

# **RUSSIA & INTERNATIONAL SECURITY**

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP  
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**CHECKED AGAINST DELIVERY**

Thank you Edward for that introduction.

It's a pleasure to be here today at the invitation of the Sir Edward Heath Charitable Foundation.

And I think it's fitting that I will be speaking about international security, a topic that resonates deeply with Sir Edward's legacy.

In particular, given his commitment to the UK's role in Europe, which was born of his wartime experience and his deep desire for peace on the European continent.

And also given his interest in China, long before it became the key international player it is today.

## **SALISBURY**

It's a privilege to speak here in Salisbury this evening.

Six years ago today, I was preparing to tell the House of Commons - and the country - that we believed Russia was responsible for deploying chemical weapons on British soil.

I revealed that a former Russian intelligence officer and his daughter had been poisoned by a military-grade nerve agent known as Novichok.

And I stated that the attack on Sergei and Yulia Skripal was not just attempted murder, but a hostile act against the United Kingdom.

We offered Russia the opportunity to provide an explanation.

To explain how it lost control of this nerve agent.

How it came to be used in the United Kingdom.

And why it was operating an undeclared chemical weapons programme in contravention of international law.

An explanation was not forthcoming.

But I was clear that this unlawful use of force must be met with a robust response.

So I announced later that week that I had ordered the dismantling of the Russian intelligence network in the UK.

That included the expulsion of 23 Russian diplomats who were identified as undeclared intelligence officers – the single biggest expulsion for over thirty years.

I also announced that we would suspend all planned bilateral contact with the Russian government – and that we would introduce new powers to tackle hostile state activity.

We had asked the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to conduct its own investigation.

And the OPCW endorsed our findings in full.

Following the attack, we shared our intelligence with allies.

That included information surrounding the incident, and analysis from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory at Porton Down – which I had the privilege of visiting again earlier today.

Throughout the investigations into what happened, I was speaking regularly with fellow world leaders to persuade them to follow our actions in degrading Russian intelligence capabilities.

Some conversations were easier than others, but the collective response was overwhelming.

Following the UK's lead, some 27 other countries and NATO also took action.

It became the largest collective expulsion of Russian intelligence officers in history.

A total of 153 individuals engaged in conducting Russian espionage operations around the world had been identified and sent packing.

It was a clear signal to Moscow that it had been caught out – and that the world was not prepared to tolerate such a flagrant breach of international law.

## LESSONS FROM SALISBURY

Looking back, the resilience shown by the people of Salisbury was remarkable and I commend all who ensured not only that the incident was dealt with, but also those who helped Salisbury to recover.

The incident here in Salisbury said a lot about Russia and how it operates.

The Salisbury poisoning showed not only how Russia has a culture of retribution against dissidents and defectors - but how its security state operates beyond the rule of law.

There is little new here.

Since the days of Lenin - and particularly during the Soviet era - the Kremlin's biological and chemical weapons programmes have been a source of national pride.

And Russia has deployed them on several occasions to conduct illegal state-sponsored assassinations.

Most recently of course, Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny is presumed to have been poisoned, following an unsuccessful Novichok attack over three years earlier.

In the UK we need only remember the poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko, who was killed with a poisonous radioactive isotope in 2006.

In that case, as with the events in Salisbury, Russia demonstrated its tendency for opportunism and recklessness.

It often acts in the interests of short-term objectives, seemingly without consideration for the consequences of its actions.

And in the case of Salisbury, its operation was poorly planned and carelessly executed.

Not only did Russia fail to assassinate its target, its actions resulted in collateral damage – not least, by threatening the life of Sergei Skripal's daughter, Yulia.

But the Skripals weren't the only victims in this affair.

Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey, who attended the crime scene, was treated in intensive care.

And after Russian operatives casually discarded the nerve agent, the bottle was found by a local man, Charlie Rowley.

Sadly, Charlie - who was himself hospitalised - gave it to his partner Dawn Sturgess, who later died from Novichok poisoning.

An innocent life was lost.

But the bottle contained enough of the nerve agent to potentially kill thousands.

Had it been passed between more people the outcome could have been catastrophic.

It's because of the potentially widespread indiscriminate effects of chemical weapons that generations before us worked to prohibit their development and use.

But as the events here in Salisbury showed, Russia has little regard for international law.

Its actions were a clear violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and upended all of the norms and customs of international relations.

