

Statement from Archbishop Nolan Lancaster House Treaties

Remember Agincourt? For so much of its history, the history of England, then Britain, has been a history of war and confrontation with France.

Remember Waterloo? Just one of many battles fought between Britain and France. Constant conflict, 41 wars in 700 years, from 1109 till 1815 – through all that time both sides seemed like natural and eternal enemies.

But that is not the case any more, and both Britain and France see themselves as natural partners working together to enhance their mutual defence.

Sadly, the Lancaster House Treaties buy in to the fallacy of nuclear deterrence. They fail to realise that the reason why the threat of war between Britain and France is over is because both countries are now friends with each other. France may be a nuclear power, but we don't depend on our nuclear weapons to protect us from French aggression – our nuclear deterrent is not there to deter the French – our foes for so much of Britain's history - it is trust, it is reconciliation, it is friendship that keeps the peace between us.

Now we have other potential enemies. But instead of seeking peace by building up trust and reconciliation and friendship, the Lancaster House Treaties peddle the false logic that tries to persuade us that peace between nations is secured by the threat of mutual destruction.

In reality, nuclear deterrence reinforces division and mistrust, it hardens the divide, it ensures that our foe remains our permanent enemy.

Deterrence requires that each side, in order to have an effective deterrent, has to keep modernising its nuclear arsenal. Each improvement on one side spurs the other to upgrade or increase their weaponry. Deterrence fuels an arms race, increases military spending and does nothing to tackle the causes of conflict and division in the world. Deterrence is a deceptive comfort blanket, for these weapons do not bring comfort to the world but heighten anxiety and make for a more insecure world.

The Lancaster House Treaties' promotion of nuclear weapons means it fails to acknowledge that the best way to ease tension is to build up trust, not armaments; that seeing the other side as a potential friend is more effective than ensuring they are permanent foe. Deterrence can never do that and so does not lead to peace.

It is good that Britain and France are at peace, but these treaties are not the way to extend that peace to the world.

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