

# Foreign Secretary gives keynote speech in Ukraine: 17 February 2022

## **Introduction**

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

The spectre of Russian aggression has long hung over Eastern Europe.

Today it menaces our friends in Ukraine, and threatens security and stability for us all.

We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Ukraine.

Despite Russia's claims, the military build-up shows no signs of slowing down. There is currently no evidence that forces are withdrawing.

Russia must step back from the brink.

The Kremlin has had every offer of diplomacy – the Normandy process, proposals for further talks in the NATO-Russia Council, transparency mechanisms through the OSCE, and countless bilateral discussions.

Time after time they have chosen not to engage with these proposals but to obfuscate and object.

When President Putin spoke at the Munich Security Conference 15 years ago, he said that NATO expansion “represents a serious provocation.”

Since then NATO has not expanded its membership closer to Russian territory. But Russia has invaded two sovereign states and continues to undermine their territorial integrity.

Russia faces no threat from NATO or Ukraine.

But accommodating illegitimate Russian concerns would not make their threats disappear. Instead, Russia would be emboldened.

Bullies only respond to strength.

I urge Russia to take the path of diplomacy. We are ready to talk. We can talk at the UN as fellow members of the P5, at the OSCE at the Nato-Russia council. Russia can talk bilaterally with the United States as well as with other Nato allies. I say to Russia: now is the time to deescalate and choose diplomacy.

But we are very clear – if they decide to continue down the path of aggression, there will be massive consequences bringing Russia severe economic costs and pariah status.

## Challenging Russia's arguments & actions

For years now, Russia has been building its capabilities, violating its commitments and probing our weaknesses.

The West needs to wise up. We need to work together to discredit their arguments in public.

We should use our intelligence strategically to challenge their narrative – as we did last month, exposing the Kremlin's plans to install a pro-Russian leader in Kyiv and exposing their military build-up on the border.

And we should take on falsehoods – like Russia's claim that the 2014 Revolution of Dignity was a coup d'état, or when they talk about the "indivisibility of security" as if it means that security is a zero sum game.

Russia argues that increasing one state's security can only come at the expense of another's. And with this perverse philosophy they falsely claim that countries on Russia's borders should not be able to defend themselves or join defensive alliances like NATO.

I challenged Foreign Minister Lavrov on this in Moscow last week.

The commitment to "indivisibility of security" runs through the Helsinki Accords and the OSCE summits in Istanbul and Astana. And it means the precise opposite of what Russia claims. It's actually a message of mutual dependence – that our security is inseparable – and that a threat to one imperils the security of all.

Russia claims that it's being threatened. But what is the real threat? It's not NATO's defensive alliance. The real threat is the more than 100,000 battle-ready troops massed on the border of this sovereign state.

Russia thinks NATO shouldn't expand. The truth is that countries want to join Nato. People want insurance and they see safety in numbers. And this is only accelerated by Russia's belligerence.

Their aggression is driving NATO to strengthen its resolve. It turns the people of Ukraine and others against Russia. And it forces customers of Russian gas to question the reliability of their supplier.

Russia's aggression is not just targeted at Ukraine.

Their campaign of hybrid warfare across Europe has brought cyber attacks, attempts to undermine elections, and the use of chemical and radiological weapons on the streets of London and Salisbury. They are supporting destabilising mercenaries across Africa.

They have chipped away at the architecture that makes us all more secure. I mean everything from developing missiles in violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, to breaking the commitments they made to Ukraine in Helsinki, Budapest and Minsk.

And now they have deployed their new generation of intermediate range missiles, which can launch nuclear and conventional warheads.

This is one of the most destabilising developments of the last decade.

## **No going back**

We will be strong and we will act together.

And even if Russia pulls back from the Ukrainian border, the problem will have not have gone away.

The free world needs to draw the line under a decade of drift.

That means investing in defence and deterrence, and pressing on with NATO's rapid modernisation.

If we hang back, that would only embolden the bullies in their campaign against sovereignty and the right to self-determination.

This is a litmus test for the West.

We must stand up and defuse Russian aggression now, because if we don't, it will embolden not only the Kremlin, but aggressors, authoritarians and autocrats right around the world.

What matters here in Eastern Europe matters for the world – and it matters for the future.

We have a duty to make sure that the next ten years are better than the last.

And of course, threats exist far beyond the Euro-Atlantic region. Our security is also indivisible from what is going on in Asia-Pacific.

