

The war in Ukraine

Some of you would like to discuss the war in Ukraine. You ask my view.

I hate to see senseless slaughter and destruction of property. The loss of life and injury to Ukrainians is dreadful. I would like to see a ceasefire and negotiated settlement, but this can only happen when Russia and Ukraine both wish to proceed in that way. I do not want to see other forces and nations intervene to try to impose a settlement on them. That would doubtless mean even more deaths and unhappiness.

I do not agree with the few who take the Russian side and say Russia is close to victory. All the evidence available from this far away points to a fairly static war now, with both sides well dug in. Both can damage the other but cannot win quickly or easily. I condemn Russia's violent seizure of Ukraine territory.

The issue of how much support the UK and allies should offer Ukraine is difficult. There is general agreement that no NATO, therefore no UK, forces should enter Ukraine and fight on their side. There is agreement no NATO supplied weapons should be used by Ukraine for an attack on Russian territory, but they can be used within Ukraine against Russian occupied areas. There has been a reluctance to supply fast jets, but some tanks and more sophisticated drones and smart weapons have been supplied.

Clearly the volume and power of western weapons supplied will have an impact on the result, just as weapon supplies and economic support to Russia by her allies helps Russia. I wrote before this latest conflict about the circumstances that led to a change of government in Ukraine in 2014 and the background to the Russian seizure of Crimea. I would be interested in your thoughts on how NATO should proceed. I have not been seeking to influence or change this policy.

There are big issues arising from the prolonged war concerning the displacement of people, the costs of rebuilding and the future financing of Ukraine.

Saving industry

The path to net zero threatens many traditional industries that rely on fossil fuels for their manufacture and for their products. The car industry is being asked to close all its petrol and diesel car factories, writing off large amounts of sunk capital in machinery and research and development. The steel industry is being asked to switch from making steel from ore smelted in a blast furnace, to melting old metal in an electric arc furnace. Oil, and

gas companies will be asked to stop extracting more fuel from their wells as the electric revolution proceeds, leading Green campaigners to talk of stranded assets. If the UK does this too soon we will end up importing fossil fuel heavy products instead and world CO 2 will go up, not down.

Western governments want to force the pace of these changes, going faster than consumer preferences and normal market forces will deliver. As a result business is demanding large subsidies to set up the new activities, bans and controls on the old activities to prevent people still wanting these products, and even favours the use of taxation to tilt the markets in the direction of net zero products.

Biden's America has decided to increase spending and borrowing substantially to be able to pay large subsidies to divert green investments to the USA from other places that might have attracted them. The EU with a smaller budget is also planning on spending and borrowing more at EU level to do the same. So far EU strategy has been good for electric vehicle and battery manufacture in Hungary and Poland. This poses a serious issue for the UK. How do we best compete?

Out of the EU gives us a great advantage as we can target our own policies to benefit the UK rather than going along with EU policies which are likely to help other countries in the Union more, as has so far been the case. It seems to me we could best add to the attractions of the UK by strengthening our offer on skilled people, lower business taxes and informed government purchasing. Bidding up the subsidy cost of getting an investment is not a good idea, and may help to undermine the future profitability of these new businesses by concentrating attention on subsidy farming rather than on what the consumer wants to buy. In the end the only guarantee of a strong business and of the tax revenue that can bring is for the business to make things people want to buy at an affordable price. Too many business bought with large subsidies flounder when the subsidy ends.

Self employment falls again

I have been drawing attention for sometime to the loss of 700,000 self employed since the lockdowns. The latest figures show that the loss has now risen to 790,000. Some of this was the direct result of the lockdowns themselves. Unable to earn a living owing to bans on activity, some decided to end their self employment and retire, or look for jobs when the lockdowns ended. Some of it is the result of the toughened tax regime which makes it difficult for self employed people to gain contracts from companies worried about tax status questions. Clearly the more recent falls are not the result of the lockdowns but of something else.

Self employment offers flexibility, more capacity and competitive pressures that help the customers. It can also be a good way of life for people who can

earn directly from their own efforts and increase their earnings from doing more and offering great customer services. I am renewing my proposal to the government that they should change the tax rules for the self employed to encourage more to take it up, to the benefit of the economy.

My Question on the Prime Minister's G20 Summit Statement

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):

Did the Chinese representatives give any indication of when they might stop their big increases in carbon dioxide and start to reduce them? Does the Prime Minister agree with me that it makes no sense for the UK to rely on Chinese imports of electric vehicles, solar panels and other green products when they are so CO2-intensive in their production, and deny us the jobs and added value?

The Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak:

My right hon. Friend makes a good point. He will see in the G20 declaration a commitment by all members recognising the need to peak emissions in the next couple of years. To his broader point, that is why the Government have consulted on measures to address carbon leakage. It is absolutely right that there is a level playing field, and that if we take action here it should not come at the cost of British workers if it ultimately makes no difference to global emissions. That is why we have consulted on proposals on carbon leakage, and I very much welcome his thoughts on that.

The Power of ownership

- **Ownership is popular. It is a crucial foundation of a free society. It lies at the heart of Conservatism.**
- **Socialists try to take property away from people on grounds of inequality. Conservatives want more people to own property.**
- **Politicians should harness the popularity of ownership and private sector investment to develop policies which give the public a greater sense of pride and security**
- **From housing to employment, industry to culture, my new pamphlet sets out ways to launch an ownership revolution**

Ownership is a core dividing line between left and right and the Conservative Party should facilitate wider public ownership in order to boost security and wellbeing,.

[‘The Power of Ownership’](#), written by Sir John Redwood MP and published by the Centre for Policy Studies, builds on the themes of his book ‘Popular Capitalism’, to explain how important ownership is to democracy and a free society and how it can be advanced for many more people.

The [report](#) outlines a number of ways to boost ownership, including:

- Support home ownership by supporting self-builds, selling off government- or council-owned rundown properties to bring them back into use more quickly
- Compensate those living near new housing developments to discourage NIMBYism and increase housebuilding. New towns and villages may be better than trying to cram more buildings into an existing village or town.
- Infrastructure should be delivered prior to new homes being built to reassure the settled community and to be ready for the new residents when the homes are sold
- Raise the VAT threshold to £250,000, boosting the capacity and growth potential of the small business sector
- Gift licence fee holders shares in the BBC, allowing them to appoint the Board and Director General, with the ability to sell new shares to raise capital in the future
- Selling off the remainder of government holding in NatWest in a single major transaction

Sir John Redwood MP, author of ‘The Power of Ownership’, said:

‘There are still too many people with too few assets. People cannot be expected to be capitalists if they are denied access to capital, and the ownership and security that comes with it.

‘Whether we look at housing, industry, employment, or culture, the Conservative Party should be promoting ownership at every turn – empowering the public and delivering for the economy.’

The pamphlet is available through the Centre for Policy Studies website.

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