *Will Trident Still Work in the Future?* <http://www.basicint.org/publications/paul-ingram-executive-director/2016/will-trident-still-work-future>

<sup>5</sup> <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/03/01/nuclear-weapons-russia-united-states/385528002/>

ratified it and there's every reason to believe that the 50 required for it to come into force can be secured by the end of 2019.

Over 127 states support the Treaty, especially in Africa and Latin America – it's the Europeans who are most resistant, arguing it could undermine nuclear deterrence.

Which begs the question that if we genuinely believed that having more nuclear weapons keeps a country safer, how can we argue against Iran or North Korea seeking to develop them too?

The Global Ban Treaty is sorely needed. INF prohibited missiles were “meant to wipe out cities in Europe” and we are witnessing a new nuclear arms race.

The awarding of last year's Nobel Peace prize to the campaigners behind the Treaty and the focus on stigmatising nuclear weapons, just as previous treaties marginalised landmines and cluster munitions represent a real turning of the tide.

We have made a difference.

And our active remembrance must recognise too the significant role mass protests and mobilisation against nuclear escalation and cruise missiles, including at Greenham peace camp, played in securing the INF treaty.

### **The biggest security threat**

So let's be careful never to forget we are making progress, even if at times it can feel that's too slow and undermined by regression.

Because remembering what we have achieved makes us more effective change makers going forward. It helps us hold on to the kind of hope Rebecca Solnit identifies. Not a lottery ticket that you sit in the dark clutching and feeling lucky but a powerful force - that shoves you out the door.

Because, she writes, “ it will take everything you have to steer the future away from endless war, from the annihilation of the earth's treasures and the grinding down of the poor and marginal... To hope is to give yourself to the future - and that commitment to the future is what makes the present inhabitable.”

To more effectively wage peace we need to shift the balance – towards the positives that fill us with hope. If we want to transform the future into one that's safe for everyone, we must keep remembering, learning and actively making the difference.

## **Environment**

It's easy to think that we are living through a unique moment in history but when it comes to our impact on the natural world there's no denying it's true.

Here and now, at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the biggest threat to humankind is the ecological crisis - a planet exploited beyond its natural limits.

And failing to address that will vastly increase the likelihood of future conflicts.

From a national security perspective – as well as every other perspective - it makes no sense to be investing weapons of mass destruction that are useless in the face of organised crime, terrorism, cyber warfare, pandemics - and climate change.

Actually, the Ministry of Defence does understand that the major strategic threats of the future are ecological. They recognise that coastal flooding, climate-driven migration and rising food prices due to drought and water stress will be some of the most significant impacts of climate change over the next 30 years – and that these pose a significant security threat. Far greater than anything Trident might help us with.

Indeed, scientists, world leaders including US Presidents and UK Prime Ministers, the major security experts in the UN and around the world all agree that climate change should be the top strategic priority because it poses the greatest risk to our security and to the prospects of peace.

## **Ecological Crisis**

We look around us, and we see deepening threats to the sustainability of the planet on which we depend, absolutely.

To feed our lifestyles, we have stolen from the future; and from countries and people weaker than ourselves.

But we are not free from the consequences. The loss of habitats, the changes to our climate, the risks of disease, flooding, droughts and storms will affect us too.

Yet on the same day that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its latest report, the Government ran rough-shod over the views of the local community – never mind their own climate advisors – and gave the green light for fracking for shale gas to start in Lancashire. A whole new fossil fuel industry at exactly the time that the scientists are clear that we need to leave around 80% of known fossil fuel reserves in the ground if we're to have any hope of avoiding catastrophic climate change.

And as if that weren't enough...

Just a few days ago, WWF's Living Planet Report was published. We now know humanity has wiped out 60% of mammals, birds, fish and reptiles since 1970.

To give you a sense of the scale of that kind of loss, it's like the entire human population of North America, South America, Africa, Europe, China and Oceania disappearing.

The vast and growing consumption of food and resources is destroying the web of life, billions of years in the making, upon which human society ultimately depends for clean air, water and everything else.

The annihilation of wildlife is now an emergency that threatens civilisation – and will inevitably fuel future wars, just as previous wars have been fought over access to precious but scarce resources.

The evidence couldn't be any stronger yet rather than an emergency budget, the Government's response this week was to allocate just £60m for tree planting compared to £30bn for road building.

The Chancellor not only failed to mention climate change in his budget speech, but the policies he put forward will increase the UK's climate impact.

