

Priti Patel's speech to Heritage Foundation

It is wonderful to see our friends on this side of the Atlantic and of course for me personally, knowing Niall but also being associated with the foundation as well.

This Foundation has a well-established reputation and an incredible history, a proud history of speaking up for liberty and advancing conservative values and beliefs.

And of course it was in 1989, it was Margaret Thatcher took pride in declaring that “we in the Conservative Party are conviction politicians. We know what we believe. We hold fast to our beliefs. And when elected, we put them into practice.”

Being here today is very much a reminder that our international coalitions – throughout the conservative movement – are based upon principles, purpose and conviction.

And of course we are the generation of politicians who follow in the footsteps of political giants – Margret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan – the very people who stood up to our enemies, confronted the hard issues of the nanny state, defended our values with conviction and belief and tackled those who stood in the way of our economic freedoms.

And at the core of our values system is the principle of safety and security.

Now in my role as Home Secretary, the safety and security of the people of the United Kingdom is fundamental to everything that I do.

Security and safety can only be achieved by working with our friends and allies, because not only are we united in our shared values, but we are united in our desire to be safe.

It also means playing my part in protecting the rules-based international order and, of course, our abiding desire to be free, because our freedom is utterly dependent upon security.

So if you ask me if I'm more of a free-marketeer or more concerned with law-and-order, I will tell you now that's a false dichotomy.

Free markets do not exist in a state of nature. They can only exist with the rule of law.

You cannot have free markets in a thriving economy if people, property, and businesses are unprotected.

What capitalism represents is freedom – the space to create, ingenuity –the very thing our adversaries seek to undermine.

And they do so not just to gain economic advantage, but of course to destabilise us altogether.

That is something we must not let them do.

Nor can democracy function without security. Someone cannot vote freely if she is scared, or intimidated or if her choices are not legally upheld.

Democracies collapse in the absence of security.

And nobody has the freedom to thrive and succeed if they are not safe and secure.

Security is the great rock upon which freedom sits. If you chip away at that rock, freedom will be eroded bit by bit.

And there are so many of us that speak passionately about how hard-won our freedoms were, and of course how easily they could be lost.

Mrs Thatcher and Ronald Reagan were steadfast and united in their belief in freedom as they confronted the "evil" empires of communism and socialism. And they were right to do so.

But we must never forget that rock that underpins those freedoms must be defended too, and that it will crumble if we do not work together to preserve it.

In 1989, the Berlin Wall fell. Freedom seemed to have won so comprehensively it was even suggested that history had ended.

32 years later, we know that is not true.

There is nothing inevitable about the future.

If we want a future in which we are prosperous, happy, and free, we will have to continue to work for it...

And with that, that means co-operation among allies on our shared security threats and holding a clear understanding that if we don't have security, we will have none of the things we want or even take for granted, and of course many the things we do not want.

So today, I would like to speak about the global picture and the various threats we face as allies – all of which endanger our shared freedom and prosperity.

This year we saw the withdrawal from Afghanistan – a major event pressing a broad range of challenges amongst us all.

The United Kingdom responded at great speed – in extremely difficult and dangerous circumstances to bring Afghans who shared our values and also worked alongside us to safety and to extract others left vulnerable by the change of regime in Afghanistan.

Strengthened by our Five Eyes and other international partnerships, our commitment to NATO remains vital and steadfast.

And we see in the case of Afghanistan why security and safety for women and girls is so vital – and also how it is central to economic prosperity.

The United Kingdom, like other allies, is proven a safe haven for people at risk, including women, girls and minority groups.

We won't need to explain to any of them that freedom depends upon security.

All the while, we need to be alive to the changing situation in Afghanistan and how it alters the geopolitical and global security picture, as well as closely following developments elsewhere.

The context for 2021 and the years ahead is very different to what has gone before.

It is also incumbent on all of us to act – to tackle existing threats but also to protect ourselves against future ones.

State threats materialise in multiple forms. Physical threats to people and to life – such as through assassination, forced repatriation, or harassment.

The physical threats to our way of life and to our values – including sabotage, threats such as espionage, and interference.

Supplemented by invisible threats – cyber-attacks, malware, fraud, extortion, and intellectual property theft

Resulting in an erosion of our freedoms, harm to our economic stability – all underpinned by deliberate intent to destabilise our security and the rules-based order on which it stands.

And then there are the threats to geostrategic interests.

Occasionally, these actions will be completely brazen and so overt, such as with the assassination of Alexander Litvinenko in 2006 and the Salisbury Novichok poisonings of 2018.

These outrages were perpetrated with very clear intent, the clear intention of sending a message that perceived disloyalty will not be tolerated. That is completely at odds with freedom.

