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REIMAGINING U.S. SECURITY SPENDING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY & BEYOND



WIN WITHOUT WAR



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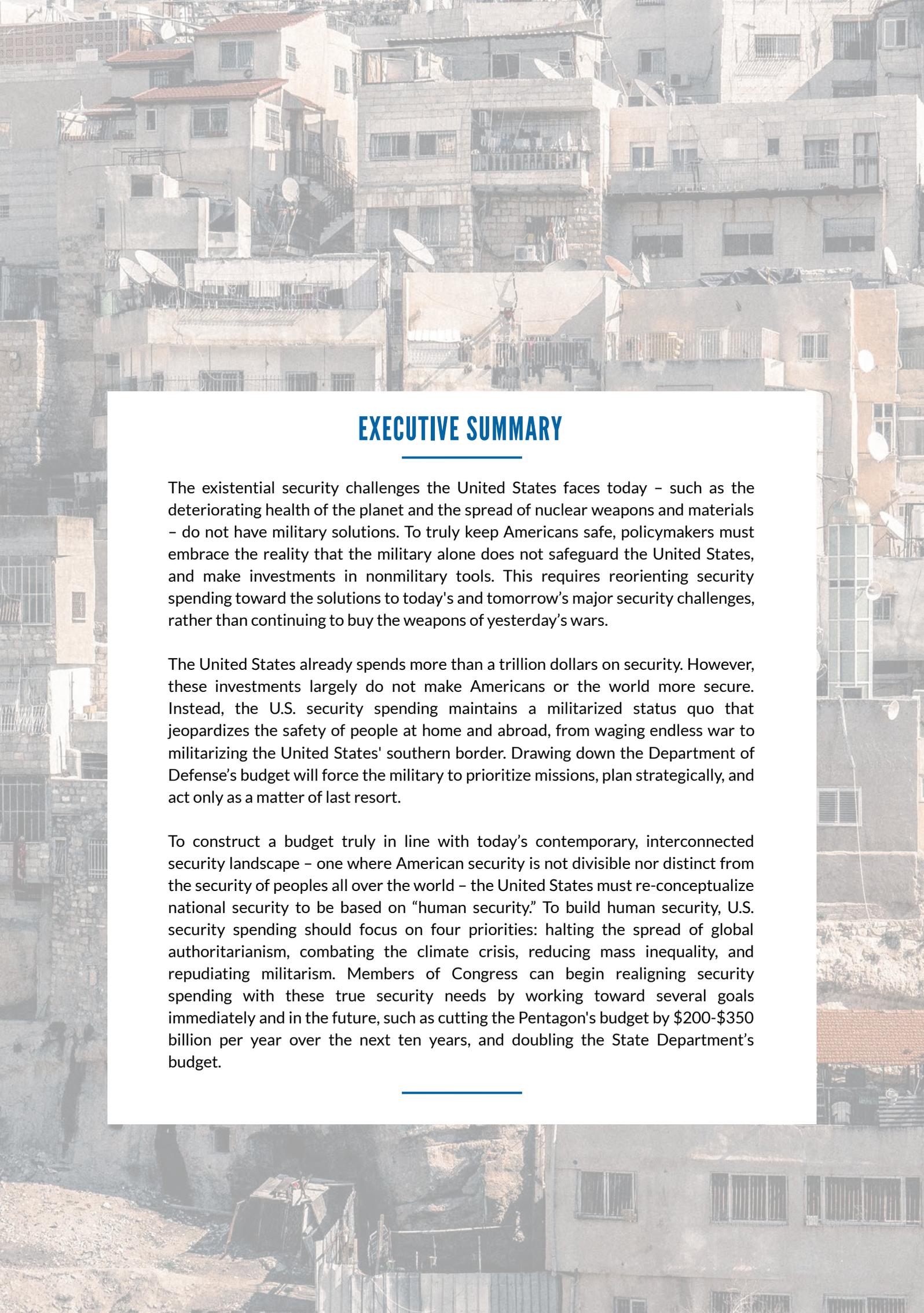
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The existential security challenges the United States faces today – such as the deteriorating health of the planet and the spread of nuclear weapons and materials – do not have military solutions. To truly keep Americans safe, policymakers must embrace the reality that the military alone does not safeguard the United States, and make investments in nonmilitary tools. This requires reorienting security spending toward the solutions to today's and tomorrow's major security challenges, rather than continuing to buy the weapons of yesterday's wars.

The United States already spends more than a trillion dollars on security. However, these investments largely do not make Americans or the world more secure. Instead, the U.S. security spending maintains a militarized status quo that jeopardizes the safety of people at home and abroad, from waging endless war to militarizing the United States' southern border. Drawing down the Department of Defense's budget will force the military to prioritize missions, plan strategically, and act only as a matter of last resort.

To construct a budget truly in line with today's contemporary, interconnected security landscape – one where American security is not divisible nor distinct from the security of peoples all over the world – the United States must re-conceptualize national security to be based on "human security." To build human security, U.S. security spending should focus on four priorities: halting the spread of global authoritarianism, combating the climate crisis, reducing mass inequality, and repudiating militarism. Members of Congress can begin realigning security spending with these true security needs by working toward several goals immediately and in the future, such as cutting the Pentagon's budget by \$200-\$350 billion per year over the next ten years, and doubling the State Department's budget.

INTRODUCTION

With most living paycheck to paycheck, millions of Americans take great care to spend on the priorities that matter — from food and housing, to college education and healthcare.¹ They expect the federal government to do the same, to identify those priorities and spend Americans' hard-earned tax dollars accordingly.

Security is one of those priorities. However, new global challenges like climate change and rising authoritarianism have renewed questions about exactly *how* the United States should keep Americans safe and secure.² The way legislators and policymakers choose to answer those questions is partly reflected in the federal budget. More than numerical tables and copious amendments, the budget tells a story of the United States' values, policy priorities, and the tools it believes are important.

The historically high defense budgets of recent years reflect the U.S.' overwhelming reliance on a military-first approach to security. These astronomical Pentagon budgets are sustained by the predominant public narrative that Americans' security is almost solely dependent on the size and technology of the U.S. military. Indeed, one of Donald Trump's favorite, and false, talking points on the 2016 presidential campaign trail was how the previous administration had "gutted" the military, and that only "re-building" it would keep Americans safe.³ But despite his partisan claim, a bipartisan consensus sustains today's historic levels of defense spending.