## **Asia-Pacific**

Beijing is increasing its assertiveness and expanding its armed forces at breakneck speed. They are upending the rule of law to create no go areas in the South China Sea, and conducting military flights near Taiwan.

But China is not the same as Russia.

They claim a policy of non-interference.

That's why it's surprising to see China's leaders aligning themselves with the Kremlin.

They didn't object to the 2014 invasion of Crimea. They now talk about who should or shouldn't be able to join NATO. And last month they joined Russia in resisting a Security Council discussion on Ukraine.

If China wants to be seen as a responsible global actor they should be doing everything possible to ensure that Russia steps back. The world is watching to see whether their actions contribute to peace and stability, or to

fuelling aggression.

So how can we deal with this growing questioning of security norms and frameworks?

How can we make sure that Ukraine – and all of us – are safer in the years to come?

I think there are three areas that we should focus on

## **Updating arms control**

Firstly, alongside deterrence, we must recommit to arms control.

Much of the architecture we have now arose in the 1990s. It reflects what Mrs Thatcher called “yesterday’s vision of the future.”

In the 21st century we need to take account of new technologies and take a more global approach.

We call on Russia and China to work with us on agreements that will keep our citizens safe.

In the long run, we can’t have a situation where the US is limited to arms control agreements but others can act unconstrained.

We have to strengthen accountability for breaches of agreements, calling out non-compliance – as we have in the abhorrent use of chemical weapons by Russia and Syria.

And we must improve transparency and trust-building measures.

We need to act together on nuclear disarmament, where the UK has long taken a lead.

We made an historic affirmation last month, together with the rest of the P5.

We committed to the Reagan-Gorbachev pledge that a nuclear war could not be won and should not be fought.

We must build on that and put in place concrete measures to reduce the risk of nuclear war. And with that in mind, we must redouble our shared efforts to stop Iran’s nuclear programme.

## **New domains**

Secondly, we need to manage those areas where the rules are weakest, or where clashes and escalation are most likely to break out. Namely space, cyber space, the information space and the high seas.

Ukrainians know all too well how damaging cyber attacks and disinformation can be.

That’s why the UK is working with our partners to set standards in these

areas – including the use of new technologies.

That's why we're leading work in the UN to broker an international consensus on responsible behaviour towards space.

And that's why we are establishing a new government Information Unit in the UK.

This will be an agile, fully-equipped team tasked with rebutting false narratives and countering the disinformation that malign actors use to target and undermine democratic societies.

## **Deepening ties with allies**

Finally, we must strengthen our ties with friends and partners – and strengthen our shared capabilities.

We want to see democracies across Europe and beyond stepping up to the plate. We will work more closely with our allies, friends and partners, including the EU.

We want to see NATO accelerate its modernisation and seize the opportunity of the new Strategic Concept to strengthen defence and deterrence.

We are already putting our money where our mouth is as NATO's biggest defence spender in Europe.

We are joining with our Baltic and Nordic partners in the ground-breaking UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force.

We are providing defensive weapons to Ukraine and have trained 22,000 members of the Ukrainian army.

And we are taking the lead in developing new security ties – like our new AUKUS partnership with the US and Australia, and our growing partnership with Poland and Ukraine.

In dangerous times, we have to take a hard-headed approach.

That includes being ready to accept short-term pain for long-term gain, whether through imposing tough sanctions or cutting strategic dependence by opposing Nord Stream 2.

This is how we will ensure the next ten years are defined not by danger and drift, but by strength and stability.

## **Conclusion**

We want to live in a world where people are in charge of their own future, free from aggression and coercion, where security is truly indivisible, and where nations respect the sovereignty of others, and live up to their commitments.

That means working together with our friends in Ukraine and beyond to face down malign threats.

It means leading the charge to ensure that the architecture of peace stands the test of time.

And it means making the hard choices to keep our people safe and build a better, more secure future for all of us.

That is our mission. And together we can make that happen.

Thank you.

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## [We urge Russia to match its words with actions](#)

I thank you and I thank the briefers for the information that they've given today. The United Nations, the OSCE, and the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission continue to command our full support. The rights of all Ukrainians, whether they are in Kyiv, Lviv, Donetsk or Luhansk, can only be served by peace, diplomacy, and dialogue.

