



VETERANS

— *for* —

BRITAIN

~ 2%: The Threshold
Margins of Effective
Defence

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~ 2%:

The Threshold Margins of Effective Defence

Summary

- The UK needs to adjust its Defence Spending so as to honestly fulfil the 2% budget target as a minimum, not a target
- The 2% target was effectively pulled out of a hat and should not be taken as a certain bodyguard to national security
- The long term aim by the end of the next Parliament should be 3% Defence share of GDP
- Extra spending should be transitioned and better managed, so as to reduce the risk of waste
- The extra funding should accompany strategic revisions of national and global security priorities in the wake of Brexit. A series of discussion points are raised for review.

Introduction

NATO members have committed themselves to spending 2% of national budgets on defence. A parallel commitment also requires one fifth of this spending to be on procurement, to keep pace with new capabilities arising from potential opponents.

The question of how much money should be spent on defence as a share of government spending has been a controversial one for years. It has played a part in General Elections, and generated the fall of ministers and Governments. Decisions over spending on dreadnaughts wracked the Liberals in power, and the ship gave its name to an election. Baldwin's government faced similar internal conflicts over rearmament. The 1966 Defence review, if implemented properly, would have made retaking the Falklands impossible: the planned scrapping of HMS Endurance helped prompt the original invasion. Even the so-called 'peace dividend' that was being pursued at the end of the Cold War ran into reality months later when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, leading to a difficult cobbling together of a single Armoured Division from the three then deployed in Germany with the BAOR.

From such examples, it should also become clear that *underspending* proves a false economy once those resources are needed. Materiel and trained personnel cannot be conjured out of thin air, and the time taken to fill a gap encouraged by that very gap can be measured in expenditure much greater than the savings accrued under false pretences.

So while we recognise that politicians and planners are quite right to identify what constitutes value for money in order to better attribute resources, it is also critical to maintain a strategic perspective on the cost of failure as well; and to neutrally assess whether there is a threshold beyond which capabilities and deterrence both reach critical failure.

NATO has collectively done so. The share of Defence spending that has been identified as appropriate as a minimum is 2%. Unfortunately, many NATO states are taking that as an aspiration with minimal consequences for not attaining.

The UK has decided it is an important target. However, it has also more recently decided to readjust the way it interprets expenditure. A cynical observer will suggest that this has been done in order to hide reduction in actual share of spending – after all, were it otherwise, the MoD would instead be putting out press releases boasting that it is exceeding the 2% share.

But it is not.

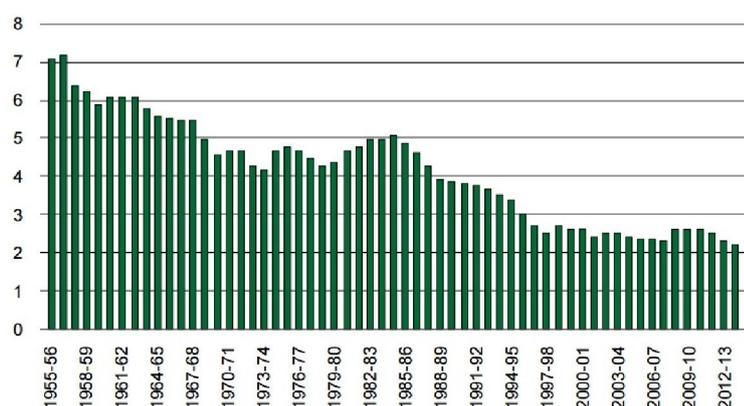
The single best study to date of what has happened has emerged from the House of Commons Defence Committee.¹ It contains praise for the Government, but also warnings and some criticisms.