Undoubtedly, Americans place significant and deserved faith in the military, trusting it to resolve major challenges. The reality, however, is that the existential threats the United States faces — such as the deteriorating health of the planet and the spread of nuclear weapons and materials — do not have military solutions. And the U.S.' continued reliance on military-first solutions to nonmilitary challenges has both aggravated threats and violated the values the U.S. aspires to uphold.

As a result, policymakers must make investments in tools beyond the military, but the United States does not have unlimited resources. The ballooning national deficit means the U.S. should not invest in the solutions to tomorrow's major security challenges while continuing to maintain or expand the current level of exorbitant Pentagon spending. A holistic view of U.S. security spending is necessary to publicly illuminate the spending trade-offs associated with continuing to primarily invest in hard security. To truly keep Americans safe, legislators and policymakers must rethink where the U.S. is making its investments and reorient security spending to address the national and global challenges of tomorrow.

THE UNITED STATES' TRILLION DOLLAR SECURITY RECEIPT

Currently, security-related spending can be found in a host of accounts across the federal government. Policymakers can begin reorienting their conception of security by embracing the reality that the military alone does not safeguard the United States and by taking a unified approach to security spending.⁴ In total, U.S. spending on national security adds up to more than a trillion dollars per year, after accounting for funding at the Pentagon, the Departments of State, Homeland Security, and Energy, as well as other agencies managing security-related programs.

Military-Related Spending

The discretionary national defense budget function (050) in the president's FY2020 request includes \$718 billion for the Department of Defense, \$23 billion for "atomic energy defense" spending within the Department of Energy, plus an additional \$8 billion for other "defense-related" spending. Funding for the Defense Department is broken down into \$576 billion in "base" spending, as well as \$9 billion in "emergency requirements" and a whopping \$165 billion in Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) – a budget gimmick designed to avoid having to increase the spending limits set by the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA). The president's FY2020 budget request thus amounts to a mammoth \$750 billion defense budget – a \$34 billion or 4.7 percent increase over the FY2019 enacted level.

Military-related spending can be found in several other areas outside the 050 budget account, including veterans benefits and services. The people the U.S. relies on to wage its endless wars, and the country's responsibility to care for them, are a vital component

A Slush Fund for War

The Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) fund is an additional pot of war funding used to finance operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries where the United States is engaged in military operations. Initially designated as funding for the post-9/11 wars, Congress now uses OCO to appropriate funds to the DOD and other agencies in excess of the agency's "base" budget. Since 9/11, Congress has appropriated almost \$2 trillion for OCO. It has also been exempt from the spending caps set by the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA).⁵

Due to the lack of limits - and accountability - for the OCO fund, the Pentagon has used it to circumvent the BCA's caps, effectively making OCO a slush fund for war and non-war spending. In 2016, the DOD admitted that half of the OCO budget was being allocated for base budget needs, not emergency, war-related activities as designed.⁶ So, even as the United States has drawn down troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, Pentagon spending has not correspondingly decreased. As a result, the cost-per-troop has increased from about \$1 million in 2008 to \$5.9 million in 2016.⁷ Donald Trump's FY2020 request highlights this glaring loophole, as he proposes increasing OCO by 139 percent in order to have a \$750 billion Pentagon budget beyond the \$576 billion ceiling set by the BCA.⁸

CURRENT U.S. SECURITY SPENDING

of security spending. For FY2020, the president's budget request proposes a \$216.2 billion budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs, split between \$93.1 billion in proposed discretionary spending and \$123.1 billion in mandatory budget authority.

Security Spending at Home

The Department of Homeland Security, which includes the Transportation Security Administration, Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), the Secret Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Coast Guard, is one of multiple vestiges of George W. Bush's post-9/11 security state. The Trump administration requests \$51.7 billion for DHS in FY2020, as well as an additional \$19.4 billion for the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF).⁹ Rather than investing in human needs, the budget invests in tools that perpetuate and expand policies that militarize our communities and exacerbate human suffering, including \$5 billion for a new, unnecessary, and racist border wall and \$2.7 billion for 54,000 detention beds for migrants and asylum seekers. For these misplaced priorities and its abuses, DHS requires serious re-evaluation and reform, whether through extensively reorienting its policies or dissolving DHS and distributing its necessary tasks to other agencies.

International Affairs Spending

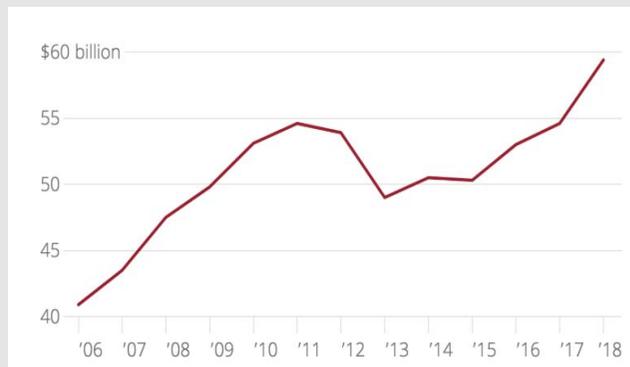
Essential tools of U.S. global engagement and vital alternatives to military action are funded through the international affairs budget function (150) for the State Department, foreign operations, and other related programs like the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). This account is an integral component of U.S. security spending. Effective diplomacy is key to ensuring that the U.S. only uses force as the very last resort. Even Donald Trump's former Defense Secretary, retired General Jim Mattis, once told legislators, "If you don't fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition ultimately."¹⁰

Instead, the administration has repeatedly tried to slash funding for U.S. development, nonmilitary foreign aid, and diplomacy. Donald Trump's FY2020 proposal continues this trend with a 24 percent cut to the international affairs budget that leaves just \$40 billion, including \$19.2 billion fully or partially managed by USAID, to resource vital diplomatic and nonmilitary tools of statecraft.¹¹ This topline amounts to just five percent of what the Trump administration requested for the Pentagon. While the budget seeks to zero out stabilization funding for places like Syria and the Occupied Palestinian territories, the Trump administration prioritizes embassy security and international security assistance.