I recently announced in relation to Salisbury that arrest warrants are now in place for three additional men. And just yesterday, I confirmed that we in the United Kingdom will hold a public inquiry. And I will be robust in my continuation in my work to pursue justice in terms of what happened around Salisbury.

But when this outrage occurred in the United Kingdom needed support from our international allies. When we expelled 23 undeclared Russian intelligence officers, 28 other countries and NATO joined us and supported us, resulting

in the largest collective expulsion ever – of more than 150 Russian intelligence officers.

This degraded Russian intelligence capability for years to come. Our friends knew that this grotesque act was not just a human tragedy but an assault on our nationhood and on liberty.

It is a reminder of how intricately freedom and safety are one.

Meanwhile, espionage is evolving. Governments continue to spy on each other, but spying now has a much further reach, including into our universities and businesses.

It is not only inherently improper for countries to try to influence each other – which is of course why I am here over this side of the Atlantic this week!

But importantly we can never allow national security of our nations to be compromised.

Despite the power of diplomacy, one of the most significant threats to our security continues to be malign interference.

The activities of those hidden relationships where public figures are encouraged to pursue and push another country's interests, hack-and-leak operations and organised crime and trolling.

We in the UK will no longer tolerate such brazen attacks and the brazen way we have seen our national security subject to such activities. Our upcoming legislation will represent the biggest counter state threats legislation in over one hundred years.

To share just two examples, we will modernise existing counter-espionage laws to better reflect the contemporary threat; and we will improve our ability to protect official data and strengthen the associated offences.

Our strategic partnership must continue to address all this activity – which is uninhibited and growing along with all the other threats we see in day in, day out.

Absolutely critical to this remains our CT partnerships with the US, where our shared focus and approach is central to protecting both of our countries – which I am determined to deepen even further over the coming months and years.

Of course, we still face threat of terrorism. This too is a threat that mutates.

Following major incidents, there have been two changes to the threat level in the United Kingdom in recent weeks. It is now at “severe” – the second highest level.

The United Kingdom's approach to terrorism of all kinds takes place under

four main workstreams: prevent, pursue, protect, and prepare.

And it is thanks to the superb and largely unsung work of United Kingdom counter-terrorism agencies, since 2017 that 31 plots that were in their latter stages have been foiled.

The threats we face today have of course changed. They can play out in the battleground, or in a bedroom.

And low sophistication is changing the way we must all act to defend ourselves.

As with all security issues, as terrorism becomes more complex, so our response needs to become more sophisticated and nuanced.

We must constantly strive to refine our approach and strengthen our domestic and collective resilience.

To respond to an evolving and serious threat, we are scaling up our efforts to tackle hatred and radicalisation and strengthen our capability to disrupt those who seek to radicalise others into violence and terrorism.

This of course means working very closely with policing, relevant experts, and other government departments and experts to build a picture of possible threats to society. I will continue use every tool and every lever at my disposal.

One of these tools is data. Considerable data-sharing is already happening at the highest levels to protect us from terrorism and criminal activity and I will continue to push the United States and other allies for further cooperation in this area.

Islamist extremism is so significant, it is an enduring threat. It is heavily influenced by theatres of conflict and geopolitical changes, and how these are presented online.

A belief that democracy is decadent and evil is, of course, a core tenet of Islamist extremism.

The United Kingdom is a committed member of the Global Coalition Against Daesh, co-leading the effort to counter propaganda and hosting Counter-Daesh Communications Cells.

Since I became Home Secretary in 2019, I have proscribed four extreme right-wing terrorist groups, all of which spread vile, antisemitic propaganda.

Sikh separatist extremism has also caused considerable tensions in recent years. While we stoutly defend freedom of expression, it must always be within the law.

We have expanded our disruptions capability to better address those people who seek to radicalise but who operate, often intentionally, below legal thresholds.

We now need to focus on how we can go further to analyse, prevent and disrupt the spread of high-harm extremist ideologies that can lead to community division and to radicalisation into terrorism, particularly those that radicalise others but deliberately operate below CT thresholds.

There are a wide range of offences and powers that can be used to counter the threat from extremism and we are working to maximise their use. These include powers to regulate charities; broadcasting and education; immigration powers; and offences such as encouragement of terrorism and public order offences.

And today I have laid an order in the United Kingdom Parliament to amend Schedule 2 to the Terrorism Act 2000 to proscribe Hamas in its entirety – including its political wing.

Hamas has significant terrorist capability, including access to extensive and sophisticated weaponry, as well as terrorist training facilities, and it has long been involved in significant terrorist violence.