I want to make absolutely clear the United Kingdom's support for implementation of the Minsk agreements, as endorsed by UNSC resolution 2202. That resolution reaffirmed the Security Council's full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

It remains the responsibility of all parties to implement fully their commitments and seek a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

In this respect, we condemn the actions taken by the Russian Duma to propose that the Russian President recognise the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk as independent. This would directly undermine the Minsk agreements and must be rejected by the Russian authorities, in line with the commitments that they have made.

We welcome all efforts to support the process and avoid escalation, including the role of the OSCE and the Normandy format.

This remains our long-standing position. Mr President,

Let us remind ourselves of the context for the Minsk agreements, and the situation in which Ukraine finds itself today:

In March 2014, Russia invaded and illegally annexed Crimea, in flagrant

violation of international law.

A few weeks later, in April, Russia instigated a conflict in the Donbas, which it continues to fuel today.

More than 14,000 have died in the fighting there.

Now, today, the Ukrainian people are yet again living under threat of invasion with well over 100,000 Russian troops, heavy weaponry, and military vessels amassed and exercising on their northern, eastern and southern borders, from Belarus to the Black Sea.

Let us say clearly what the world can see:

Russia has deployed the forces necessary to invade Ukraine, and now has them readied them for action.

In the past days we have heard Russian claims that some units are returning to barracks. It is, however, all too clear that the opposite is in fact true, and the Russian military build-up continues.

Russia will say it has the right to move its forces on its own territory, but no one has the right to threaten the use of force. Russia is patently failing to live up to the international commitments it has made around military transparency, by refusing to adequately explain its military build-up or provide the necessary transparency to build trust and de-escalate the situation. If the Kremlin is serious about a diplomatic resolution then it needs to show up to diplomatic meetings and commit to meaningful OSCE talks, including via Chapter 3 of the OSCE Vienna Document. They did not show up on Wednesday, and do not intend to show up on Friday.

Russia's actions are clearly designed to intimidate, threaten and destabilise Ukraine. We know it, they know it, and the international community knows it.

Mr President,

Russia called this meeting today to discuss resolution 2202.

That text is very clear on two points that reflect the core tenets of the Charter emphasised by the UN Secretary-General when he addressed this situation only a few days ago:

One, that resolving the situation in the eastern regions of Ukraine can only be achieved through a peaceful means, and

Two, that there must be full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Yet we are seeing increasing disinformation about events in the Donbas that are straight out of the Kremlin playbook: a blatant attempt by the Russian Government to fabricate a pretext for the invasion of Ukraine.

It is therefore clear that we are at a critical juncture to prevent further

escalation.

Upholding the core tenets of the Charter in respect of peaceful resolution and respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity has never been more important.

Russia must now engage with the diplomatic processes we have built up over several decades, and on which global security depends, to resolve the situation through peaceful means.

If Russia chooses to launch an attack at this time of heightened tension, using disinformation as a pretext, it will show that Russia was never serious about diplomatic engagement.

Any Russian invasion now would be a conflict of choice for President Putin, and an abdication of Russia's responsibility under the UN Charter to refrain from the use of force and to maintain international peace and security.

There should be no doubt that any further Russian incursion into Ukraine would be a massive strategic mistake, and a humanitarian disaster, that will be met with strength, including significant coordinated sanctions. And we will continue to call out the pattern of deception and disinformation from the Russian state.

If Russia is serious about the Charter and its role as a permanent member of this Council:

it should give the Minsk agreements the chance to be implemented, free from coercion;

it should engage seriously with diplomacy;

and it should stand down all its troops.

There is still time to change path. Conflict can be avoided.

We urge Russia to match its words with actions, to withdraw its troops, to engage in meaningful talks and to act in the best interests of peace, security and stability in Europe.

I thank you.

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**[OSCE report on climate and security:  
UK statement](#)**

Thank you, Secretary-General.



I would like to share a few brief reactions in response to your report

We share your view, which is widely held, that climate change is one of the defining challenges of our time. The security implications of climate change reach across the OSCE's 'comprehensive' concept of security and I share your enthusiasm about [the new Decision](#) and the useful work we can do.

We thank you for your consideration of the way forward, and agree with your 5 proposals.

Particularly, we support the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA)'s planned work to launch a regional consultation process to identify and implement joint climate adaptation initiatives. Adaptation is a key approach in responding to the climate crisis.

Also, climatic systems are large and complex, and expert gathering and analysis of data is essential for an effective response. The OSCE could play a crucial role in bringing these actors together and identifying these climatic risks early.