The Black Budget

The "black" budget represents classified government spending for covert operations and intelligence agencies. The Trump administration requested \$86 billion for the total amount in FY2020, a six percent increase from FY2019. It includes the National Security Agency and fourteen other civilian intelligence agencies, with funding for surveillance technologies, paramilitary activities, and black site prisons. The amount of taxpayer dollars spent on these programs should not be a secret. The public, and members of Congress, should call for the black budget's partial declassification to allow for appropriate oversight, accountability, and public debate on the need for such operations. Ultimately, legislators must work to end the intelligence community's participation in paramilitary activities, including drone strikes and the arming of nonstate actors.

Non-military "Black" Budget function for intelligence and covert operations



Source: Steven Nelson, "Intelligence 'black budget' hits mysterious new high under Trump," *The Washington Examiner*, October 30, 2018. Available at: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/white-house/spy-budgets-soared-in-trumps-first-year>. Data from the Federation for American Scientists.

CURRENT U.S. SECURITY SPENDING



Federal Climate Change Spending

Climate change is one of the foremost challenges facing the world today. From large-scale displacement to natural disasters and biodiversity loss, the global climate crisis threatens U.S. national and global security, as well as human survival, and thus, should be an integral component of U.S. security spending.

Despite the Trump administration's deprioritization of climate change, the federal government still invests in climate research, adaptation, and mitigation – though not nearly to the extent needed to address this global crisis. According to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), federal climate change spending amounted to \$13.2 billion across at least 18 programs in FY2017 (the latest year for which data is available), located in agencies from the Department of Agriculture to the National Science Foundation. In the six agencies the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reviewed, however, 94 percent of reported funding went to programs that were related to – but not directly dedicated to – climate change, like nuclear energy research. OMB's climate reporting also failed to reflect the costs associated with fiscal exposure to climate change, like disaster relief or damage to domestic and overseas military bases as a consequence of extreme weather and rising sea levels. Consequently, the actual amount the federal government spends on climate change is not transparent.¹²

Exacerbating this lack of transparency is the discontinuation of congressionally-mandated reporting requirements for climate-related spending. Previously, a reporting provision in several years of appropriations legislation required the executive branch to submit a comprehensive report of “all Federal agency funding, domestic and international, for climate change programs, projects and activities” per fiscal year, including an accounting of funding by agency that identified “climate change programs, projects, and activities and associated costs by line item.”¹³ The consolidated congressional appropriations acts for FY2018 and FY2019 have not included this reporting requirement.

Consequently, as the latest figures on climate expenditures are not available from OMB, climate-related spending is not totalled in this report's summation of total security spending. Since, however, responding to climate change is fundamental to U.S. security, this report will recommend both reinstating the reporting requirement, increasing funding to climate-related programs, and considering the creation of an interagency task force to develop a whole-of-government initiative to establish domestic and international efforts to mitigate the climate crisis in the next ten years.

CURRENT U.S. SECURITY SPENDING

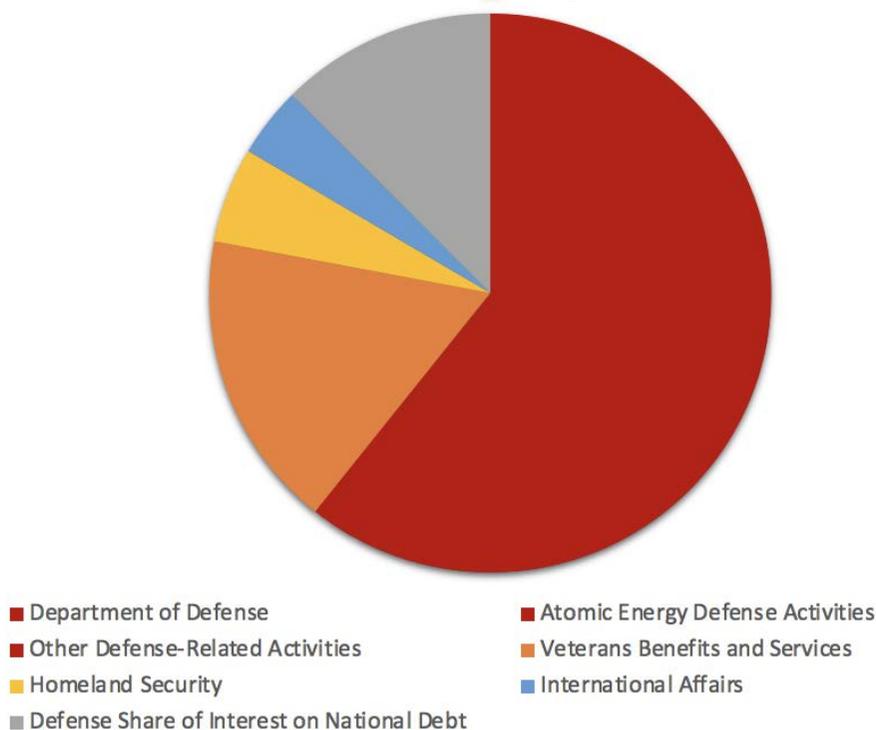
In total, the United States' security receipt amounts to more than a trillion dollars, as it has since at least 2017.¹⁴ Factoring in other related accounts across the federal government, such as the share of interest on the national debt, drives that figure even higher.¹⁵

Security Program (in billions)	2018 (appropriated)	2019 (appropriated)	2020 (President's Budget request)
Department of Defense	694.52	693.07	727.97
Atomic Energy Defense Activities	23.33	24.02	24.8
Other Defense-Related Activities	8.81	9.12	9.01
Veterans Benefits and Services	182.39	194.84	216.52
International Affairs	80.23	75.41	50.99
Homeland Security	47.72	47.52	69.2
Defense Share of Interest on National Debt	112.7 ¹⁶	123.5 ¹⁷	156.3¹⁸
Total Security Spending	1149.7	1167.48	1254.79

Sources: Table 29-1 from FY2020 Analytical Perspectives; Homeland Security FY2020 Budget-in-Brief

While the president's FY2020 budget request is merely a recommendation to Congress, it continues to reflect a few basic trends in U.S. security spending – minimal funding for diplomacy and foreign aid paired with outsized military and defense spending.