The IPCC report published last month was very clear about what Governments need to do and the time left to act.

Just 12 years to prevent climate catastrophe.

And what's the response?

Profound moral failure from a generation of politicians who will not live to see the devastation that their policies will wreak on future generations.

Here I confess I've struggled most to find some causes for hope.

But here's one.

Earlier this week, Spain announced it will shut down most of its coal mines by the end of this year.

What's particularly positive about their plans is that they recognise the interconnectedness of environmental and social justice.

So over £220 million will be invested in mining regions over the next decade.

Invested in early retirement schemes for miners aged over 48, environmental restoration work in pit communities and re-skilling schemes for cutting-edge green industries.

It doesn't just ensure nobody is forgotten, it innovates as well.

Demonstrates there's no need to choose between jobs and protecting the environment. It is possible to have both.

But if containing climate change is like a war, then it is one that we are losing, despite victory in some battles.

And in a vicious cycle, climate change adds further stress to a struggling global economy, undermines global cooperation, which in turns slows, or even halts, efforts to tackle the problem.

All the while the temperature rises.

### **Interconnectedness**

We cannot deal with the ecological crisis in isolation. Economic mismanagement is wrecking our climate. Climate change is creating droughts that destabilise whole nations, foster conflicts and create new flows of refugees. And that in turn creates political instability, and risks making our economic and environmental challenges all the more difficult to tackle, by fomenting fear, xenophobia and isolationism.

Active remembrance demands that we completely shift our mind-set – understand that waging peace cannot happen in isolation either.

That it must be done in co-operation with those stopping deportation flights from leaving Stanstead airport, the volunteers at food banks, the pioneers of community owned energy and banks, the occupiers of diggers, the three young men sent to prison for opposing fracking in Lancashire, who were set free just a couple of weeks' ago.

Those connections have been made but if you leave today with just one take away pledge, please make it to seek out and act in solidarity with others that are part of the wider movement that underpins and interacts with our campaign for peace.

Active remembrance requires too that we pause to reflect on the kind of people we are. On the kind of world we want to build.

The world need not be this way. Poverty, war and inequality are not inevitable.

But to create a different world, we must act differently.

One of the definitions of insanity is to keep on doing the same thing, but expecting a different result.

### **A different kind of economy - growth**

As I've argued, climate change is a stress multiplier.

The recent IPCC report makes that clear and makes clear too the scale of the threat that climate change poses.

But it's also identifies a remarkable opportunity to choose a new path forward – to do nothing less than transform everything.

The report says we need to cut annual global emissions by half in the next 12 years and hit net zero by the middle of the century.

As the anthropologist, Jason Hickel, writes:

*“It would be difficult to overstate how dramatic this trajectory is. It requires nothing less than a total and rapid reversal of our present direction as a civilization.... After decades of delay, this is our last chance to get it right.”*

Perceived wisdom dictates that massive investment in clean energy and decarbonising the economy are what’s needed.

And that’s certainly going to be necessary. But on its own, it’s not enough

If we are serious about the long term fundamental change that waging peace demands, we have to be far more ambitious.

To take on the problem that is our obsession with economic growth.

The economist Kenneth Boulding pointed out long ago that anyone who thinks infinite economic growth is possible on a planet of finite resources is either a madman – or an economist.

In the time period by which we need to cut emissions to net zero, the next 30 years, the size of the global economy is set to triple.

Think about it – 3 times more production and consumption.

That makes sufficiently decarbonising the economy rapidly enough a virtually impossible task.

And it makes the case for an alternative approach overwhelming.

Reality dictates that nothing short of fundamentally changing the logic of our economy will suffice.

Instead of growing industrial output at all costs, we simply have to consume less.

To help imagine that this might look like, let me quote Hickel again:

*It means moving away from disposable products toward goods that last. It means repairing our existing things rather than buying new ones. It means designing things so that they can be repaired (modular devices such as Fairphones rather than proprietary devices such as iPhones). It means investing in public goods and finding ways to share stuff—from cars to lawn mowers—shifting from an ethic of ownership to an ethic of usership.*

Waging peace together to tackle the ecological crisis requires system level change.

A new global economy of sharing, participation and collaboration.

Redistributing power, wealth and jobs, providing genuine security in a world liberated from the threats we face today.

And liberated from the advertising industry, whose sole purpose is to make us feel miserable. We're not good enough, clever enough, beautiful or sexy enough unless we buy the latest "thing". As the wonderful Professor Tim Jackson puts it, they try to persuade us to spend money we don't have to buy things we don't need to make impressions that don't last on people we don't care about.