Declining Expenditure

UK share of GDP going into Defence has been steadily declining for a long period of time, with periods of brief blips. Even the spending share arising from deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan only generated a temporary increase equal to half the levels seen in response to the Falklands War. The following chart sets this out visually:

Defence Expenditure as a Percentage of GDP, 1955–2014 ¹

Defence Expenditure as a Percentage of GDP, 1955–2014



Sources: British Historical Statistics, Mitchell (1955 to 1975); UK Defence Statistics, DASA (from 1975 to 1990); HM Treasury, Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis 2014 (1990 to 2014); Annual GDP: Office for National Statistics

¹ House of Commons Defence Committee: *Shifting the goalposts? Defence expenditure and the 2% pledge*, First Special Report of Session 2016–17

Under Tony Blair, the UK considerably exceeded the total Defence target by adding 0.5% of GDP otherwise held as the Treasury Reserve. It did so to provide financial support to major commitments to conflict zones. With the end of the main engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan (at least on the same scale), that Reserve is no longer being tapped and so the MoD's own spending is the figure under review. A sum that was already borderline prior to these conflicts is now needing to be redefined in order to match commitments.

To some extent this is a false debate. 2% has become totemic in its own right, without the right questions being raised;

- Is 2% enough for the UK's security requirements?
- Is 2% enough for the UK's strategic interests in the absence of full NATO engagement?
- Is 2% enough given the failure of other states to match that commitment
- Is 2% below the threshold to maintain a viable, professional and technologically sufficient defence?
- Does dropping below the 2% administratively raise disproportionate costs, for example boosting the need to give retention bonuses of various sorts, or making administration increasingly top heavy and inefficient?

The Commons Defence Committee was blunt about the worst end risks;

Despite the UK's high ranking, relative to other NATO members, UK defence expenditure has fallen far too low in our national priorities. The world today is at its most dangerous and unstable since the end of the Cold War. While 2% is arguably a useful metric by which to measure the sufficiency of the UK commitment to NATO, it does not solely determine whether our total expenditure on defence is sufficient, given that the UK has significant additional commitments such as our defence of the Falkland Islands. Some of the costs of these UK commitments are additional to the NATO requirement, and therefore constitute an additional requirement for UK defence expenditure. Until and unless the MoD quantifies the net additional costs, we cannot be confident that 2% is enough, whether in political or capability terms. We remain to be convinced that the current financial settlement is sufficient to rectify the decline of defence as a national priority.²

Significantly, Germany – which was amongst the more serious 'offenders' in breaching this objective, has heeded the long-repeated calls from the United States. President Trump's election appears to have focused minds in this regards, although still falling far short of the commitments the American people have been prepared to make on their behalf. Other states should also take note.

² Op cit, pp23-24

The 2%

The 2% Commitment was first generated in 2006, in response to concerns raised at lack of parity in defence expenditure by a number of European States compared with others. This commitment was reiterated in 2014. It remains a commitment openly supported by the UK Government.

What is less recognised, however, is that this figure appears to have been generated arbitrarily. At the 2006 NATO meeting, the number was, in effect, just pulled out of the hat as a simple target that might realistically be agreed on by the underspenders. It might just as easily have been 1.9% or 1.65%, except that 2 is an integer.

Rather than being the product of detailed scientific, strategic and economic analysis, the goal appears to have been generated as the result of political discussions based on what was collectively deliverable rather than useful and desirable; and predicated on existing budgets rather than any analysis of potential requirements. The fact that the 2% figure was already being undercut by a number of NATO states during the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan may also provide some context of the urgency at the time in seeking to anchor the more financially wayward states.

Sadly, the document containing the actual political guidance remains classified.

Even then, it took another eight years, until the NATO Summit in Wales in 2014, for the two per cent goal to be formally endorsed at the level of heads of state and government. As a further indicator of the political difficulties associated with getting just this target,

- o It also introduced a ten year deadline by which to meet the goals;
- o There was a similar ten year period for countries to reach the associated target of spending a fifth of the defence budget on R&D and big project procurement;
- o Countries reaching the 2% agreed not to drop below it, so it was not even a freeze at then-current rates for those operating above it;
- o Countries not reaching these goals agreed in the meantime as a minimum merely to keep the percentage at existing levels;
- o Progress would be subject to annual review and discussion only (though Secretary Generals have lobbied behind the scenes).

One might now begin to understand why US administrations have been so frustrated with some of their European allies.

The principles behind the resulting Wales Communiqué remain as relevant then as it does today, even if the 2% figure itself turns out to be fey. It stated,

Our overall security and defence depend both on how much we spend and how we spend it. Increased investments should be directed towards meeting our capability priorities, and

Allies also need to display the political will to provide required capabilities and deploy forces when they are needed.