TOTAL U.S. SECURITY SPENDING
(FY2020 President's Budget Request)



CURRENT U.S. SECURITY SPENDING

MILITARY SPENDING IN PERSPECTIVE

Military spending is currently at some of the highest levels in history. The skyrocketing defense budgets of the Reagan-era buildup were surpassed in 2003 with the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and peaked in 2010 as the war in Iraq drew to a close and then-President Obama turned the U.S. military's attention toward Afghanistan. The subsequent decline in FY2015 can be attributed to budget caps imposed by the Budget Control Act of 2011 and a drawdown of forces in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet this decline is superficial as defense budgets still exceed the peak of the Reagan-era defense buildup, even after adjusting for inflation.¹⁹ This means that the U.S. spends more today than it did during the wars in Korea and Vietnam.

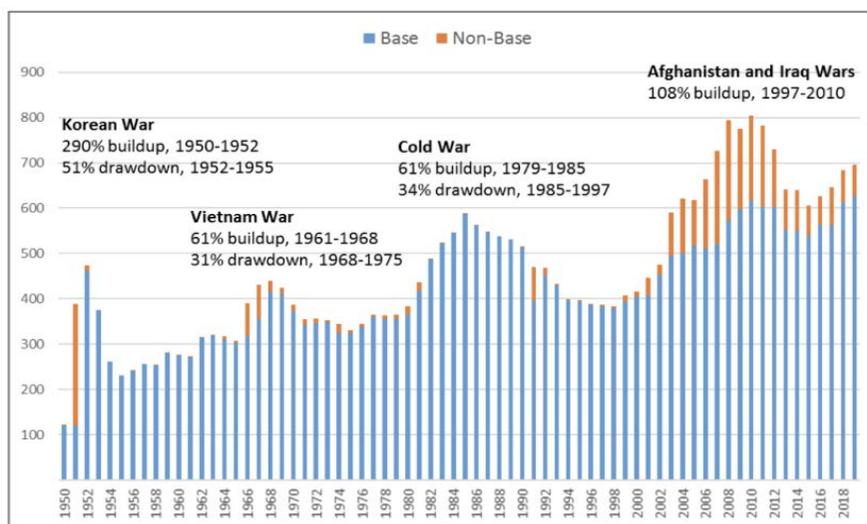
Despite the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the anticipated “peace dividend,” the U.S. has generally continued to invest in an unsustainable war economy that prioritizes weapons and profits over

human needs at home and abroad.²⁰

A key aspect of the continued expansion of the Pentagon's budget is the power of the military-industrial complex, which uses money and the revolving door to wield influence in Washington to ensure its profits are not harmed by the changing security environment.

Nearly half of the Pentagon's budget goes directly to defense contractors, who reap the rewards of this corrupt system, with the CEOs of the top ten U.S. defense companies earning a combined \$160 million in 2016 – a bill largely footed by taxpayer dollars.²¹ Meanwhile, members of Congress protect these companies' defense contracts in their districts, when in reality, research has indicated that investing in other industries like infrastructure, clean energy, or education would create one and a half to two times as many jobs per dollar spent.²²

DOD Budget Authority: A Historical Perspective
(in billions of constant FY2019 dollars)



Source: Brendan W. McGarry and Susan B. Epstein, “Overseas Contingency Operations Funding: Background and Status,” Congressional Research Service, January 15, 2019. Available at: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R44519.pdf>

CURRENT U.S. SECURITY SPENDING

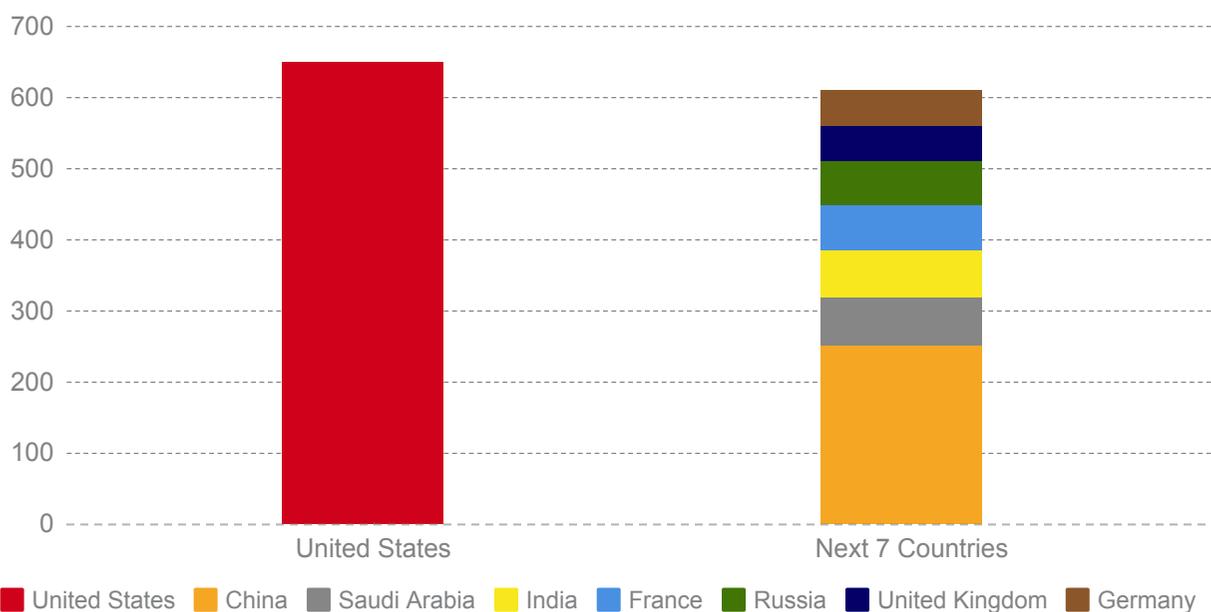
More recently, Washington's foreign policy establishment has sought to justify increasing the Pentagon's budget by claiming that "great power" competition with Russia and China amidst the ongoing, endless post-9/11 wars will require ever more increases to maintain absolute military supremacy.²³ Yet, Russian and Chinese influence and militaries have grown in spite of – and possibly in response to – the United States spending more on its military than the next seven nations combined.²⁴ The reality is that if defense hawks would like to return to Cold War-era spending, that would entail decreasing today's military budgets – not increasing them.²⁵ Additionally, the U.S.' military-first approach has only compounded the expansion of violent groups that perpetrate terrorism.²⁶ This reality demonstrates that military might alone cannot overcome these perceived security challenges.