But the current listing of Hamas creates an artificial distinction between various parts of that organisation – it is right that, that listing is updated to reflect this.

This is an important step, especially for the Jewish community. Hamas is fundamentally and rabidly antisemitic.

Antisemitism is an enduring evil which I will never tolerate. Jewish people routinely feel unsafe – at school, in the streets, when they worship, in their homes, and online.

This step will strengthen the case against anyone who waves a Hamas flag in the United Kingdom, an act that is bound to make Jewish people and the community feel unsafe.

Anyone who supports or invites support for a proscribed organisation is breaking the law. That now includes Hamas in whatever form it takes.

We tolerate extremism, it will erode the rock of security. I led work with colleagues to protect our country's intellectual property and other interests.

I also launched new Counter-Terrorism Operations Centre, bringing together policing, the intelligence agency, and the criminal justice system coordinating their expertise, resources, and intelligence in a state-of-the-art facility.

Meanwhile, our Victims of Terrorism Unit is there to provide support for all victims, regardless of their nationality, after a UK-based attack.

We have to carry on working phenomenally hard, through our Five Eyes partnerships and other international partnerships.

And I will always encourage Five Eyes partners to strengthen our arrangements when it comes to the appalling and abhorrent issue of child sexual

exploitation and abuse as well as counter-terrorism.

The instant communication enabled by modern technology – which is so positive in so many ways – inevitably makes the challenge of keeping our people more safe rather hard.

It also demands an international response, a global response, and that is what I am pursuing.

Terrible ideas and falsehoods spread like wildfire, radicalising and emboldening. The incitement and financing of terrorism are both rife online.

Freedom of speech does not include the right to incite terrorism.

The Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism is an example of strong progress, but the truth is that we need to do so much more.

End-to-End encryption brings further risks – indeed in my view it jeopardises the good work that has gone before.

Messages are already encrypted as standard – but end-to-end encryption where neither the platform operator nor law enforcement can see the content jeopardises much of that work.

Reasonable people instinctively understand that law enforcement has got to be able to track and tackle the sharing of terrorist material or child abuse images where it has a legal warrant to do so. That would be the same in the offline world.

Merely removing offending accounts from a platform is nowhere near good enough and social media companies need to take greater responsibility for the harms, the very harms that they are responsible for.

I will continue to call on all our allies to back the United Kingdom's approach of holding technology companies to account for the harmful content they host on their platforms and if they neglect public safety when designing products.

Our Online Safety Bill will place on technology companies a binding duty for care of their users and end-to-end encryption will not release companies from that duty.

It is hyperbolic and wrong to assert that these concerns are really about snooping on the blameless or an assault on freedom. If that were so, I would be the first to speak out.

This is about public safety and keeping people safe from evil.

Now, it is through these very platforms that illicit finance enables most of the shared threats we face from terrorism, organised crime, and other malicious actors to thrive.

The risk of dirty money is one we are all aware of and it requires

significant global action to tackle illicit financial flows.

The G7 delivered strong commitments to tackle corruption and kleptocracies as part of the United Kingdom's presidency, as will next month's Summit for Democracy here in the US.

A close relation of illicit finance is of course cybercrime.

As technology develops, so do the opportunities for cyber criminals. The arrival of 5G and the Internet of Things has created a multitude of new opportunities but also vulnerabilities, including inside people's homes. The rapid advancement of 5G has been a salutary reminder to us all that we can never stand still in the field of technology and innovation.

Our security and freedoms are linked to the very way in which our strategic partnerships advance technological solutions and we must never be left to rely on technology that presents a risk to the security of our nations.

'Deep Fake' technology provides opportunities for fraud and identity theft – for the exploitation purposes and extortion.

There have been attacks on national infrastructure, business, individuals, civil society, and organisations of every type – even political parties are vulnerable now to ransomware attacks.

At the very least, these are assaults on our way of life and our national integrity.

At the worst, such as with attacks on our CNI, they represent an immediate and grave threat.

The United Kingdom has a specialist cyber law enforcement network and we are shifting to a "whole-of-cyber" approach, and that broadens the scope of our National Cyber Strategy beyond cyber security to now cover the whole of cyberspace.

By the end of the year, we will publish a National Cyber Strategy that will strengthen law enforcement and make our approach much more collaborative.

The Budapest Convention has helped to foster international cooperation on this issue and the United Nations is developing a new Cybercrime Treaty.

And just last month, the UK hosted a session on countering illicit finance as part of a multilateral event led by the United States seeking new global ways of disrupting ransomware attacks.

At the G7 summit, I called on all states to identify and hold to account cyber-criminal gangs who operate in their territories.

