

Responding to the war in Europe

Dear Constituent

Many of you will be sharing my horror at events in Ukraine. The daily scenes of death and destruction, of mass movements of people fleeing the violence are harrowing. They are a constant reminder of why war is wrong. They are what happens when politics and negotiation fail.

Some of you write wanting the U.K. to enforce a no fly zone over Ukraine to stop aerial bombing. This would mean declaring war on Russia, as a no fly zone would require contesting Ukrainian air space with the Russians. Escalating the war in this way would be full of hazards. Nuclear powers taking each other on requires restraint by both sides over first use of nuclear weapons. NATO could of course defeat Russia at likely great cost to life and property but the U.K. alone would be stretched. Our allies led by the USA do not want to take NATO to war with Russia over Ukraine. A successful No fly zone after a bruising set of air battles would not end the ground artillery and missiles raining down on Ukraine unless a victorious NATO airforce went on to bomb Russian forces in difficult urban locations with likely deaths of the very people we wish to help.

Some of you wish to see more rich Russians in the U.K. sanctioned, with confiscation of assets. Ministers are keen to do this to all cronies of Putin who might still have some influence over him, and to those who came by their wealth through crime. They do need to proceed according to the rule of law. Many rich Russians living peacefully in the U.K. are neither Putin supporters nor criminals. The government should sanction those where they have a good legal case against them. This can take time to research and establish.

Some of you want a generous offer to those fleeing the violence. The government is expediting entry to the U.K. to those with family here who wish to come to stay. The needs and wishes of the hundreds of thousands crossing into Poland and Romania is to be housed and fed near to Ukraine with a view to returning to their homes as soon as possible. Many are women and children temporarily separated from their menfolk who have stayed at home to fight. The U.K. is offering substantial financial and practical aid to assist with the temporary camps. The U.K. will keep its support under review as the situation develops as needs and wishes may change.

The U.K. did lead a stronger response from NATO with deliveries of weapons to help defend Ukraine before others and by working with US Intelligence to reveal the true nature of Putin's plans to encourage preparation against the onslaught. The U.K. is striving to do all it can as a good ally short of declaring war to pressurise Russia to end the violence and helping brave Ukrainian defenders hold off the attacks.

Yours sincerely

John Redwood