There's not much sense in that.

We know what we need to do. But how can we make this real?

## **Engagement**

The first thing to say is that, as with the example of Spain that I gave earlier, I think we should start with win-win situations. By talking about how much there is to gain from the solutions to the crises we face - rather than dwelling for too long on the problem.

One of my favourite cartoons shows a professor in a lecture theatre. On the whiteboard behind her, she's made a list of all the advantages of moving to a zero carbon economy: more affordable public transport, properly insulated homes so people aren't dying from fuel poverty, more local and healthy food, more time to spend with family and friends, kids playing in the streets again. And one of her students has their hand in the air, and the speech bubble from their mouth reads: But what if climate change is a hoax and we've created a better world for no reason?

Creating that better world is what we're about.

We have to offer people reasons to say yes. Reasons to hope. And that in turn, I believe, will transform them into wagers of peace.



The exciting thing is that within Europe at least we can improve people's lives and provide meaningful work right now, without any growth at all, simply by distributing what we already have more fairly.

That's not just my assertion, it's what 238 scientists told the EU at an event called *GDP And Beyond* in September.<sup>6</sup>

And it is yet more evidence that the change we need is possible, with the right political will.

So part of our role as peace activists is to change perceptions and understanding – to build belief in alternatives.

After all, the politicians and business owners making big decisions are still people. So too are those around them – the advisors and technocrats, the investors and the workforce, scientists and generals. They in turn have friends, and colleagues, and family, who are perhaps more open to different ways of seeing the world. And so we have the potential for influence.

We live in an inter-connected world. We are, it is said, just five connections away from every other human on the planet. It may be strange to think that this means we are five connections from the sailors on a Trident submarine, or the technicians at Menwith Hill, or the sales team at British Aerospace. But if we are, then this is an opportunity too good to miss.

When we sign a petition, or go on a demonstration, or write to a newspaper, or simply talk to our friends and family about the issues that matter, we have the chance to exercise that influence. To challenge preconceptions and even, perhaps, to shift perceptions a little.

Active remembrance means seizing every opportunity that comes our way.

When it comes to world leaders, or the military and security apparatus, it feels very different. More like an armed stand-off. As if we are in our trenches, and they are in theirs. We trade arguments – perhaps even insults. We struggle to find common ground.

Many of you will share my memories of standing by the fence at Greenham Common. And all of us will have had that same experience. Being on one side of

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/sep/16/the-eu-needs-a-stability-and-wellbeing-pact-not-more-growth>

a barrier, and seeing the police, or the army, or the neo-fascists or whoever on the other. The very setting creates division. We are tempted to see those on the other side as enemies.

Yet I am sure we have all had the impulse to reach out. To try and convince those on the other side to put aside their guns and batons and listen to a more hopeful message. To believe that the human race can be better than an endless future of war and repression. To throw flowers into the fences.

And if we are to be true to our principles, it must be we who step out of our trenches first.

### **Making it Happen**

A nice idea, you might say. But what would this mean in practical terms?

In part, that is the conversation our wider movement needs to have going forward.

But I do have a few suggestions – particularly about peace and security.

First, that we are clear that greater engagement should not, and need not, mean the sacrifice a single one of our principles or our policies. This is not about junking what matters. It is about finding new ways to converse with others and explain our case.

The second is that we draw upon our strengths. Particularly, those who have already found ways to engage with those whose minds we need to change.

We have in our ranks so many people who have the experience and knowledge to help our political leaders chart a new course. Let's make the most of them!

It's not only that we have the right values and instincts. We also have the analysis and arguments too.

My third suggestion is that we should be ambitious.

Take the UK's National Security Strategy.

It sounds impressive, doesn't it? National Security Strategy.

Unfortunately, it's rubbish. Ill-thought through. Badly-expressed. And most of all, it doesn't properly engage with the issues.

The respected British defence think-tank, the Royal United Services Institute, has said of climate change:

“From a defence perspective, there is a danger that the military will be ill-equipped, under-resourced and under-prepared.”

That’s an understatement. Climate change does not appear in any of the three National Security Objectives<sup>7</sup>.

Our admirals and generals are on record expressing their grave concerns about the threat from climate change. Even Tony Blair said it was one of the two most pressing threats to the United Kingdom.

So the British Government clearly needs some help with a National Security Strategy that’s fit for purpose - and we are well-placed to help.