We had seen before how Russia's actions had violated national sovereignty - not least in Georgia, Crimea and the Donbas.

But the Salisbury poisoning showed us why we cannot presume Russia's brazen actions will be confined to its immediate sphere of influence.

By deploying chemical weapons in Britain, Russia proved that its appetite for risk extended to violating the sovereignty of a major Western power.

In retrospect, the incident in Salisbury proved a staging post on Russia's journey towards international pariah.

And its actions in the years since have sewn little doubt of the threat it poses to our way of life.

## **RUSSIA'S AIMS**

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reformist policies of President Gorbachev, many of us looked at a post-Soviet Russia with hope.

And after the collapse of the USSR, we in the West sought to pursue a constructive partnership with a free and democratising nation.

We supported the development of a market economy in Russia and took steps to integrate it into the international system.

We genuinely believed we were extending the hand of friendship to a nation that was undergoing positive political change.

But as regards Vladimir Putin, we have to accept that once a KGB man, always a KGB man.

To Putin, the collapse of the Soviet Union was a humiliation.

He describes it as “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century” and portrays the West as having taken advantage of Russia at its moment of weakness.

By distorting and weaponising Russian history, Putin attempts to create a narrative to underpin his ambitions.

He has tried to galvanise the Russian people against an external enemy and justify his illegal acts.

His vision is to recreate a Russia of the past.

To establish a resurgent power that can assert control over its neighbours.

One that has the strength to act on its claims to former Soviet territory in Ukraine and across the former Russian empire.

One that challenges NATO’s defensive posture on its eastern flank.

And ultimately, a Russia that contests perceived Western dominance in the wider world.

Because to Putin, international affairs are a zero sum game.

He believes that Russia will be stronger if the West is weaker – and that Russia's interests are best served by limiting the political, economic and military power of Western states.

Putin pursues policies designed to disrupt the post-war international order, which he believes has served Western interests over his own.

And he seeks to undermine the West by targeting vulnerabilities within democratic systems and in liberal society.

## **TARGETING DEMOCRACY**

Because, there is a paradox at the heart of democracy.

Our cherished freedoms - our commitment to liberty and the rule of law - are the foundations of our strength.

The drivers of innovation, prosperity and progress.

Yet these same freedoms present us with our greatest challenges.

Creating space for those who would exploit our openness, sow discord in our free societies and destabilise our liberal way of life.

The resilience of our values is being tested like never before.

And as one of Russia's highest priority intelligence targets, the UK is under constant pressure from Russian espionage.

From those who seek to infiltrate our political and commercial life.

Who seek to recruit informants.

Who set out to commit sabotage, blackmail, cause disorder and create distrust.

And increasingly, this activity takes place in cyberspace, where Russia is a sophisticated player.

Russia has proven that it's able to intrude into private networks and that it can threaten critical national infrastructure.

It has deployed cyber techniques to attempt to influence our democratic processes.

And the GRU is increasingly employing the handiwork of organised crime groups to help it rapidly scale up its network across Europe.

Commonly, Russia sets out to spread disinformation and run influence campaigns.

Historically, its own state-owned media - channels like Russia Today and Sputnik - have attempted to implant Russian narratives directly into Western society.

But perhaps most significantly, it has exploited the inherent weakness of social media in being able to easily amplify untruths on an exponential scale.

Regrettably, in recent years, it has experienced some success.

Its online bots and trolls disseminate false facts and pernicious narratives, designed to undermine faith in democracy and our values.

And it can rely on a chorus of online extremists and conspiracy theorists to amplify its content.

These are Putin's useful idiots, who promulgate this content sufficiently that it is consumed by ordinary mainstream citizens.

Driving up the salience of the most divisive issues facing the Western world.

Pitting sections of our society against one other.

Enabling extreme political views to become an accepted feature of our public debate.

And weakening the very fabric of our democracies.

## **CHALLENGING WESTERN INTERESTS ABROAD**

Russia's offensive tactics are not just taking place within our borders.

It seeks to challenge Western interests in other world regions, both directly and through proxies.

In Syria, Russia has been instrumental in supporting the Assad regime.

Its strategic alliance with Iran has seen deepening trade and military cooperation between the two countries – including the supply of Iranian drones for use against Ukraine.

And since the invasion, Russia has been deepening its so-called “no limits” partnership with China.