Currently, five Allies (UK, US, Greece, Estonia, Poland) are officially considered as meeting the two percent goal. 22 Allies increased defence spending in 2016. Romania's defence budget signed off in 2017 now has 2%, and Latvia and Lithuania also announced they will reach two percent in the next year or so. In these regards, there is a degree of slow momentum towards the 2% across NATO from those who were below the threshold, so some measure of stabilisation has at least been achieved.

The first problem is, however, whether that prestidigitated figure is enough to do the job. The second problem is whether the 2% is currently being 'gamed' by the accountants.

In setting a goal for underspenders, it has also legitimised a drop to a threshold figure for those countries previously spending above that target. It has become a sort of 'minimum wage for defence', and one that has yet to be widely met at that.

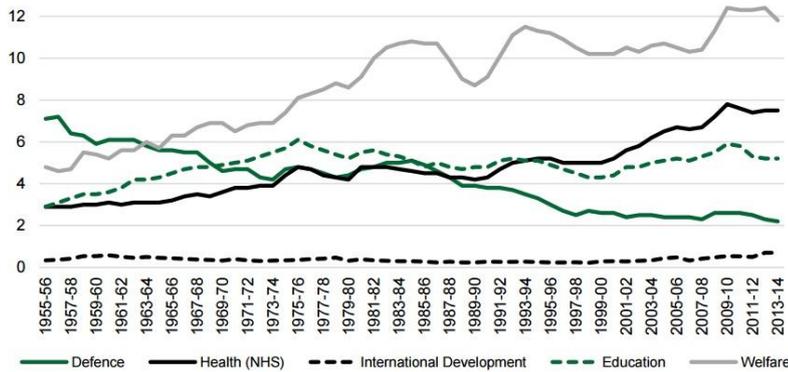
NATO's definition of defence expenditure includes all spending on military forces, military aid to other nations, military pensions, host government expenses for other NATO forces, and NATO infrastructure and civilian staff costs. In the UK's case, that means over £1bn of pensions is now being counted against the Defence Budget as opposed to Social Security. While many supporters of Veterans for Britain are in receipt of such pensions, we do not necessarily all constitute an operational effective part of the national deterrent.

By shifting to the wider definition used by other states (which may not in some areas have the same degree of spending on wider intelligence infrastructure in particular), what this change has meant in practice has been transforming a spend that would have amounted to 1.97% of GDP into a new calculation of 2.08% of GDP, without generating any extra spending.

These accounting changes add a further level of uncertainty over future defence expenditure. The current intention is to expand the MoD budget by a 0.5% year on year increase in cash terms. However, this takes no account of what happens if, as seems quite likely, the UK economy expands faster than this. A real terms increase lower than actual GDP growth would place the 2% target at risk. Meanwhile, top up money that could be accessed from a new reserve, the Strategic Defence Fund, and which forms a key part of the planning assumptions around current 2% targets is not guaranteed: it must be regularly bid for. In terms of national priorities and where departmental spending has genuinely been ring-fenced and actively corralled into, the following graph is particularly useful;

Comparative study of expenditures as a percentage of GDP, 1955–2014

Comparative study of expenditures as a percentage of GDP, 1955–2014



House of Commons Defence Committee: *Shifting the goalposts? Defence expenditure and the 2% pledge*, First Special Report of Session 2016–17

We do not suggest that this issue is anything quite so plain as the dialogue in the film Dunkirk: “They chose guns; we chose butter”. But in such matters there is a balancing act to be made, and we suggest that it may be time to consider, dispassionately, with an eye on global risks and consequences of failure the setting on the scales.

The following correspondingly form a set of brief recommendations that those seeking to review such matters might reflect on. In some areas, Veterans for Britain hopes to publish more detailed analysis in due course.

Recommendation 1: Move to the True Two Per Cent

The UK’s legerdemain in accountancy underlines the reality that it is not delivering a guaranteed 2 per cent level of funding on defence spending. Even if there is in any given year a top up that reaches that target, the variable nature of the funding will not assist in planning and steady development and replacement of capability.

