



Dear Stop the War Coalition,

Many thanks for the questions you have put to the Labour leader and Deputy leader candidates and for the campaigns you continue to run for peace and international justice. The record of the Stop the War Coalition in campaigning against Britain's involvement in wars abroad for nearly 20 years and organising the historic anti-Iraq war protests in 2003 is to be applauded.

I strongly believe that the values of peace, human rights, international law and global justice have to be at the heart of Labour's approach to foreign policy and as Labour leader would ensure this is the case.

When the Labour leadership and government supported the war and invasion of Iraq it broke trust with millions of voters, and this decision continues to play a role in people's loss of faith in, and distrust of our political system today. Jeremy Corbyn apologising for the Labour party's role in that humanitarian disaster with the publication of the Chilcott Inquiry is a moment we should all be proud of, but it never should have been necessary and we need to ensure it never happens again.

Recent wars in the Middle East have made the world more, not less, dangerous. They have not worked for this country or the people they have been waged against, whose lives have been shattered.

That is one of the reasons why I voted against bombing Syria 2015 and also why I spoke out against the threat of war with Iran.

Not only must Labour be a party of peace we must have an internationalist approach that can achieve peace and global justice, and through this ensure global stability.

This means never repeating the errors of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. We must instead support diplomacy and conflict resolution through the work of the United Nations with respect for international law.

Labour must set out a positive, independent, foreign policy based on international co-operation for security, human rights and global justice.

At this juncture it is more important than ever that Britain considers what role it wishes to play in the world. I believe the role of our country must be to assist in, and enable, the de-escalation of dangerous conflicts.

Too often – for example, through weapon sales to Saudi Arabia used in the war in Yemen – we have poured fuel on the fire, being complicit in creating a humanitarian crisis in Yemen. As of March last year, it had been reported that half of all children in Yemen aged between six months and five years were chronically malnourished, 20 million people don't know if they're going to be able to get their next week's supply of food, and 85,000 children were estimated at this point to have died of starvation.

It is simply a disgrace that last year the British government invited Saudi Arabia to one of the world's largest arms fairs here despite court ruling saying sales of weapons that will be used in Yemen are unlawful. As well as taking the lives of too many in Yemen being claimed in the war and its humanitarian disaster, Britain has made the region and ourselves less safe.

I am proud of the manifesto commitment Labour made to immediately suspend the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia for use in Yemen and to Israel for arms used in violation of the human rights of Palestinian civilians. I am proud of the strong support we gave to Palestinian human rights in our last two manifestos and the motions we overwhelmingly agreed at Labour Party Conferences in 2018 and 2019, and the last TUC Congress.

Our manifesto was also right to commit to immediately recognising a state of Palestine. This also means opposing Donald Trump's illegal and reactionary 'Deal of the Century'. It is a one-sided attempt to impose an unjust solution on the Palestinians. We must instead stand for an internationally backed peace plan with international law and human rights at its heart.

We cannot outsource our foreign policy, defence and security to the US as our present government would seek to do. Whether it be joining the US in arms sales to repressive governments in Honduras and Colombia in Latin America that attack trade unionists, or backing the disastrous 'deal of the century' plan against the rights of the Palestinian people, the Tories are too willing to dance to Trump's reactionary tune on the world stage.

As Labour leader, I will fight this government and campaign for an independent foreign policy with international law, human rights, peace and global justice at its heart because I also believe this is in the best interests of our country. The actions of Trump are making our world less safe and less stable.

Our country's security must be the central priority of any government. Our actions in the world should contribute to us never reaching the point where a decision about use of nuclear weapons has to be made. Killing millions of innocent people would not make our country and its citizens safer. That's why, as outlined above, we need a different approach to peace and security, which focuses on de-escalation and conflict prevent, through expanded diplomacy and above all the respect for international law.

We need a defence and security policy that comes from an evidence-based approach, that is relevant to the modern world and is effective at keeping us safe. The threats we face are increasingly the areas of cyberattacks and terrorist threats in an increasingly unstable world, particularly in the Middle East. This is why I voted against Trident renewal in the free vote on this issue. We have played a role in creating that insecurity. Now we need to be a country that ends, rather than starts and creates, wars. We need to end the outsourcing of our foreign policy, defence and security to the US, including in the area of nuclear weapons.

We must play our part in ridding the world of nuclear weapons. In the era of Trump, with his refusal to commit to serious international action on the issue of nuclear disarmament, this means the UK must both honour our commitments to international treaties on nuclear non-proliferation and make sure others do the same.

All of this means Britain playing a different role in the world in the future compared to the past – one where British foreign policy is truly ethical and truly independent - and in Labour we must continue to support this and the peace and anti-war movement. Another world is possible, and working together we can help achieve it.

Yours Sincerely,

Rebecca Long-Bailey