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new things
Make
new connections

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After Ukraine, What Lessons Now for Western Leadership?
A lecture by The Right Honourable Tony Blair

The West is at an inflection point. Living standards are stagnating, millions are struggling to meet their basic needs, and inflation means that real wages are set to fall. Western politics is in turmoil, fuelled further by social media. The internal politics in America is dominating external policy in a way that is destructive to coherence. This moment is arguably graver than those inflection points of 1945 and 1980.

The West needs a strategy. Ultimately, whether a political system is sustained or undermined depends upon its ability to deliver. There must be a governing project which makes sense of the world and provides advancement for people. The US can lead on this new project and strategy, while closely involving its allies.

The greatest opportunity for domestic policy is the technology revolution. It is the potential solution to poor growth and productivity, and can enable us to respond to climate change while maintaining development. There is a need to address legitimate concerns around potential abuses of technology while not stifling innovation. Britain is well placed to harness the opportunities that technology brings.

The biggest geopolitical challenge will come from China. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shocked the West, upending our belief in big nation rationality. However, China poses the biggest challenge, signifying the end of western political and economic dominance.

Foreign policy needs to focus on strength plus engagement. China's place as a superpower is justified, and the West should acknowledge this. There needs to be respect for Chinese culture and people, and an understanding that the Chinese system is not monolithic. Nonetheless, there is a serious threat that China will attempt to return Taiwan by force rather than persuasion, and our foreign policy should reflect this. The West needs to be clear that if China changes its attitude towards us, then our reaction towards China will change accordingly.

The need to maintain military superiority. The West needs to be prepared for any eventuality. Therefore, an increase in defence spending and preparation for a globally coordinated response are needed.

Responding to soft power dynamics and development needs. Authoritarian nations have been pouring resources into the developing world, and acquiring soft power as a result. However, developing countries tend to prefer western business, and have increasing scepticism of the Chinese model. The West should be sensitive to this and responsive to developing countries' needs, delivering infrastructure and vaccination programmes where needed. This is also an important moment to maintain leadership in the Middle East.