Perhaps the most chilling threats are the ones that we cannot see. Bioterrorism is the stuff of Hollywood movies and of nightmares, but sadly it is all too real.

It will flourish if we allow the break-down of the rules-based international order – as we saw in Salisbury and in the vile use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Even when a biological problem does not necessarily stem from a wicked, deliberate act – when it comes to diseases – the threat can be enormous and of course it does not respect international borders.

Chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defence is yet another area that demands that we stick together and work together.

Even if someone is not killed by a biological attack, the impact on their health could easily be so devastating that their freedom to live their full life is severely compromised.

We cannot hope to stay safe or live freely if we are sheepish about calling out such wrongdoing.

What is true of minor domestic criminals is equally true on an international scale.

Several governments are willing and capable of overt and covert action that undermines the United Kingdom's national security.

This includes such activity from state or state-based organisations in Russia, China, and Iran.

We respect the people of every country, but we will do whatever it takes to keep our country and our allies safe.

The British Government's Integrated Review, published earlier this year, was a review of our national security and international policy and it made very clear that the actions of the Russian state pose an acute and direct threat.

I have already spoken about Salisbury. Since then, we have repeatedly exposed the reckless and dangerous activities of Russian Intelligence Services.

We've called out Russia's malicious cyber activity, sanctioned individuals responsible for hostile and malign activity against the United Kingdom and our allies, introduced new Chemical Weapons, Global Human Rights, and Global Anti-Corruption sanctions regimes and cracked down on illicit finance.

Now last year, working in tandem with Europe, we announced sanctions against the Russian Intelligence Services for cyberattacks against the United Kingdom and our allies.

We also took robust action in our response to the poisoning and attempted murder of Alexei Navalny – enforcing asset freezes and travel bans against 13 individuals and a Russian research centre.

As the US and UK set out in April this year, Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service – the SVR – was behind a series of cyber intrusions, including the

SolarWinds compromise.

There are also significant human rights concerns in China, and that's in relation in relation to the Uyghurs and also Hong Kong.

And in the United Kingdom I am very proud that we have not forgotten our strong links to Hong Kong.

We created a new visa and new routes of settlement for Hong Kongers with British National (Overseas) status, who will now be able to live their life free from the fear of oppression.

In July, the United Kingdom and our partners were able to confirm that Chinese state-backed actors were responsible for gaining access to computer networks via Microsoft Exchange servers accessing email accounts, acquiring data, and deploying malware.

This affected more than a quarter of a million servers worldwide. Those hit included the Norwegian Parliament and European Banking Authority.

The United Kingdom signed a bilateral agreement setting out acceptable behaviour in cyberspace with China in 2015 and we continue to hold China accountable for it.

In December 2018, the UK Government and 14 other countries called out China's Ministry of State Security for breaching the agreement.

In February, a Belgian court sentenced an accredited Iranian diplomat based in Vienna to 20 years imprisonment for his role in a plot to bomb a conference in Paris hosted by Iranian dissidents. The Belgian state security service stated that "the plan for the attack was conceived in the name of Iran and under its leadership."

In July, the US DoJ announced that a New York court had unsealed an indictment against four people resident in Iran for their involvement in a plot to kidnap an unnamed Iranian-American journalist.

The indictment also detailed four other individuals under surveillance by the network, including one based in the United Kingdom.

Prosecutors said one of the conspirators was an Iranian intelligence official, while the other three were 'assets' of Iranian intelligence.

All of this shows that complacency for us all is simply not an option.

To conclude, you will all sense the extraordinary and evolving threats we face at home and abroad. And my message that defending the freedom we share requires us all to act in an agile, co-ordinated way to combat shared security threats and defend our shared values and the rules-based order.

The whole country in the United Kingdom was shocked only last month by the brutal killing of an MP, and that was my dear friend Sir David Amess. And last weekend we saw a fatal incident outside a maternity hospital in

Liverpool. Both are being investigated as terrorist incidents.

I am very grateful for the way politicians and others from other countries have held out the hand of friendship.

A show of solidarity goes a long way. But the fact is that these dreadful events were not unprecedented, and that we have to work ferociously hard to defend our freedoms.

Effective national and international security policies mean giving each threat and hazard the resources it needs, while always maintaining the core expertise in each area and having the ability at a moment's notice to surge capacity into a crisis.

Finally, it is worth remembering that things can change for the better, as well as for the worse.

Some of the United Kingdom's closest allies today are countries whom we have fought wars in the past.

While we will not hesitate to protect ourselves, it is very much our preference not only to enjoy economic and diplomatic relations, but also to be friends.

Countries that embrace freedom invariably become more prosperous and with that, they also become safer, too.

Thank you.