Defending Democracy in an Age of Global Uncertainty and Insecurity; How Much do Targets Matter?

Speakers:
Philip Dunne MP, Minister of State for Defence
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Chair: **Peter Oborne**, Associate Editor, The Spectator

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Exchange 8 (inside secure zone)

BACKGROUND

As the first Conservative Government in almost two decades presides over increasingly reduced public spending at a time when the demands on public policy are more complex and challenging, how might the UK and its partners continue to re-explore its role in the world? The task of developing coherent defence, foreign, as well as development policies remains an increasing political priority. To achieve this, how might the UK promote greater co-operation working to identify and support local solutions to assist peacebuilding and long-term stability, while ensuring support from the public at home and beyond?

A brief survey of just a few global 'hot spots' demonstrates that, what appears to be local and regional challenges at first sight, actually generates escalating global impacts. In the Middle East and North Africa, Syria continues to slide into unrelenting war with the number of refugees exceeding four million and internally displaced people (IDP) estimated at 6.5 million. On-going offensives against jihadi insurgents (including rebels from Islamic State - IS), yields indecisive results. In addition, the jihadi threat in large swathes of Iraq continues to undermine an already fragile state. Meanwhile in Libya, what appear to be endless rounds of political dialogue seem to generate little more than worsening clashes between rival authorities particularly in the absence of any genuine national unity government. How might positive contributions be made to build unity and promote social justice?

In the case of security challenges in Africa South of the Sahara, can counter-terrorism efforts promote state-building in Somalia? Furthermore, how can global partners work together to support regional security co-operation across West Africa particularly with the insurgency driven by Boko Haram in Nigeria and a frail peace agreement in Mali which has generated a resumption in fighting. What's more, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the advent of the 2016 presidential elections has led to growing popular opposition due to political manoeuvring by President Kabila's government to create conditions for a third term in office. What influence might be brought to bear to overcome this challenge?

What appears to be unambiguously clear is that peacebuilding and regional security are global public goods, where the benefits extend beyond national borders, generations and population groups, albeit in different ways. Addressing the complexity of escalating violence and promoting peace requires the development and support of legitimate and credible local institutions to connect and empower ordinary citizens in meaningful ways.

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