The very first step must be for the occupants of Numbers 10 and 11 Downing Street to treat the 2 per cent target as an honest baseline and not a figure that can be legitimately fudged in order to continue to generate misleading press releases, which is the situation where the government is currently teetering.

Again, even if current ministers continue to provide additional funding from the reserve pool, there is no guarantee that their successors will do the same. Indeed, it is sadly inevitable that at some point they will not.

Aside from a small increase in operational effectiveness, a shift to an ‘honest 2%’ sends a diplomatic signal that defence decline has been halted.

Part of this process should include a review of where defence expenditure may in practise be acting as a general subsidy in support of the militaries of other nations, whether this is

cost effective, and whether this supports the defence of the UK (or should be counted as strategic expenditure).

Another element involves looking at the true cost of the nuclear deterrent. This is the bedrock to our conventional security, and used to be funded separately as a strategic asset. With an aggregation of security-related items, and because capital and through-life costs are so high, this takes up a disproportionate amount of what might otherwise appear to be 'spare' funding. Honesty is required over these commitments when calculating defence expenditure.

Recommendation 2: Phased Transition to Three Per Cent by the End of the Next Parliament, Coupled with Planning Reforms

Halting is not enough when the pit props have so badly rotted. The UK is, historically, a maritime power, and an expeditionary power. Yet in military terms it has dangerous capability gaps. The lack of aviation for the new aircraft carriers, the lack of heavy armour, the lack of maritime surveillance, a capability gap in anti-ship missiles, RN escort fleet numbers, the failure to retain manpower and other examples are cases in point. These are exacerbated by increased R&D spending by potential opponents and exporters of equipment to hostile regimes.

To plug these gaps requires wise spending, to avoid procurement disasters that squander billions à la Nimrod. Despite significant changes to the way in which procurement has been managed over the past ten years, reporting continues to suggest a lack of coherence across Services and across MoD floors in setting out item procurement plans. It seems old habits die hard, and the tendency remains for procurement to be set and modifications added almost as a matter of course at a later date, increasing unit capability but at a disproportionate cost and requiring savings by cutting back the number of units produced.

Recent reporting suggests that this is still driven by counterproductive procurement tactics within Whitehall: bid first for a system that lacks the capability you need; leak to the press that the kit can't do the job and lives are at risk; then politically push the Treasury to provide the funds to add the extra capability.³ The problem with this disjointed approach is that this drives up unit costs well above what they would have been had they been part of the original planning, meaning that the end number of items produced then needs to be cut to compensate. So there are fewer platforms delivered than are needed, each at exorbitant cost.

Worse, since original capability was not included in the original specs, this may generate new design flaws (for instance, by trying to put two uncomplimentary sets of electronic equipment physically next to each other as the original design did not take space for the new set into account).

To the extent to which this constitutes an accurate representation of actual and general MoD bidding practises, it is a dangerous and counterproductive model that needs to be binned.

³ "Revealed: the Huge Gaps in UK's Defences", *Sunday Times*, 5 February 2017. This is the infamous 'Type 45s as noisy as a box of spanners' article.

But primarily, the key concern (and the issue that drives such bad practice) is about the shortfall in money.

The problem unfortunately extends beyond simply procurement. The Royal Navy is now well below critical mass, and the Army and RAF are both not far off. This is an issue not just about numbers, but includes the ability to regenerate capability and ensure the future flow of capable senior people into critical posts later in their careers.⁴

We recognise that suggesting a three per cent target is just as arbitrary as setting a two per cent one. The problem in generating any amended figure lies in the apparent current absence of a coherent strategic analysis, driven by planning needs rather than the Treasury, looking at what spending needs to happen to make defence work. The difference coming from that recommended extra percentile lies in an incremental reduction of strategic risk.

Either defence is an important area that requires investment in the literal sense – to avoid spending larger amounts later on to mitigate greater loss – or it is not. If the latter, the UK has three options. It should surrender its national independence and merge with another state; it should disband its armed forces like Costa Rica and abandon its international interests (trade included); or it should leave NATO and adopt a position akin to cold war Finland. None of these are acceptable.