As the new budget caps deal indicates, Pentagon spending is primed to continue its unrestricted rise unless a major shift in policy takes place.

Even as the United States spends more on the military than during the height of major inter-state wars and the Cold War – vastly outspending all allies and competitors – the Pentagon's budget is set to further expand.

Pentagon spending increased by \$108 billion between the president's proposed FY2017 budget (largely written by former President Barack Obama's administration) and Congress' FY2018 budget caps deal. It then further grew from \$700 billion in FY2018 to \$716 billion in FY2019.²⁷ FY2020 is set to continue this upwards trajectory with the recent budget caps deal that increases Pentagon spending to a whopping \$738 billion for FY2020, which totals \$1.48 trillion over two years.²⁸ Moreover, numerous weapons programs, like the F-35 fighter jet and the Littoral Combat Ship, have continued to increase in cost, driving budgets up at taxpayers' expense.²⁹ If this trajectory continues, the Pentagon's budget could be on track to eventually swallow the entire discretionary spending budget, leaving little left over to fund actual security needs. As the new budget caps deal indicates, Pentagon spending is primed to continue its unrestricted rise unless a major shift in policy takes place.

GLOBAL MILITARY SPENDING
(billions of dollars)



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Military Expenditure Database, April 2019. Using FY2018 numbers. Available at: <https://www.sipri.org/research/armament-and-disarmament/arms-transfers-and-military-spending/military-expenditure>

CURRENT U.S. SECURITY SPENDING

WHERE THE U.S. SPENDS ONE TRILLION DOLLARS

The Pentagon cannot definitively account for how it spends its vast budget. Despite being the largest recipient of discretionary funding in the federal budget, the Department of Defense failed its first ever audit in 2018 and remains the only federal agency to have never passed an audit.³⁰ The failed audit demonstrates the agency's lack of financial controls and ability to assess whether taxpayers' dollars are being spent responsibly — a reality repeatedly underscored by numerous reports of Pentagon waste.³¹ Meanwhile, a recent Government Accountability Office study revealed that the agency can't even spend all of the money appropriated to it, with the Pentagon returning \$80 billion in funds between FY2013 and FY2018.³²

- *Endless War*

Since 9/11, the United States has waged an endless and global preventative war. By every reasonable metric, this military-first approach to solving a political problem has been an abject failure. The influence and number of violent groups that perpetrate terrorism has only proliferated worldwide and the U.S.' actions — from Bush's disastrous invasion and occupation of Iraq to Obama's expansive, secretive drone wars — have had precipitous, deadly consequences for communities around the world. This endless war now involves 80 countries — 40 percent of the world's nations — and includes the war in Afghanistan, the longest running war in U.S. history.³⁴



The Pentagon reportedly spent

\$4.6 million

on crab and lobster in 2019.³³

This failed strategy comes at a steep price. In addition to thousands of U.S. troops, these wars directly killed around 500,000 people in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan alone.³⁵ U.S. service members and civilians across the globe continue losing their lives as a result of this irresponsible and short-sighted approach. Meanwhile, waging endless war is not cheap — the United States has spent nearly \$6 trillion on the post-9/11 wars and continues to spend billions more each year.

In addition to wastefulness, the federal government is failing to spend the United States' trillion dollar security check strategically. The U.S. continues to pour vast sums of money into military misadventures and hard security strategies that are fiscally irresponsible and often do not make the United States safer, from endless war to an increasingly militarized State Department.



CURRENT U.S. SECURITY SPENDING

- **Unnecessary Military Bases**

The United States operates almost 800 military bases in more than 70 countries.³⁶ Not only does maintaining overseas bases cost \$120 billion per year, this forward-deployed military posture is outdated with technology's reduction of travel times and long range capabilities. A U.S. military presence can also help to prop up authoritarian regimes, such as in Bahrain, and stoke anti-American sentiment by feeding accusations of the U.S. being an occupying force. Keeping the U.S. safe does not require a global military footprint. Rather it is possible to maintain the military's deterrence power by premising military engagement on a more restrained posture.³⁷

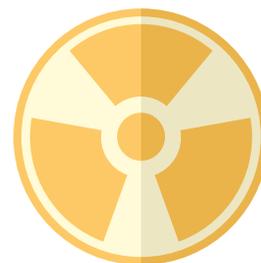
Military bases and installations are also likely to cost the United States a significant amount of money in the future – many of which are vestiges of this outdated forward-deployed military posture. According to the Pentagon, climate change has major implications for infrastructure maintenance and, thus, readiness. In a 2019 report to Congress, the Pentagon reviewed 79 military installations and found 53 experiencing recurrent flooding, 43 encountering drought, 36 at risk of wildfires, six undergoing desertification, and one impacted by thawing permafrost.³⁸ In all, two-thirds of the military's installations are currently or will be threatened by climate change, and the Pentagon is already incurring the costs associated with this damage. In 2019, the U.S. Air Force requested \$5 billion to repair just two bases after severe weather.³⁹ Yet, the DOD remains incapable of including the impact of climate change on military installations in its budget because of inadequate reporting.⁴⁰



- **Outsized Nuclear Modernization and Development**

The United States is currently undergoing an excessive nuclear modernization program that will cost the U.S. \$1.7 trillion, and possibly more, over the next three decades. For example, the U.S. government plans to develop 480 B61 gravity bombs, which are the most expensive bombs ever built at about \$20.8 million each. These warheads have an “adjustable” range spanning anywhere from a 0.3 to a 340 kiloton detonation – 23 times the force of the bomb that leveled Hiroshima.⁴¹ This modernization plan is not only expensive but it's also reckless, abdicating U.S. leadership on nuclear nonproliferation.

Furthermore, the Trump administration's Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) also includes plans for the development of a new “low yield” nuclear warhead and his withdrawal from the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty opens the door to the development of even more unnecessary weapons. Investing billions of dollars in new nuclear weapons is already triggering a global arms race with other nuclear weapons states and aspiring nuclear powers, making nuclear use more likely and Americans and the world less safe.