Now Russia’s largest trading partner, China has proved to be a vital source of diplomatic and economic support.

It has sided with Russia at key international fora like the UN.

It has lent credibility to Russian propaganda in less developed parts of the world by validating its claims about NATO aggression.

Chinese companies are profiting from the supply of goods used by Russian military forces in Ukraine.

And the Chinese economy is enabling Russia to circumvent international sanctions.

But as tempting as some might find it, we can’t simply declare China an enemy state or seek to pretend it doesn’t exist.

Like it or not, China is an integral part of the global economy.

What happens to trade with China affects companies, growth and livelihoods here in the UK and across the Western world.

That’s why I have always said there is a balance to be struck.

Rather than ignore China, we must continue to engage – but seek to counteract its influence when it acts against our national interest.

For instance, in Africa – where China and Russia are both investing heavily in furthering their political and economic clout.

Their objectives are to supplant Western diplomatic and economic relationships.

Russia in particular is seeking to foment anti-Western, anti-colonial sentiment.

And we have watched as it has increased its support for the more authoritarian regimes.

We have seen how it has enabled and exploited coups, including in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

In some cases it has been Russian mercenary groups that have provided armed support to governments, militias and warlords – and amplified disinformation on the ground.

In other instances the Russian foreign intelligence service has played a direct role.

Alarmingly, Russia has several military cooperation agreements in place with African regimes that include commitments on the supply of arms, equipment and training.

And recently we have heard how it's deepening its military and economic ties in exchange for preferential access to natural resources.

Russia appears to be prioritising its relationship with South Africa in particular.

In 2022 the world watched as South Africa refused to condemn Russia's actions in Ukraine and its President sought to blame NATO for provoking the invasion.

Last February, one year into that conflict, South Africa chose to conduct joint naval exercises with Russia off its coast.

Having destroyed any residual relationships with the West, it's no wonder that Moscow is focusing its charm offensive on the Global South – the nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

But it is not purely an act of necessity.

Moscow has much to gain from deepening its alliances with these countries, which are amassing greater economic and political power, and are demanding a stronger say in global affairs.

But we should not be allowing Russia a free pass – we must counteract its influence and assert the attractiveness of our values and the value of our friendship.

We must make the case to post-colonial countries – those which understand the concept of sovereignty – why Putin will never see the world from their perspective.

We must inject fresh energy into building new relationships, each with distinct identities – including with those we might count as old partners.

It is even more important now, having reduced the support we provide through international aid, which I believe was a retrograde step.

Relying on our historic links or on signing one-off trade deals just isn't enough.

We need to see a long term political and financial commitment, not just for the good of the world, but for our own national security.

## **MULTILATERALISM**

This year, Russia has the presidency of BRICS – the group of countries which also include Brazil, India and China.

It intends to use that opportunity to deepen cooperation between members, including on the coordination of foreign policy - and it has been suggested that further countries could be admitted.

It should not surprise us that Russia places emphasis on new and alternative international groupings.

Other examples include the Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

Groups comprised almost entirely of countries from the Global South or those already within Russia's sphere of influence.

Because Russia's motivation is not merely to strike alliances with burgeoning world powers, but to disrupt and destabilise the existing rules-based multilateral framework populated by Western states.

Establishing rival power structures is entirely consistent with Russia's aim of upending the international order and accelerating the transition to a multi-polar world.

Multi-polar in the sense that the world is effectively governed by several dominant powers, with Russia a key pole in this new order.

It would not be a world based on rules and norms, but one where strength is the only currency.

A world governed by power brokers cutting deals.

A world - Russia hopes - in which it is given a stronger hand to conduct malign activities and to realise its historic ambitions.

And its strategy is timely - for the multilateralism we have enjoyed over recent decades is under severe strain.

Sadly our multilateral system has come under attack, often from its main beneficiaries.

It's a system comprising institutions that were founded by Western allies in the wake of the second world war.

Institutions whose founders sought to embody the values they had been fighting for.

Freedom from tyranny.

The rule of law.

And the rights of all nations.

They are a symbol of our success – and the guarantor of our collective security.

At the international level, we must re-make the case for multilateral co-operation as the way to overcome our shared challenges and achieve our common goals.

If we continue to look in on ourselves and allow our international structures to wither, the global framework we have relied upon will be lost to authoritarian states.

States who seek not to uphold our values but to do us harm.