Recommendation 3: Avoid the DfID Budget Gaffes – Allow for Roll Over and Avoid March Panic Spending

The Department for International Development has become a byword for Whitehall waste. There are several reasons behind this, of which the most readily redeemable is over budget timings. The department has a legal obligation to spend a fixed sum (0.7% of GDP) every year. Inevitably shortfalls happen. The result is a rush to reach that target, which is achieved by throwing money at projects that may not reach appropriate standards.

A not dissimilar practise is more widely known across government departments, since underspend encourages finance managers and Treasury Officials in turn to identify spare cash as signifying a budget that can be readily cut.

Naturally, where this occurs, this can discourage professionalism in the management of resources. Funding to the MoD should correspondingly be allowed some latitude accountancy terms, with carry over for the following year. Similar processes might be usefully explored in tandem for other departments, particularly those offices with variables that go beyond ready predictables such as wages. To make the most of any increases in spending in MoD budgets however, planners should be reassured that a delay of a couple of months that may save money should not be penalised by having money taken away, because of a failure to spend on something more expensive or less effective.

⁴ Defining ‘critical mass’ merits more study. Previous Whitehall analysis has too often defaulted on managing negatives not building positives - what to lose next; not what capabilities, staffing, systems and tools are needed for long term success.

Recommendation 4: Target Restoring Capability that was Meant to be “Temporarily” Lost

When the Conservatives worked on defence policy in the Brown years, they did so under the Damoclean blade of a massive deficit and a rocketing national debt. Both problems have failed to be addressed, and will remain issues for the Treasury for years (likely, decades) to come. Defence spokesmen accepted there was a need for the MoD (a small department compared with other ring fenced ones) to bear a share of the cuts. This would be alleviated by greater reliance of cooperation with allies, in order to reduce gaps, for instance over the greater sharing of guard ship duties with France in the Caribbean.

However, the deal was that capabilities lost would be built up again subsequently. Hits were to be time-lapsed and not permanent. It is time for the Treasury to honour the deal.

Recommendation 5: Protecting the North Sea, and its Airspace

The passage of Russian assets by sea to Syria, and the increased presence of Russian aircraft testing UK air defences, should remind us of the centrality of the North Sea to UK and indeed NATO defence planning.

Even if there is no full scale defence review (which an increase in spending lends itself to suggest might be a good idea), then a strategic review of the UK's obligations in the North Sea area would be a useful exercise, particularly given new civilian pressures in those waters (see below) and continuing obligations to defend North Sea energy assets.

Recommendation 6: Retain the Ethos of Value for Money, and Impact over Size, Including in Small Ships

On a more day-today level, with Brexit comes UK extraction from the disastrous Common Fisheries Policy. The UK will gain control over territorial waters out to the 200 nm/median line limit.

These will need to be policed by protection vessels, a responsibility largely shared between the Royal Navy, RAF, and the Devolved Governments.

Scotland has three vessels, of which one is used for inshore tasks, and two light aircraft; the Welsh Government is procuring three vessels to replace its current capability which it acknowledges cannot cover its existing area of responsibility; Northern Ireland has a new vessel; the Isle of Man has one vessel; those of the Channel Islands are inshore and one is being replaced. The size, reach and capability of these are very mixed however, and may be further limited where non-Service personnel are used.

The MoD is in the process of building five River Class vessels, whose entry into the register will be timely. So the UK is not without existing assets and more that will come on line. However, there is a risk that some waters will see overstretch, and may require some shifting of resources between spending authorities.

A review of 'rules of engagement' will also be needed, as it is entirely plausible a foreign trawler captain, no longer able to fish legally, may seek to do so illegally or make his activity a cause célèbre. Fisheries disputes have been a cause of violence in the past, and have included cases of fatality in inter-fishing clashes, and even physical altercations with personnel on Royal Navy vessels (eg HMS Brocklesby and HMS Blazer in separate incidents in 1993). Policing will need to be done robustly, but fairly and even-handedly. Perhaps some open consultation with Canadian veterans of the 'Turbot War' may be advised.

Recommendation 7: No Spending for the Sake of Spending – Invest in Tech That Works

MoD procurement has a long history of generating material that is unsuited to deployment. The UK is not alone in that of course, and the department has changed practises over the last decade to seek to mitigate the most egregious risks.