- **A Militarized Border**

Construction of Trump's unnecessary and racist border wall could cost upwards of \$70 billion. Moreover, the deployment of thousands of troops to the border could cost close to a billion dollars by the end of 2019.⁴² In addition to violating the U.S.' responsibility under international law to migrants and asylum seekers, building walls and deploying troops will not fix the U.S.'

CURRENT U.S. SECURITY SPENDING

broken immigration and asylum system. Nor will these militarized policies address the drivers of migration stemming from a myriad of complex challenges in South and Central America — some of which have been created or exacerbated by U.S. foreign policy decisions. Experts also agree that the Trump administration’s decision to cut aid to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras may increase instability and, as a result, force more people from their homes.⁴³



- **Militarized Diplomacy**

Despite Congress’ efforts to resist Trump’s previously proposed budget cuts to nonmilitary tools of statecraft, the State Department is still largely underfunded and understaffed. And troublingly, an ever greater portion of its skeletal budget goes to hard security, like embassy protection, weapons sales, or security assistance. For example, more than half of international assistance spending in Afghanistan and Iraq is for military or security purposes — not humanitarian aid or economic development.⁴⁴

Rather than fully funding the tools and international organizations that help vulnerable communities and investing in development and peacebuilding initiatives that tackle poverty and inequality, the State Department’s FY2020 budget request continues the militarization of diplomacy by prioritizing funding for embassy and border security over programs that serve human needs. It also seeks to expand Foreign Military Financing, a program that uses taxpayer dollars to give grants to foreign militaries so they can buy U.S. weapons — weapons that do little to further the political and economic development of recipient countries.

Any discussion of the Pentagon’s funding must reckon with the costs and consequences of the U.S.’ forward-deployed and aggressive military posture. Billions of dollars are being spent to maintain the militarized status quo illustrated by the above examples. This status quo jeopardizes the safety of people at home and abroad, and expects the U.S. military to take on missions that have no military solution. Any military “readiness crisis” touted to justify increased Pentagon spending is the result of this post-9/11 overextension and the Pentagon’s inability to spend its enormous budget wisely — not a lack of funding.

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Drawing down the Pentagon’s budget will force the military to prioritize missions, plan strategically, and only act as a matter of last resort. Such prioritization will improve the military’s efficiency and protect service members from ill-thought and ill-planned military misadventures. It will also force legislators to turn more readily to non-military alternatives, rather than continuing to rely on the Pentagon to resolve nearly every challenge. Ultimately, this reorientation towards non-military solutions will better prepare the United States to confront the challenges of the contemporary security landscape.

SECURITY SPENDING FOR TODAY & TOMORROW

REIMAGINING NATIONAL SECURITY

To construct a budget truly in line with U.S. security needs, policymakers must make a clear-eyed assessment of today's security environment where "national" challenges are often also global challenges. Large-scale conventional wars between nations have evolved into conflicts against non-state actors, waged in urban areas rather than on battlefields. The U.S.' closest peer-competitor, China, relies predominantly on economic, not military, power to expand its influence. Globalization and interconnectivity make borders increasingly porous with the spread of new technologies, cyberwarfare, the expanding power of multinational corporations, and mass migration – both forced and voluntary.

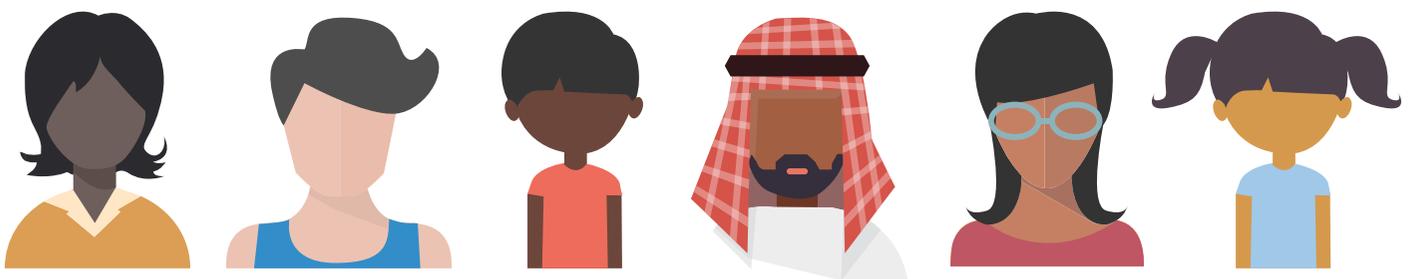
As the U.S. enters an increasingly multipolar world, a unipolar and military-first approach to global engagement is outdated. To budget appropriately for these new challenges, U.S. policymakers must align their conception of security with a contemporary, interconnected security landscape; one where effective solutions require bold multilateral engagement and a mindset that American security is not divisible nor distinct from the security of peoples all over the world. Consequently, the United States must re-conceptualize national security to be based on **human security**.

The United States must re-conceptualize national security to be based on human security.

Reclaimed and reinvigorated by the United Nations, human security addresses the "widespread and cross-cutting challenges" to the "survival, livelihood, and dignity" of all people.⁴⁵ Appropriately, human security centers the needs of people in security analysis. It also depends on both environmental security and global security, respectively representing the health of our planet and shared interests like poverty reduction and equitable access to resources and opportunity. Without addressing these various facets of security, the United States cannot help to protect the safety and well-being of individuals and communities at home or abroad.

To build human security, U.S. security spending should focus on four priorities:

- halting the spread of global authoritarianism;
- combating the climate crisis;
- reducing mass inequality;
- and repudiating militarism.





HALTING THE SPREAD OF GLOBAL AUTHORITARIANISM

From Hungary to the Philippines to Saudi Arabia, authoritarian leaders are empowered and emboldened across the world. In addition to consistently abusing human rights, authoritarians often threaten global security by deploying xenophobic rhetoric to incite political divisions and leveraging international corruption networks for support. The rise of authoritarian powers has also offered nation-states an alternative economic model of development and governance to democracies. As a result, a concerted effort by authoritarian powers to export their model over the last decade has challenged democratization efforts around the world.