## **NATO**

In one sense, NATO is an outlier.

Unlike other institutions, it has enjoyed more unity of purpose in recent years.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, allies came together to show their commitment to the defence of democracy.

In many ways, Putin achieved the opposite of what he wanted.

With Sweden and Finland joining the alliance, there is a stronger NATO presence on his border than ever before.

And as an exclusively Euro-Atlantic alliance, NATO doesn't by definition have the same exposure to the corrosive influence of hostile states.

But it is vulnerable to acts of destabilisation from within.

Its core mission is to safeguard the freedom and security of its members - and it achieves that by maintaining the credibility of its deterrence.

But over recent years, NATO countries have given the appearance of being less willing to defend our values – and less able to sustain an effective deterrence.

We have seen it in our response to one international incident after another.

Take Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008.

The West's reaction was slow and inadequate, and Russia further violated the terms of the ceasefire without repercussions.

What should have been a wake-up call to the international community became instead a green light for Vladimir Putin.

The situation was made worse by Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014.

It was the first time since the second world war that one state had forcibly seized territory from another in Europe.

Western sanctions that followed proved too weak to deter Russia.

It continued to instigate conflict in the Donbas.

And it pursued a campaign of aggression in the years that followed.

It repeatedly violated the airspace of several European countries and has conducted a sustained campaign of cyber espionage, including meddling in elections, hacking the Danish Ministry of Defence and the German Bundestag, among others.

Putin had rightly seen a pattern of Western timidity in the face of blatant aggression.

And I have no doubt that it will have emboldened him to act when he saw an opportunity in Ukraine.

But of all our foreign policy endeavours, it's NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan that possibly would have delighted the Kremlin most.

Every NATO country had sent personnel into theatre over the course of that conflict.

And since 2003, the mission was NATO-controlled.

A fundamental principle of NATO is that it acts as one – and it should never have been within the gift of the US to simply negotiate withdrawal on its own.

But following the deal President Trump signed with the Taliban in 2020, a timeline was set for the drawdown of US troops.

The decision effectively bound all NATO partners.

All those UK personnel who served in Afghanistan and the families of those who lost their lives there should be proud of what they achieved.

They provided the opportunity of a better future with more freedom to so many.

But in the summer of 2021, the world watched as the disaster of the withdrawal from Kabul unfolded.

Desperate people chasing planes down a runway.

Mothers handing babies over airport fences in the hope that their children would have a better life.

Afghans who had loyally supported NATO forces left abandoned at the hands of the Taliban.

And we subsequently failed to deter the Taliban from reinstating its brutal regime.

The rights of women and girls vanished overnight.

And the young, democratic country we had worked hard to build was plunged back into mediaeval oppression.

As I said in the House of Commons at the time, in my view, more should have been done to try to find a way to keep a sufficient military presence in the country, to maintain the security of Kabul and hence support a government.

It would possibly have required fewer troops than are already stationed at peaceful military outposts around the world.

And with proper planning and the right commitment from our partners, an alternative alliance of countries could have been brought together.

But perhaps the most serious consequence of that debacle was the message it sent around the world to those who would do the West harm.

Having met Vladimir Putin on several occasions, I can assure you, he is a cold, calculating individual – and he will not have been blind to the implications of our actions.

What will it have told him about the West's capabilities?

About the strength of our resolve?

About our willingness to persevere – and to defend our values?

And what did it say about NATO - the greatest defence alliance in history - but one that appeared to be entirely dependent on the United States?

Now NATO is contemplating the prospect of a second Trump presidency, and there are fears across the alliance that in such an event, the US could withdraw its support entirely.

It gives me a sense of *deja vu*.

As Prime Minister in 2017, I visited Washington as the first world leader to meet Donald Trump following his inauguration.

Contrary to media narratives, I went with the specific purpose of underlining the importance of the NATO alliance and encouraging him to give it his wholehearted support.

I wanted to lay the groundwork early ahead of the NATO leaders' summit the following year.

Our conversations in the Oval Office went well - but going into the press conference that followed, I really had no idea what he would say.

I was half expecting him to say the opposite of what we had just discussed.

Fortunately he did give his support to NATO - and following a sustained effort from allies and his own staff, he reluctantly maintained that support at the 2018 summit.

But this is just the problem - you never really know what Donald Trump's position will be from one moment to the next.

Whether he will support America's allies.