It is possible that planners may view the prospect of increased budgets as an opportunity for a small number of big budget spends, in areas of current uncertain development, rather than a wider area of delivery of capability at lower cost. Clear guidance needs to be provided from the outset to avoid new resources being wasted on limited but resource-diverting objectives. Funding strategy may also be reconsidered to allow greater flexibility in purchasing stock on short order to plug newly identified gaps (as happened with off-the-rack vehicles that were more mine-strike resilient).

Recommendation 8: Buy British, Buy US

'Buy British' as a stratagem supports jobs, secures R&D leadership, and maintains strategic production capability. However, it comes at the risk of loss of cost efficiency and of delivering products that are not of the calibre that the armed forces need (Nimrod again provides an example). National preferential procurement also encourages other countries to buy their own production as well, even if UK suppliers are more cost-efficient.

There is a balance between basic Adam Smith supply mechanics, and sustaining national strategic supply. That will also be tempered by the need to identify where the best suppliers come from, in terms of reliability and technological generation.

Overall, realistically that means a tendency will be to buy from UK and US suppliers. This should rule out buying from European suppliers, but (viz Westland) this should be done less on geo-strategic grounds and more on delivery of effective kit.

Recommendation 9: Do not Corporately Buy into EU Procurement, Go Bilateral

In a separate paper, Veterans for Britain intends to explore the future of the UK's relationship with EU Defence Procurement systems.

We simply make the point here that there will be occasions where the UK may see value in associating with individual programmes run through the European Defence Agency. This should not, however, generate an intent to remain a full participant seeking to be closely integrated in a programme likely to be increasingly strategically divergent from non-continental, global states such as the UK, and whose research facilities are often far less capable than US counterparts.

Recommendation 10: Increased integration of DfID Budgets in Direct Support of Operations (and taken from the 0.7%)

The process of integrating money spent by DfID in areas of UK military engagement has considerably improved over the past decade. Work should continue so the aid budget can be more readily and directly tapped to support MoD mission objectives in conflict zones, and expenditure counted as part of the 0.7%.

We suggest it is not double counted against the 2.0% as well.

Recommendation 11: The increase in capability should be accompanied by wider use of defence diplomacy

One of the strengths of the UK lies in its soft power. One aspect of this arises from the education of service personnel and political leaders in other countries, and the personal ties that may date back many years. These have occasionally be developed to considerable advantage. Less well developed are the unique regimental ties that historically bind a number of British regiments with former colonial counterparts, in North America, South Asia, Australasia and Africa.

There is a reticence (perhaps funding-related) to fully exploit these links, even at times where anniversaries provide a logical trigger for joint staff rides, formal commemorative events or shared activities. More resource could be expended at marginal cost for potentially disproportionate gain, relating more immediately to the WWI centenary, and Canadian Confederation.

Recommendation 12: HMG should strategically factor in proportionate development of exports in boosted sectors

Increased expenditure on national procurement may generate opportunities to gain new and expanded markets for defence exports. This will generate diplomatic gains, and or more direct importance may reduce unit costs for domestic production.

An increase in purchase of UK manufactured assets will obviously need to be accompanied by reflection on export opportunities that arise as a consequence.

Conclusion

The United Kingdom has an excessive national debt. This is still being added to by a large and ongoing government deficit.

Tackling the financial hole is a strategic necessity for many reasons. Leaving the deficit and the debt unaddressed generates long term weakness, not least as an increased portion of resources have to be diverted merely to service loans.

In this context it is understandable that public spending has been cut. The way this was carried out, with certain departments ring fenced and others not, proved more open to question. Seeking to address one strategic problem should not be done by generating another.

Twenty five years ago, even at a point of increased defence expenditure, the United Kingdom went into the Gulf War with insufficient defence resources to do the job. Our units on the ground got the nickname from better-resourced US counterparts of being the “borrowers”. Our relative capabilities and resources have diminished significantly since then.

Our current plans appear to be funded on principles more akin to the scratch attitudes that threw together expeditionary forces for the Khedive Campaign rather than a realistic appraisal of equipment and personnel that needs to be in place to carry out deterrence in practice.

