ANDREW MARR SHOW
8TH MARCH 2015
PHILIP HAMMOND
FOREIGN SECRETARY

- Hammond would not be comfortable leaving the EU
- Philip Hammond warned that significant further sanctions could be imposed unless Moscow abided by the terms of the Ukraine ceasefire.

AM: The Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond joins me now. How confident are you about, for instance, the Russians not moving forward to take Mariupol, the next big city?

PH: Well, that’s the big question now. There has been a reduction in violence since the new agreement was signed. But I don’t detect that Mr Putin’s strategic intentions have changed. So this is just a question now about what tools he uses to achieve those objectives, and we’re all hoping that there will be a reduction, a continued reduction in violence, and we’ve all made clear that if there is a big assault, for example on Mariupol, that will be responded to with a significant increase in the economic pressure from Russia from the EU.

AM: So it’ll just be more sanctions? He knows he can grab Mariupol, he can grab another big slab of Ukraine, and all that will happen is a few more sanctions, which he can tolerate?

PH: Well, I wouldn’t say all that will happen is a few more sanctions. The sanctions are significant and they’re hurting Russia. The denial of access to western capital markets at a time when Russia’s under huge pressure from declining oil revenues and a sliding rouble is really hurting Russia. It’s hurting the central bank’s reserves and he can’t stand by –

AM: But it’s not hurting political power.
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PH: Well, he can’t stand that pressure forever, and he has been running around Moscow telling his oligarchs that it’ll all be over by July, don’t worry, the pressure will be off, the sanctions will be over by the summer. We’ve got to make clear to him that unless he delivers on the commitments that he made on February 12th in Minsk it won’t all be over. The pressure, if anything, will increase.

AM: Is it too much to say that if the Russians attack Mariupol that is a new Cold War beginning?
PH: Well, you will see a significant stepping up in the pressure from the EU on Russia. And I don’t want to talk about Cold Wars, but we are clear that Russia has decided, it has made the decision that it wants to be in a strategic competition with the west, with Europe. It doesn’t any longer see us as partners, it sees us as competitors or even adversaries. And that means that we’re going to have a difficult, prickly relationship with Russia probably for some time to come.

AM: Are there any circumstances in which we would give military support to Ukraine?
PH: We don’t think there can be a military resolution to this crisis. The disparity between the size of the Ukrainian armed forces and the Russian armed forces doesn’t make that a sensible way to go. And we have to insist that the rules-based system, which say very clearly that you can’t change international boundaries by force is protected and is imposed.

AM: Except that it hasn’t been, he’s already changed the boundaries by force, and although obviously the Ukraine can’t defeat the Russian armed forces, they could make life much, much harder for them. President Obama’s coming under a lot of pressure from Congress, for instance, to start to arm Ukrainian forces.
PH: Well, we’re providing a lot of support to the Ukrainians. We’re providing training, we’re providing technical support, we provide
them with non-lethal equipment, and we’ve said that we will keep this under review. But the most important thing is that under the Minsk agreement Russia has committed to handing back control of all of Ukraine’s territory, including the border with Russia, by the end of this year. We have to hold them to that. If that doesn’t happen, Russia can expect the temperature to be turned up significantly.

AN: But we are in a position where we cannot give them any kind of military threat, there is only economic sanctions that we can suggest. Less capital.

PH: Well, we are not going to fight the Russians in Ukraine. We’ve been very clear and open about that, and I think we also have to make a very sharp distinction between the guarantee that we extend to our NATO partners throughout the NATO countries, including the Baltic states, where there is a hard red line protecting them.

AM: Where you’ve been.

PH: I have, I’ve just come back from Riga. There’s a hard red line protecting them. And the kind of support –

AM: Just stop there. They are NATO members, and any Russian incursion into the Baltics would result in war?

PH: Any Russian incursion into the Baltics would entitle the Baltic countries to seek to invoke article five of the Washington Treaty, which is the mutual defence guarantee that underpins NATO.

AM: Which is war?

PH: And Mr Putin knows that very well, and that is what protects the Baltic states. If we blur the distinction between the support that we would give to NATO member countries coming under threat and the support that we can give to non-NATO countries, I think that’s actually quite damaging. We need to keep that distinction very clear.
AM: Do you agree with the Defence Secretary therefore that Putin is now a clear and present threat to us, an existential threat one of the major generals has said?