Whether he will fulfil America's leadership role in the free world.

Because all too often, “America first” meant “America only”.

And a potential second Trump presidency is likely to be far more unpredictable than the first.

Indeed, Donald Trump recently said that he would encourage the Russians to do “whatever the hell they want” to a NATO ally.

Clearly these comments are dangerous and further undermine the credibility of our deterrence.

So I would say to NATO leaders nervous about the loss of US support – this matter is simply too important to wish that your fears are unfounded.

We must urgently prepare for a more dangerous future.

That means a re-assessment of what NATO stands for.

Should it act simply in defence of European territory – or in defence of Western interests and values more broadly?

Should we build on the momentum established by Sweden and Finland, and look to new allies seeking to join the alliance?

It also means re-assessing how NATO operates.

Whether more flexibility is needed in the way NATO operates.

Whether there should be region-specific objectives, with groups of countries being able to work together to meet specific needs.

And we should increasingly be looking at how NATO interfaces with other organisations.

For instance in ensuring that the EU’s new defence initiatives work in concert with NATO objectives rather than in contrast to them.

But preparing for a more dangerous future also means spending more on defence.

I have always said that all NATO countries should be delivering on their commitments to meet the defence spending target of 2% of GDP.

It means that the burden of our collective defence is more fairly shared, but also that we are properly equipped.

It's crucial to maintaining the effect of our deterrence, and of course to retain the confidence of other members, not least the United States.

This year a majority of members are on track to meet the 2% target, but 13 countries will still fall short – and we must be clear that this is not sustainable in our uncertain world.

The UK has a proud record within NATO and we should be seeking to maintain our position of leadership within the alliance.

We already meet our 2% requirement and we must make sure that we continue that in the years ahead.

But crucially it also means acting smarter.

As in so many areas of the public sector, it is not about how much you spend, it is about how you spend the money you have – and to be honest, defence is a key area where we need to reform and improve procurement.

There are often huge inefficiencies in defence procurement, with the cost of major programmes spiralling out of control and not being delivered on time.

So I welcome the government's recent announcement to reform the way we develop and purchase military equipment.

But acting smarter means ensuring our capability is appropriate to the challenge.

We now have sustained hybrid warfare that combines conventional combat with the use of drones, information and cyber warfare – and we are dealing with a multiplicity of state and non-state actors.

The answer can't always be "more tanks", "more ships", or more big kit.

Rather, we must be able to sustain and grow our conventional hard power posture while continuing to develop our offensive and defensive capabilities in other areas such as cyberspace.

And we should be seeking to work on the ground in partnership with NATO allies wherever possible.

Because the very essence of NATO is preparedness.

Preparedness for all eventualities.

Of course, it's in no country's interest to break up our alliance.

Losing the support of the United States would certainly be a major setback for European security.

But, contrary to popular belief, NATO is not just a means of protecting Europe - the United States benefits as well.

We should remember that ahead of the last Russian elections, Putin gave a video presentation during his annual state of the nation speech which depicted nuclear missiles raining down on the state of Florida.

And just three weeks ago, Dmitry Medvedev - now deputy chair of Russia's National Security Council - stated that attempts to push Russia out of occupied Ukrainian territory would result in nuclear strikes against Washington and US allies.

Aside from the direct threat, it would not be in the broader interests of the United States to weaken NATO.

The US thrives as a leading political and economic power in a stable world – one that is free of conflict, operating under the rule of law, where contracts are enforced, with reliable trading routes and the free movement of capital.

A world facilitated not purely by American might, but through its network of alliances.

And in a world where power is shifting Eastwards, America needs its allies more than ever.

So I say to our friends in the Republican Party:

Resist the false security of isolation.

America is stronger when the world is more free.

As Ronald Regan said: "We know that peace is the condition under which mankind was meant to flourish.

Yet peace does not exist of its own will.

It depends on us.

On our courage to build it, and guard it, and pass it on to future generations.”

## **UKRAINE**

There is perhaps nowhere that courage is needed more than in Ukraine.

Over the last two years, over 31,000 Ukrainian soldiers have lost their lives while defending their country.

And UK Defence Intelligence estimates that over 350,000 Russian personnel have been killed or wounded.

Putin hasn't been deterred.

He's fighting a war of attrition - and has resorted to nuclear blackmail in an attempt to sustain his advances.