We also welcome an inclusive approach which takes into account the differentiated effect of climate change on different groups, and the role they can play.

As the decision itself said, the OSCE can complement efforts, in partnership with other bodies. I welcome the suggestion of further consultation with others working in this field so that we may learn from each other and more effectively respond to the common threat.

Our momentum is timely. Across the world but also in our own region, we are seeing how climate change is having an increasingly direct impact on security, through issues like migration and water scarcity.

I thank you again, Secretary-General, for the report and I look forward to the deliberations it has started, including at the high-level meeting on March 25th.

Thank you.

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## [New research reinforces the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines](#)

The [UKHSA-backed study](#) is the world's biggest study into COVID-19 antibodies and regularly tests a large cohort of healthcare workers to answer the most important questions about the virus.

The latest paper focuses on the protection provided against COVID- 19 infection in those who have had 2 doses of the vaccine, as well as those who have previously been infected with COVID-19.

The results show that 2 doses of vaccine provide significant short-term protection against infection among those who had not had a previous infection – but that this protection wanes significantly after 6 months.

Analysis was also carried out on participants, both unvaccinated and vaccinated, who had been previously infected with COVID-19.

Unvaccinated participants who had been previously infected with COVID-19 were found to have 86% reduced risk of reinfection, when compared to the risk of primary infection in those who had no previous infection and were also unvaccinated. This protection waned to 69% after a year.

Dual protection in people who had been previously infected and subsequently double vaccinated was even greater and more durable, standing at over 90% after 2 doses. This protection remained strong over a year after infection and over 6 months following vaccination.

Susan Hopkins, SIREN study lead and Chief Medical Advisor at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), said:

This research demonstrates why it is crucial to get vaccinated, as it provides a significantly greater level of protection against infection from COVID-19, whether or not you have been previously infected.

However, the analysis also clearly shows that this protection from just 2 doses wanes significantly within months, which is why the rollout of booster jabs has been an instrumental part of our efforts to contain COVID-19.

To avoid infection and illness, it is vital that everyone eligible takes up the offer of a booster as soon as it is offered.

Vaccine effectiveness for Pfizer, where the second dose was administered 6 weeks or more after the first dose, stood at 85% from 14 to 73 days after, falling to 51% after 6 months.

Vaccine effectiveness for 2 doses of Pfizer, where both doses were administered within 6 weeks of each other, stood at 89% 14 to 73 days after dose 2, decreasing to 53% after 6 months.

Results from this SIREN study were gathered between 7 December 2020 and 21 September 2021.

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# Tier 1 Investor Visa route closes over security concerns

The Home Secretary has taken decisive action to shut the Tier 1 Investor visa route to all new applicants from all nationalities with immediate effect.

The route had allowed entry and stay in the UK if an applicant invested funds in share capital or loan capital in active and trading UK registered companies.

It has been under constant review and some cases had given rise to security concerns, including people acquiring their wealth illegitimately and being associated with wider corruption.

While work has been done to reform the route in order to prevent abuse, the Home Office has acted to close it today.

This demonstrates the government's New Plan for Immigration in action – being firm against those wanting to abuse the immigration system while those who want to come to the UK and play by the rules will have that opportunity.

The Home Office will be making reforms to the Innovator route, part of the new points-based immigration system, to provide an ambitious investment route which works more effectively in support of the UK's economy.

Findings of a Home Office review, which looked at all Tier 1 Investor visas granted from when the scheme launched in 2008 up to 5 April 2015 when the route was reformed, will be published in due course.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

I have zero tolerance for abuse of our immigration system. Under my New Plan for Immigration, I want to ensure the British people have confidence in the system, including stopping corrupt elites who threaten our national security and push dirty money around our cities.

Closing this route is just the start of our renewed crackdown on fraud and illicit finance. We will be publishing a fraud action plan, while the forthcoming Economic Crime Bill will crackdown on people abusing our financial institutions and better protect the taxpayer.

Since its introduction, the Investor visa route has been reformed to improve its value to the UK economy and to reduce the exposure of the route to illicit finance.

The introduction of the points-based immigration system has allowed us to

target investors we want in the country. Improvements will be made to the Innovator visa route to support this.

Settlement will now be conditional on applicants executing an investment strategy that can show genuine job creation and other tangible economic impacts, passively holding UK investments will no longer be enough to obtain settlement.