We could bring in the environmental and conservation groups. The aid and development groups, who see the impact of climate change. The refugee groups, who understand the reality of the growing displacement of populations.

In fact, perhaps we should write our own National Security Strategy.

And think how different it would look.

Tackling problems at source – giving people hope, a stake in their communities, more control over their lives by encouraging democracy and the rule of law. Finding ways to reduce tensions and resolve conflicts. Replacing economic exploitation with economic cooperation.

Building up international institutions. Replacing wars of adventure with respect for international law.

Curtailing the arms trade. Showing leadership in arms reduction negotiations. And giving a new impetus to nuclear non-proliferation by immediately suspending plans for a replacement for Trident.

Investment in military equipment that can be used to support disaster relief and peace-keeping.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/555607/2015\\_Strategic\\_Defence\\_and\\_Security\\_Review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/555607/2015_Strategic_Defence_and_Security_Review.pdf)

A new approach to international trade talks. Globalisation should not be about handing power to multinational corporations. But it could be a force for good if it means agreeing international standards for the environment, workers' rights and health and safety.

A renewal of our commitment to human rights and civil liberties, including a digital bill of rights that establishes the UK as leading voice when it comes to standards for the rule of law and democracy in digital spaces.

Successive governments have responded in the most foolish and incompetent way to the threat of terrorism. Stigmatising people – not just refugees, but British citizens – by race or religion. More surveillance and intrusion. Showing contempt for the rule of law.

Let's wage peace by reinstating the truth as something of value

A global policy of contraction and convergence in which rich countries' use of finite energy resources contracts, while that of poorer countries expands. Ultimately, the goal being to converge on an equitable and sustainable per capita sharing of global energy, designed to keep well below 2 degrees Centigrade of warming – and ideally below 1.5 degrees too. Only in this way can poor countries improve living standards while the world as a whole avoids hitting resource and climate limits.

And a new Lucas plan – and no I am not naming it after myself but referring to the plan developed 40 years ago by workers at the Lucas Aerospace Company in response to the corporate plan for the company's future.

The corporate plan was to ensure a greater involvement in military markets and higher profit rates. It also meant the loss of jobs. The workers argued that concentrating on military goods and markets was neither the best use of resources, nor in itself desirable. And, by swapping the production of military goods for that of useful goods, they demonstrated no jobs needed to be cut.

Way ahead of their times, they looked specifically at energy and proposed that Lucas concentrate on renewable sources of energy generation, alongside developing more efficient methods of energy conservation.

These pioneers recognised that waging peace means waging war on poverty, inequality and environmental damage.

Marking their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a massive transition to a new green industrial strategy, that helps tackle climate change, creates secure job and replaces the military economy, would be hugely fitting.

Doing this as part of an alternative National Security Strategy is just one of the kinds of opportunities I believe lies within our reach.

The network Rethinking Security has done some hugely helpful work on getting us there too. They identify things like rebalancing current resource allocations away from costly military capabilities towards preventive and peacebuilding measures instead.

The Foreign Office reorienting the UK's security alliances on the basis of shared commitments to peace and human rights; DfID pursuing the vision of building peaceful, just and inclusive societies as set out in Goal 16 of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and the Home Office reducing the social and political marginalisation of vulnerable communities.

They call too for the public to be consulted on security priorities – waging peace hand in hand with every citizen, and with a commitment to expecting the best.

For surely any national security strategy must be owned by the people it is designed to keep safe. And reflect their values and aspirations.

Big demands - but what do we have to lose?

Our active remembrance has to be ambitious and it has to be proportionate with the scale of the crises we face.

### **Wrap-up**

“At the going down of the sun and in the morning, We will remember them.”

What better way to honour all those that have been taken from us in the name of war, than by actively building a world where we truly do never forget.

So let me give you one final example of what I think active remembrance looks like: it's right before me in this room. It's you.

Humanity faces new and dangerous challenges. Our leaders do not have the answers. And I think they know it.

This gives us more of a chance to influence their thinking for the better than we've had for many years. To help set the terms of the debate. To challenge outdated models of security. To put new emphasis on promoting security and peace through economic and ecological justice.

There is no, as yet unfound, group of people who are going to lead us into the safety and security of peace. We are it. We are the present and that means we are the future.

So friends, wagers of peace, the most effective way we can engage in active remembrance is to never forget that - and to use it to bring new energy, power and the force of hope to our quest.

Thank you.