PH: We have to regard the Russians as strategic competitors. We have to understand Mr Putin’s view of the world and his view of Russia’s place in it. And that puts him, frankly, at odds with our view of the post-Soviet settlement in Europe. We believe that the countries that were liberated from the Soviet Union, the non-Russian republics, should be free to choose their own futures as democratic independent nations. Mr Putin has a fundamentally different view. He sees those countries as in his sphere of influence with him exercising some kind of strategic veto over their freedom of action.

AM: And we have Russian submarines testing our waters and Russian jets buzzing our airspace, and at the same time we are not committing ourselves to maintaining the NATO minimum defence spending. Is two per cent which the prime minister wants to maintain and the Chancellor is clearly not allowing him to do at the moment. Where do you stand on that? It’s very, very important to a lot of people watching, not just the generals, the people inside the armed forces, that Britain maintains her defence spending in a very, very dangerous time.

PH: Well, clearly I was defence secretary for nearly three years, I’m a passionate supporter of the armed forces and of maintaining Britain’s military strength. And we are spending two per cent of our GDP (talking over)

AM: You’re not committing the party to doing that at the next election.

PH: Well, we’re the second largest defence spender in NATO, we’ve got a huge equipment programme modernising our armed forces. We’re building the two largest aircraft carriers the Royal Navy has ever had. We’re equipping them with the world’s most advanced fighter aircraft, we’re launching a submarine –
AM: But you don’t commit to two per cent going ahead. David Davis has said that makes us look pretty damn silly, in his words.

PH: Well, we led the charge at the NATO summit.

AM: We’re going to look damn silly if we don’t do it ourselves.

PH: We led the charge encouraging our NATO partners to make this commitment. Many of them are far, far away from two per cent, and –

AM: So we want it too then don’t we?

PH: We will have a strategic defence and security review at the beginning of the next parliament and a spending review and we will set out our future plans then. But we are committed to the two per cent target.

AM: Through the course of the next parliament?

PH: We’re delivering it in the current –

AM: Through the next parliament you are commitment to that?

PH: We will set out the defence spending –

AM: I’m sorry, but a lot of people want to know whether the country can trust the Conservatives over defence and the two per cent target is crucial to this. There’s an argument going on about it, we all understand that, inside the Cabinet. As Foreign Secretary surely you can commit yourself personally to the two per cent.

PH: There are two things I can’t do today. I can’t tell you what will be in the Conservative manifesto but you’ll find out soon enough, and I can’t prejudge the outcome of the security and defence review and the spending review that will take place after the next election.

AM: Can you at least therefore –

PH: But David Cameron led the charge on the NATO two per cent commitment at the summit in Wales last year.

AM: And therefore you could at least commit yourself to agreeing with David Davis that he would look pretty damn silly if he didn’t then commit himself to two per cent for this country?

PH: Look, I worked closely with the prime minister on this subject when I was defence secretary for three years. He is passionate about our armed forces, he has always been absolutely clear that
he is not prepared to preside over any further cuts in our regular armed forces. So he knows where he wants to go. But we’ve got very difficult decisions to make in delivering our long-term economic plan to get Britain out of deficit and staring to pay down instead. We’ve got to make those difficult balanced decisions, but we will protect the integrity and the strength of our armed forces.

AM: So no cuts to the British army – no further cuts to the British army. No ifs, no buts, that’s an absolutely clear policy?
PH: The prime minister has been very clear that he is not prepared to see further cuts in the size of the regular armed forces.

AM: Turning to another - things going on in the moment, the battle for Tikrit going, raging at the moment. How important is that in a geo-strategic sense to Britain?
PH: It is important. It’s part of a long, slow push back against Isil. It will take some time. We all said it would be a battle that took not months but years to push back the advances that Isil made in Iraq. But Tikrit’s strategically important and it’s psychologically important as well, so it is a very important battle.

AM: Now, we know from what’s gone on there for a long period of time also we are effectively allies of Iran in that. It’s the Iranians not the Americans leading the attack on Tikrit. Are you comfortable with that?
PH: That’s an issue – I mean, this is an issue for the Iraqi government. It’s the Iraqi government, the Iraqi security forces that are leading the assault, and indeed leading the campaign. We are providing the navy’s support in the form of air strikes and specialist training to the Iraqi forces. Yes, there are Iranian forces involved in the battle for Tikrit, that’s an issue that the Iraqi government has to manage. And we’re very clear in our discussions with the Iraqi government that they have to balance the different factions within their society, getting that Sunni-Shiah
balance right, to make sure that the Sunni population feels that it does have a stake in the modern Iraq and well as the Kurdish population. If they don't succeed in doing that there will never be a lasting security in Iraq.