Meanwhile, democracy experienced its most “serious crisis in decades” in 2017, with 2018 marking the “12th consecutive year of decline in global freedom.”⁴⁶ Donald Trump’s attacks on freedom of the press, the crisis of so-called “fake news,” denial of Russian election meddling, and pay-to-play politics with other foreign powers have undermined democracy in the United States and around the world. He has signalled to authoritarians that he is willing to overlook their actions to undermine truth, accountable governance, and economic equality in order to pursue his own personal business and political interests.

The retrenchment of democracy is consequential to U.S. security interests. Failing democracies are some of the world’s most violent countries and since 1900, “colonial

and undemocratic powers” have caused 250 million premature deaths, which is “five times the death toll from combat in all wars combined.”⁴⁷ Moreover, repression and impunity prompt social unrest and stymie economic innovation, contributing to the frustrations and disenfranchisement that spur recruitment into violent groups.⁴⁸

Additionally, if Washington’s hawks are truly concerned about the rise of authoritarian powers, like China, they cannot rely on military solutions. China has dramatically increased its influence through economic growth and investment in international development and soft power. Cultivating soft power has been a core policy goal in Beijing since 2010, as exemplified by a network of more than 1,500 Confucius Institutes in 140 countries that provide Chinese language and culture instruction to nearly 1.5 million students worldwide.⁴⁹ Throughout Africa, China has provided predatory investments and loans of over \$25 billion for infrastructure construction, mineral extraction, and energy production.⁵⁰ China has also signed massive trade and investment agreements with countries like Iran, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Bolivia as President Xi Jinping has forged ahead with his ambitious Belt and Road Project.⁵¹ The exploitative nature of these loans and China’s blatant human rights abuses pose a significant threat to the communities hosting these projects. The United States has an opportunity to offer a competitive alternative that facilitates economic development



To truly counter the rise of these authoritarian regimes, the U.S. must invest in alternate sources of national power that will empower democratic movements and reinvigorate U.S. influence in the world.

through the recently instituted U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (USIDFC). Although the USIDFC only has a \$60 billion annual budget, it could be a promising non-exploitative alternative for local private sector growth around the world if implemented transparently. It is essential the initiative prioritizes local impact in project outcomes, seeks to establish fair and nondiscriminatory labor practices for local workers, and coordinates heavily with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

To truly counter the rise of these authoritarian regimes, the U.S. must invest in alternate sources of national power that will empower democratic movements and reinvigorate U.S. influence in the world. The Trump administration has failed to do so, reducing funding for educational and cultural exchange programs and decreasing funding for U.S. economic assistance to developing nations. Instead, the Trump administration has only increased overall defense spending that does nothing to lift people out of poverty and create

economic opportunity abroad. Given this, policymakers should expect corrupt actors in these countries to be empowered at the expense of reformers, civil society, and the civilian population.

Defending the U.S. from authoritarian encroachment means investing in democratic institutions and economic opportunity, both at home and abroad. Instead of procuring weapons to wage hypothetical, improbable, and potentially catastrophic wars, the United States should be investing in areas such as, but not limited to:

- cybersecurity and education in the United States to protect U.S. infrastructure, government, and nongovernmental institutions;
- strengthening U.S. and international anti-corruption laws (including creating a beneficial ownership registry in the United States), closing money laundering loopholes in existing anti-corruption legal regimes, and eliminating tax havens;
- soft power and public diplomacy by fully funding educational and cultural exchange programs, as well as economic development through the State Department, USAID, USIDFC, and international organizations.



COMBATING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

In a recent global poll, more people in more countries around the world listed climate change as the greatest threat to security than ever before.⁵² The climate crisis is one of the, if not the, foremost threats to human life around the world and its effects are already being felt by peoples on every continent.

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Scientists say we could have as few as twelve years to limit the most devastating effects of climate change. Despite this, the Trump administration continues to deny even the existence of a climate crisis, and politicians in both parties resist taking bold action. The consequences – which include rising sea levels, changing global weather patterns, and more extreme weather events – have already been widely reported, threatening to cause major displacement and disrupt access to essential resources. Climate crisis pressures will complicate or exacerbate nearly every challenge the global community faces, which is why the Pentagon itself describes climate change as a “threat multiplier.”⁵³

The disruptive impact of the climate crisis has also been linked to increasing the likelihood of mass

migration, violent conflict, and political instability. In Syria, droughts triggered crop failures that pushed farmers into cities, aggravating the unemployment and political unrest that eventually drove protesters out onto the streets in 2011.⁵⁴ Similar climate conditions also contributed to conflict in other countries across the Middle East, from Yemen to Libya. These violent conflicts prompt mass migration, straining the resources of neighboring countries and even destabilizing countries thousands of miles away – as demonstrated by the right-wing populism that has wracked Europe and the United States as a result of the bigotry unleashed in reaction to the Syrian refugee crisis. In the years to come, there are also likely to be a growing number of climate refugees as people around the world migrate to new locales in search of resources, safety, and economic opportunity.

Moreover, both developing countries and some of the poorest communities in the world will disproportionately feel the negative impacts of the climate crisis. As one of the primary parties responsible for helping create the current state of the planet, the U.S. has a moral responsibility to lead efforts to mitigate the damage of the climate crisis and help communities around the world adapt. Allowing others to bear the consequences of the U.S.’ actions violates human security, but also progressive principles of justice and solidarity.

No weapon or amount of spending at the Pentagon or at Customs and Border Patrol will help the U.S. prevent or prepare for the consequences of the climate crisis. The



reactive wait-and-see approach to climate change has already cost the U.S. at least \$350 billion over the past decade.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, costs from hurricanes, wildfires, and other natural disasters that have been more frequent and extreme as a result of climate change have hit a record \$300 billion in 2017 alone.⁵⁶ Rather than wait to respond to the consequences of the climate crisis, the federal budget should instead invest in proactive, preventive, and bold measures today to secure the planet before it is too late.

