Wars of Empire - then and now

In its essence the First World War was a war between the great powers to re-divide the world. On one side were the established imperial powers of Britain, France and Russia. On the other were the rising powers - above all Germany and Italy - in alliance with the unstable and crumbling Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. At stake were the colonies in Africa, the Middle East and Asia - rich sources of raw materials to feed their industries and captive markets for their manufactured products.

How similar that seems to the conflicts of the 21st century. The wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya were about oil, minerals and global position. Today it is the United States and Europe which are in decline as they are steadily eclipsed by the rapidly growing economies of China, India, Brazil, Russia and South Africa. But the United States retains overwhelming military superiority.

This conference will consider the strategic options facing the United States and Britain. Will the US try to use its military might to reverse its decline and halt the development of its key rivals - above all China and Russia? What is the ‘Pivot to Asia’ and should we be concerned about it? What is the role of NATO and other military alliances? How do we interpret the recent developments in Ukraine and Venezuela? What is the role of nuclear weapons in all this and how best can we build the peace and solidarity movement in Scotland, Britain and across the world?

About the speakers

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