AM: Now we’re hopping around the world in all directions. Boko Haram are now in alliance with Isis. Is that a significant development?
PH: I don’t think it’s a particularly significant development. We’ve actually regarded Boko Haram as being part of the extremist militant Islamist problem. Their formal alignment with Isil, I think is just a formality. I don’t think it makes much difference on the ground. But it does remind us again that this is not just a problem in Iraq and Syria, it’s a problem across North Africa, especially now in Libya. It’s a problem increasingly in West Africa, and we have to be candid about this, we have to expect that Isil or affiliated groups will crop up around the world in other places where there are substantial Muslim populations, which is why the prime minister has said this will be a generational struggle against this poisonous ideology which is seeking to undermine the peaceful religion of Islam.

AM: It’s been reported today that there’s a major, major new move against extremism in this country coming from all sides. The Sunday Telegraph has reported that. Now I know it’s not department but do understand that to be broadly speaking true?
PH: Well again, the prime minister made a speech last autumn in which he said that a priority for the next government would be moving on from tackling terrorism, violent terrorism, to also tackling the extremism that gives succour and support to violent terrorism that creates the conditions in which violent terrorism can flourish and I think this is something we’re becoming increasingly aware of in this country. That it isn’t just those who break the law by committing acts of violence, it is also that wider network of support
AM: So this is going to be a thougher line against extremism in Britain.
PH: Yes, yes.
AM: unequivocally.
PH: Yes.
AM: Turning, I’m sorry to go to yet another - jumping around which is the European Union and your own position. I think you said in the past that you think that we would have to get a new deal on migration if we’re going to stay inside the EU as it is now. You clearly haven’t got a new deal on migration. Free movement of people is something that we’ve had to concede is going to carry on. That being so would you be comfortable leaving the EU?
PH: I wouldn’t be comfortable leaving the EU because I think being inside the EU and having access to the single market is incredibly important to Britain and as a part of our long term economic plan is a vital component. We can only do that if we can get a package of reform in the European Union which makes it fit for purpose for the 21st century and answers the essential challenges of the British people and I’ve made that clear to all our European Union partners and I’ve visited 25 of the 27 other European Union capitals since I’ve been in this job. But what we have to do is make sure that the European Union reforms to deliver on our agenda and on the specific question of migration what the British people want to see is a reduction in the number of people coming here. The principle of freedom of movement to work is very deeply enshrined in the psyche of many of our European partners.
AM: And you accept that we’re not going to shift on that?
PH: On the principle of the freedom of movement to work, but within that principle there is a significant willingness on the part of our partners to work with us to address what they acknowledge is a real problem that Britain faces, and there are many ways we can do that.
AM: So how can you do that?
PH: By making our welfare system less accessible. Our public services less exposed to abuse. By focusing back on the original intention of freedom of movement to work. Not freedom of movement to claim benefits, not freedom of movement because one happens to fancy being here.

AM: Sorry this is very interesting. Is it possible that inside the EU we could have some new controls which means that EU citizens could come here to work but they could not bring their families for instance?

PH: We are working with a number of like-minded partners to look at how we can evolve the rules with the EU to ensure...

AM: But that’s a possibility?

PH: Well look, we’re looking at a whole range of things and we’ve got work with partners but we’re not the only ones who have these concerns. The Danes and the Swedes, the Dutch are very concerned about the exposure of their own welfare systems. The Germans are becoming increasingly concerned about this and EU law itself is evolving in a way that’s actually quite helpful to our position. The recent so called Dano case established that people can’t simply move around the EU in order to claim benefits, they have to be going legitimately to work. And the most important thing is that there is a wide understanding in the European Union that this is a very important issue to the British people. A wide desire to keep Britain in the EU and consequently a willingness to work with us to find a solution that will satisfy British public opinion on this issue.

AM; That’s something for the next parliament of course. Now it’s reported in the Sun newspaper this morning that you see yourself as a future prime minister. Is that true?

PH: Absolutely not. I haven’t read that.

AM: There’s no campaign to succeed David Cameron if he’s slipped from the office as it were?

PH: My campaign is to get David Cameron re-elected on May 8th, be standing on the doorstep at Number 10 Downing Street this time without his little helper standing next to him.
AM: Alright and Philip Hammond will not be standing on the doorstep in his own right, definitely not?

PH: Definitely not.

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