The 2% target is there to generate a conceptual target, and to focus accountancy minds on what armed forces need spending on them to maintain them, on paper, as a credible deterrent. That is not necessarily the same as generating the resources needed to realistically sustain them. The problem with real world planning is that the bluff is sometimes called. What then?

The United Kingdom is fortunate amongst nations in having extremely professional forces with a ‘can do’ attitude. We have also, often, been luckier than our planners have perhaps deserved. We have within living memory come back from strategic disasters such as the Fall of France, Singapore, and Suez, sometimes by the skin of our teeth. That should not make us complacent.

As we should have learnt from such examples, our luck does not always hold; and the reputational damage from failure can have extraordinarily dire consequences. The true end cost from failure on that scale is scaled upwards by a catastrophic magnitude.

We live in an uncertain world, asymmetric and territorially in flux. A number of states do not comply with international law and some even defy rational expectations. Fukuyama’s ‘end of history’ has not come to pass. It is an unhappy reality, but we cannot spend all our resources on healthcare and on the general wellbeing of our citizens. We need to keep them safe, and physically secure their prosperity too.

A reasonable level of defence expenditure is an insurance policy this country cannot afford to skirt. At present, the budget falls short. Apparent savings now need to be set against the prospective end bill.

That does not mean massive militarisation. But it does mean finally putting away the whittling knife.

About the Authors



Lieutenant General Riley has served peacetime tours of duty in Britain, the USA, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Kenya and Cyprus. He has taught at Sandhurst and Camberley, serving as Deputy Commandant at the latter.

He has also served six tours in Northern Ireland, one in Central America, five in the Balkans, one in Sierra Leone, two years in Iraq and one-and-a-half years in Afghanistan. He has commanded on operations in every rank, including Commanding General, Multi-National Division (South-East) and General Officer Commanding British Forces Iraq, 2004 – 2005; and Deputy Commanding General of all NATO forces in Afghanistan, 2007 – 2009. In these operations, he has had the privilege of commanding not only British troops, but also troops from the USA, the Commonwealth, and EU member states.

Lieutenant-General Riley was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for bravery and distinguished conduct in the Balkans in 1996; he was made an Officer of the Legion of Merit of the United States of America in 2004; he was made a Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath in the New Year's Honours 2008; and he was awarded the NATO Meritorious Service Medal by the Secretary-General in December 2008.

He is currently Visiting Professor in War Studies at King's College London and works for several companies involved with defence, security and strategic issues. He has been extremely widely published across the field of military history.



Dr Lee Rotherham (@DrBrexit) is the Executive Director of Veterans for Britain. He has been an adviser to John Major's whipless rebels, Eurosceptic MEPs, three Shadow Foreign Secretaries, the Conservative delegate to the Convention on the Future of Europe, a delegate to the Council of Europe, and government ministers.

He was Head of Opposition Research for the No Campaign in the AV Referendum, and Director of Special Projects at Vote Leave, the designated pro-withdrawal campaign during the 2016 referendum.

Outside of Westminster he has worked in publishing, teaching, heritage, and in Defence. Lee is a reservist in the British army, and has served on three overseas deployments (pictured here by the Ziggurat of Ur).

About Veterans for Britain



Veterans for Britain is led by ex-Armed Forces personnel but welcomes support from everyone who cares about the UK's autonomy, particularly in defence.

It campaigned during the referendum for a Leave vote, and now seeks to make that a practical reality by ensuring that UK links with the EU are not constrictive or damaging the country's strategic interests.

The UK and its Armed Forces would be freer, more effective, under more democratic control, and more able to retain their distinctive capabilities and ethos if they were without the impositions being applied by the EU in defence command, defence structures, operations, procurement, intelligence and the development of new technology.

We believe it is essential to maintain and where necessary re-establish the United Kingdom's autonomy in defence in the context of its pre-existing alliances and to ensure it is directly and solely accountable to the UK Parliament.

You can sign up to the campaign at www.veteransforbritain.uk to keep in touch with us.

Or you can follow us on twitter @VeteransBritain.

More information about Veterans for Britain can be found at www.veteransforbritain.uk



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