

NATO Public Forum panel Session: 'NATO in an era of Great Power competition'

First of all it's absolutely imperative that we secure Russia's defeat in Ukraine. And it's imperative for the sake of European security, freedom and democracy, and it's the only way that we are going to achieve a lasting peace in Europe.

There are some who are saying that there could be some possibility of negotiations now whilst Russia is still in Ukraine, but I think that would bring a false peace and it would lead to further aggression in the future.

We have to learn the lessons of the past, the failures of the Minsk protocol for example, in being able to secure a lasting peace in the area. So my very strong message is we have to defeat Russia first, and negotiate later.

And I completely agree with the Australian Prime Minister that we need to think very carefully about the messages we're sending to President Xi.

We've seen increased collaboration between Russia and China and we know that China is watching Ukraine closely. They're expanding their military capability and they're extending their global influence.

One significant thing today is that we will see in the new strategic concept put out by NATO specific reference to China. Because it isn't just an issue for the Indo Pacific region, it's also an issue for Euro Atlantic security.

I do think that with China extending its influence through economic coercion and building a capable military there is a real risk that they draw the wrong idea which results in a catastrophic miscalculation such as invading Taiwan.

That is exactly what we saw in the case of Ukraine, a strategic miscalculation by Putin, so this is why it's so important that the free world work together to help ensure that Taiwan is able to defend itself and to stress the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

What we're doing is making sure that Taiwan has meaningful participation in international organisations but also working to strengthen our economic ties with Taiwan, because this isn't just about hard security, it's also about economic security.

I think the lesson we've learnt also from the Ukraine crisis is the increased dependency of Europe on Russian oil and gas contributed to a sense in which Russia felt enabled to invade Ukraine because they knew it would be very difficult for Europe to respond.

So we also need to learn that lesson, I believe, with China of not becoming strategically dependent on China and in fact making sure we have strong alternatives. And not just that the free world has strong alternatives but also allies such as the Pacific Islands that the Prime Minister was talking

about, allies in South East Asia, allies in Africa and the Caribbean, also have alternatives to China's economic investment.

People will have seen at the G7 the announcement of \$600bn worth of investment through the Global Partnership for Infrastructure Investment Programme and I think that's a very important alternative to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. So I think there were huge lessons we can learn, and we need to learn them as soon as possible.

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