That he was not able to take Ukraine by force in the early weeks of the conflict is testament to the dedication and bravery of the Ukrainian military.

But it's also a product of the resolute support shown to Ukraine by the Western world.

The Russian march on Kiev prompted a commendable display of unity among Western powers.

And the UK has been proudly leading that response.

Over the last two years, we have dedicated over £12 billion in military, humanitarian and financial support.

We have trained Ukrainian troops, provided tanks and armoured vehicles, artillery ammunition and air defence missiles.

But while the Western world has provided unprecedented support, the truth is, it hasn't been enough.

In the early days, international sanctions inflicted economic dislocation on Russia.

And they have certainly helped to deprive Putin of an even larger war chest.

But in terms of achieving their strategic aim – of crippling the Russian economy – we must accept that Western sanctions have failed.

It's a hard truth, but we have seen the Russian economy stabilise as it has ramped up military spending, increased trade with China and continued to profit from exports of oil and gas.

Russia grew faster than all G7 economies last year and the IMF forecasts it will again in 2024.

The enforcement of sanctions in Western states has been patchy at best, with some countries going further than others.

And hundreds of global corporations are still doing business inside Russia.

We have learnt that complete economic isolation in our globalised world is unachievable.

And that the West was mistaken to once think that sanctions alone would ever be enough to secure a Ukrainian victory.

Ukraine needs significantly more financial resources and military equipment - and it needs it now.

It's critical that the US Congress is able to reach a settlement on the supply of military aid to Ukraine.

And there must be a step change in the production and supply of equipment and ammunition from all NATO partners, delivered in shorter timeframes.

We need to see the end of a reactive drip drip of support following weeks or months of slow deliberation on the part of Western governments.

For it has been the experience of the last two years that the weapons, tanks and planes that were first said to be off-limits have ultimately been supplied and used on the frontline.

Right now, supplies are drying up on the battlefield and that has real and immediate consequences – as we saw with the capture of the city of Avdiivka three weeks ago.

It was Russia's most significant gain in nine months.

Not because of their superior military strategy or the unmatched skill of their forces, but because Ukrainian troops were short of ammunition.

While costly in every sense, governments must now urgently reassess their strategic priorities.

Because our aim is not to stop Ukraine from losing, but to ensure it wins.

In the long lens of history, this is a defining moment.

Not just for Ukraine - for all of us.

Because if Ukraine falls, where will Putin turn next?

Perhaps his sights will settle on Moldova or the rest of Georgia.

Or if he feels sufficiently emboldened, it's foreseeable that he will test NATO's commitment to collective defence.

Perhaps he will attempt to take the Suwalki Gap or mount an incursion into the Baltic states.

At that point we would have direct confrontation between Russia and NATO.

The alternative - of not acting - would be to fatally undermine NATO's deterrence.

This is all very unlikely, I hear you say.

Objectively, none of this would be in Putin's security interests.

But we should remind ourselves that two years ago the invasion of Ukraine felt unlikely for the same reasons.

And we should remember that Putin believes he has a legitimate right to use force to reclaim what he regards as historic Russian territory.

So we should not try to over-rationalise his actions.

Instead we must do everything in our power to avoid this course of events.

The West must prove it is willing and able to act now to deter a wider war.

One that could be more costly, more deadly, and more dangerous.

It will require courage and perseverance.

For in the face of splintering resolve, Putin's tactic now is to play for time.

So we must demonstrate deterrence.

NATO must work closer together than ever before.

There will be differing views in private, but allies must speak with one voice - because Russia is watching our every move.

## **CONCLUSION**

For what is at stake in Ukraine?

Peace on the European continent.

The credibility of NATO.

The multilateral order we have spent decades building.

And the future of the West as an effective force in the world for the cause of freedom.

Because after 400 years of comparative dominance, the balance of power in our world is shifting to the East.

Long gone is the naïve assumption popular after the fall of the Soviet Union that liberal democracy is enjoying an unchallenged ascendancy.

Today we are living through a time when our values, and the institutions built to promote them, are under threat.

The values gifted to us by the generations before us, who fought for the supremacy of freedom, democracy and human rights.

Sometimes we assume our values are ancient and permanent.

It's easy to take them for granted.

But they must be defended.

For if we do not uphold our values, we will embolden those who oppose them.

So let us undertake to never give in to tyranny.

And to deepen our commitment to freedom at all costs.

**ENDS**