

VOTES IN DEFENCE - PRESS RELEASE

Votes in Defence has been established to counter the common cliché in political circles that, 'There are no votes in Defence'. It is an a-political, cross-sector community of interest that seeks to ensure adequate resources and a coherent, sustainable strategy for the Defence of the United Kingdom that will deter and defeat threats to the UK and its legitimate interests. Reflecting opinion polls that consistently show a strong majority of UK voters in favour of greater defence spending and a continued international leadership role for Britain, it comprises all sectors of British life, including public service, the financial world, commercial companies, the media, military practitioners and the general public.

Its primary area of activity will be to influence political opinion and decision-making at the national and, where appropriate, international levels. Initially, it will be actively engaged in influencing opinion in the period encompassing the May 2015 General Election and leading to a Strategic Defence and Security Review. Thereafter, to continue as a community and pressure group to ensure appropriate and sustained provision for Defence in the future, based on the security needs and interests of the UK.

The launch of *Votes in Defence* at Church House, Westminster on 22 April will be centred on a panel chaired by James Forsyth of the *Spectator*, comprising Professor Anthony King, Mr Con Coughlan (Daily Telegraph), Thomas Raines (Chatham House) and Rear Admiral Chris Parry.

What unites the panel and the wider group in particular is serious concern about the considerable strategic deficit evident in the UK's Defence, Security, Aid and Foreign policies and a sense that the political elite of the UK simply does not 'get' what is required for the British people to make their way in an increasingly unstable and challenging world.

In particular, *Votes in Defence* has identified:

- A strategic deficit: the political class do not understand the realities of the current and emerging strategic context or the systemic risks in an age of assertive regional powers and US disengagement.
- A leadership deficit: untrained in strategic management and crisis leadership, they do not 'get' how to threaten and use force, in support of favourable outcomes and British interests.
- A responsibility deficit: the political elite is failing in its primary responsibility to provide the means to anticipate and mitigate risks, deter strategic threats and to resist coercion.
- A knowledge deficit: they are uncritically ignorant or heedless about the significant 'hollowing out' of UK armed forces and of their 'war-fighting' limitations.
- A legitimacy deficit - the political elite is out of touch with UK public opinion, which wants to be assured that the UK has strong and credible armed forces, capable of resisting aggression, both on an individual and collective basis.

The *Votes in Defence* website is votesindefence.org.uk