

Has the EU's political incompetence and military impotence contributed to war?

Below we are re-publishing an extract from one of our affiliate organisations, Brexit Facts4EU.Org. The article looks at the 'wake-up' call of Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014 and how the UK responded. The full article, along with additional quotations and observations, is available [here](#).

The UK has been defending EU's eastern flank for years – most EU countries did nothing.

Russia's illegal war on Ukraine should come as no surprise to the EU. They had ample warning eight years ago, but failed on every level to respond. Indeed their actions might be seen to have contributed to Russia's aggression. The United Kingdom was the only European country to react in any meaningful way.

In 2014 Putin's Russia illegally invaded the Crimean peninsula of Ukraine and annexed it. This was a massive wake-up call for the UK and NATO, but not apparently for the EU. In taking Crimea, Russia's power in the Black Sea increased dramatically. It now seems likely that Russia will take all Ukraine's southern flank, if not the entire country.

Given that it was the EU's eagerness to get Ukraine into the EU which partly triggered Russia's actions, it is worth looking at how the EU nations responded, compared to the UK and NATO.

How the EU's actions may have contributed to war

By 2014 the EU had been in talks with Ukraine for several years. From the Russian perspective this would mean another large land border changing from being one with a 'buffer state' to being a border with a large foreign power.

In February of that year Russia invaded Crimea and installed a puppet government. That did not stop the EU. Despite Russia's annexation of Crimea – part of Ukraine's sovereign territory – the EU pressed on.

In May 2014 the EU signed an Association Agreement with Ukraine, signalling the first step towards it eventually joining the EU. The Agreement came into force in September 2017.

How did NATO and the UK respond?

At its summit in Wales in September 2014, NATO said ***"Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine have fundamentally challenged our vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace."*** The Alliance agreed what the Secretary General described as the "most significant strengthening" of its collective defence in decades.



NATO Parliament, 2014

“If we look around the world, while NATO has cut defence spending, others have rapidly increased it. Over the last 5 years, Russia increased its spending by 50%. And it plans further increases.

“At the same time, total NATO defence spending fell by 20%. **And some nations are cutting further.**”

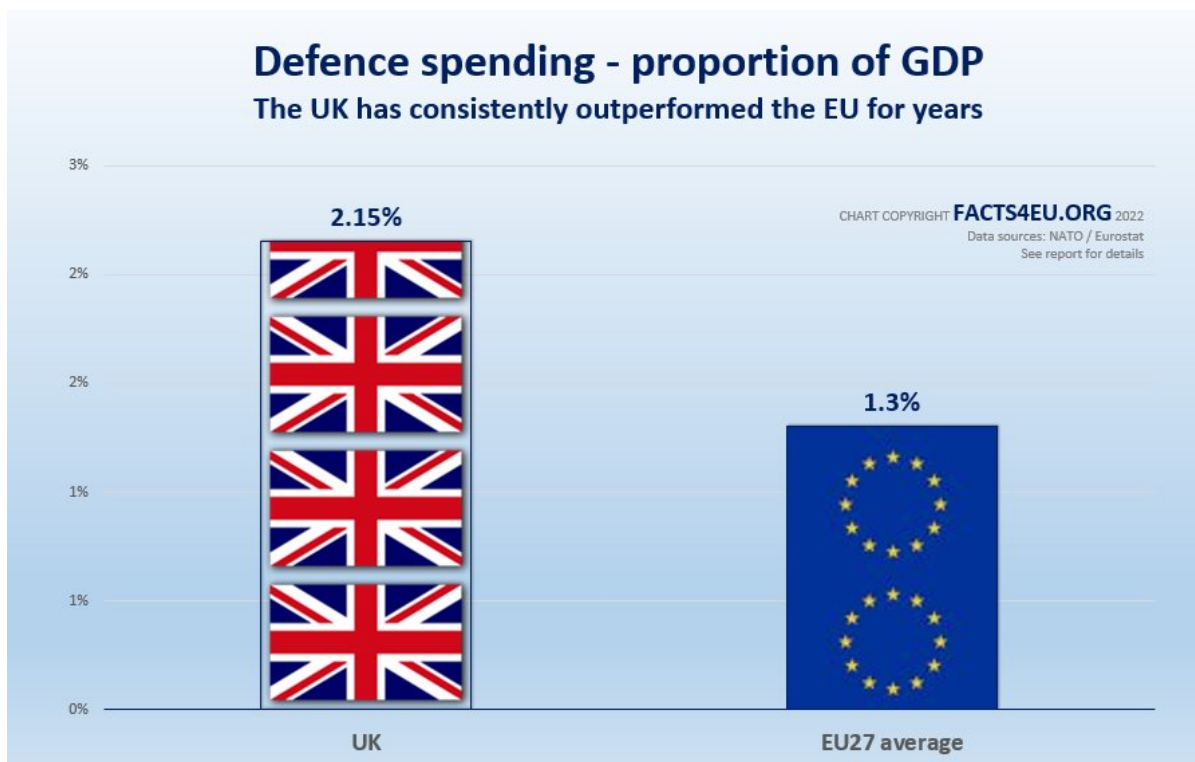
– NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Parliament, 24 Nov 2014

BREXIT FACTS4EU.ORG SUMMARY

At NATO's Wales Summit in September 2014 its member states agreed:-

1. To spend a minimum of 2% of GDP on defence
2. To spend a minimum of 20% of the defence budget on military equipment

The United Kingdom has been the only European country consistently to meet both targets.



According to the latest figures from the EU's official statistics agency, EU27 countries are still only spending an average of 1.3% on defence, compared to the UK's 2.15%.

And how is the UK defending Europe now?

While EU27 countries are finally deciding to increase their defence spending – 'after the horse has bolted' – the UK continues to defend its eastern flank.

The UK was the first country to take action, even before Putin invaded the whole of Ukraine.

On 17 January – prior to Putin's invasion – the UK agreed to supply military aid to the Ukrainian armed forces. The aid took the form of body armour, helmets, boots, ear defenders, ration packs, rangefinders and communication equipment, and for the first time it also included weapons systems. The initial supply was to be 2,000 new light anti-tank weapons (NLAWs), small arms and ammunition.

As at 26 February the UK had delivered 3,615 NLAWs and continue to deliver more. Supplies of anti-tank Javelin missiles are also in train.

Providing air cover for the EU

As if the above were not enough, the UK is also providing air cover for the EU.

"RAF Typhoon fighter jets have already completed their first air policing missions across the region, with an additional four aircraft based at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus. Typhoons flying from bases in Cyprus and the UK are now patrolling NATO airspace over Romania and Poland alongside NATO allies with Voyager air-to-air refuelling aircraft in support."

– Ministry of Defence statement, 26 Feb 2022

The EU? Too little, too late

The UK Government has been very diplomatic in avoiding criticism of the lack of action by EU27 countries.