

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.