Unfortunately, the Trump administration's 2020 budget request not only fails to take bold actions towards confronting the climate crisis, but also proposes cutting or eliminating essential climate programs. For example, Donald Trump's budget proposes a 61.9 percent cut to FEMA's Flood Hazard Mapping and Risk Analysis Program, which supports flood risk reduction and mitigation strategies. Trump also proposes cutting FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program by 66 percent, despite studies that show that for every \$1 invested in resilience measures, at least \$6 in future damages can be avoided. In the Department of Energy, Trump proposes eliminating the Weatherization Assistance program, which improves energy efficiency in low-income family homes and supports 8,500 jobs.⁵⁷ For the third time, the Trump administration is also attempting to eliminate the DOE's Advanced Research Projects Agency - Energy (ARPA-E) which identifies and invests in promising advanced energy initiatives like long-term energy storage for solar and wind power.⁵⁸ Even before the proposed cuts, the combined budget of all of these programs is less than one percent of the Pentagon's budget.

Taking long-overdue action to confront the climate crisis cannot be limited to moving or adapting overseas military bases in response to rising sea levels. Instead, the United States should invest in, for example:

- the Green Climate Fund, which helps developing countries respond to climate change, by paying the remaining \$2 billion the United States pledged to the fund in 2014;
- Green New Deal initiatives, like building green infrastructure to reform the U.S.' own economy to be based on renewable energy;
- closing many of the 800 U.S. military bases around the world that cost the U.S. taxpayer billions of dollars to maintain and operate each year, foment conflict abroad, and harm local environments;⁵⁹
- climate programs at agencies from the Department of Energy to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that the Trump administration has sought to cut;
- creating an interagency task force to prioritize and coordinate initiatives at the agency-level to develop a whole-of-government approach to the climate crisis.



REDUCING MASS INEQUALITY

Mass inequality not only represents a critical barrier to dignity and opportunity, but also a critical source of instability across the world. In the United States, the top one percent owns 40-times more wealth than the average American family.⁶⁰ The richest one percent of the global population owns half of the world's wealth.⁶¹ Subsequent resentment against lacking economic opportunity has only been aggravated by corruption and global oligarchy. As demonstrated by rising authoritarianism, this resentment has helped to fuel the rise of populist "strongmen" who blame economic grievances on immigrants and communities of color, claiming that only tough, often white, nationalist policies are the solution.

Consequently, the Chair of the Federal Reserve calls income inequality the biggest economic challenge of the next decade as it impedes economic progress and social mobility.⁶² The lack of attainable pathways to dignified income, economic opportunity, and political power can increase individuals' and communities' vulnerability to exploitation and recruitment into criminal enterprises and violent groups. Some of the countries experiencing the highest levels of violence are the most unequal and the most polarized, where the violence affects the poorest and most marginalized in a community.⁶³

Additionally, the economic challenges and stagnant social mobility exacerbated by rising income inequality create conditions that push people from rural to urban areas. Increased urbanization puts greater pressure on city economies that often already struggle to provide sustainable and fulfilling economic opportunities for all.

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This mass urbanization requires the United States to reimagine military threat engagement in highly population-dense environments. The U.S.' military-first approach to undermining the influence of violent groups that perpetrate terrorism, for example, relies on drone strikes and precision guided munitions that become far less precise when dropped into an urban area. To defeat the so-called "Islamic State," this strategy resulted in the wide-scale destruction of Raqqa, Syria and Mosul, Iraq, with the U.S.-led coalition likely responsible for the deaths of between 6,250 and 9,600 civilians since 2014.⁶⁵ The U.S. must recognize that its military tools are not appropriate in an increasingly urbanized security environment and instead prioritize nonmilitary solutions that undermine the appeal of violent non-state actors.

Furthermore, the United States' current approach to international development – which often privileges large-scale projects over hyper-localized solutions at the community level – can hamper efforts to address inequality. Rather than continue to primarily rely on multinational entities for development and peacebuilding implementation, the United States



should reorient its approach to development and peacebuilding to focus on empowering local actors in both the nonprofit and private sector. One way to do so would be to provide flexible funding to local community foundations. Community foundations receive government funding and take on the administrative and legal burden associated with such grants. These foundations then use those grants to fund local implementers, thereby empowering the local community and building local institutional capacity.⁶⁴

Finally, inequality between races, religions, genders, and sexual orientations continues to spur both structural and physical violence. From China's mass internment of Uighur Muslims and Burma's genocide of the Rohingya to the violent policing and mass incarceration of Black and brown communities in the United States, racial and religious bias serves to justify state violence.

At the same time, hate crimes are on the rise in the United States.⁶⁶ The links between mass shootings, misogyny, and white supremacy are undeniable. Keeping Americans and people around the world safe requires that the U.S. reject bigoted rhetoric and corresponding policies that embolden this troubling trend. Instead, policymakers and legislators must work to break down the systems of injustice that fuel discriminatory violence.

Financing the initiatives necessary to protect the dignity of people at home and abroad is fundamental to U.S. security. The U.S. should invest in progressive priorities that level the playing field, such as, but not limited to:

- human needs at home, like Medicare for all, \$15 minimum wage, and free or reduced public college tuition;
- sustainable, international and domestic development and peacebuilding initiatives that prioritize local actors through initiatives like community foundations;
- international organizations that work to end global hunger and poverty, and further education like UNICEF and the UN World Food Program;
- U.S.-based legal initiatives and blockchain technologies to combat corrupt practices like trade-based money laundering; and
- inter-governmental bodies, like the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), that strengthen and enforce international standards for combating of money laundering and the financing of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.



REPUDIATING MILITARISM

The challenges presented above — rising authoritarianism, climate change, and mass inequality — do not have military solutions. Yet, the largest recipient of federal discretionary funding by far remains the Pentagon. The U.S.' continued prioritization of hard security approaches largely only accrues benefits to the defense industry, while the safety of communities at home and abroad remain neglected, shortchanged, or harmed.

A critical first step in rejecting militarism is ending the failed military-first approach to countering violent groups that perpetrate terrorism. This approach has led the U.S. to spend nearly \$6 trillion on “combating terrorism” in 80 nations and to actively bomb at least 17 countries with little public oversight. It has also resulted in the rise of mass surveillance, militarized policing, and the restriction of civil liberties here at home. Despite these immense costs, violent non-state groups have only proliferated abroad.

From “precision” air campaigns with massive civilian casualties to arming partner forces that operate with impunity, the U.S.' counterproductive military first-approach has only succeeded in making the U.S. guilty of and complicit in war crimes, while undermining U.S. values in the process. Starving violent groups of both revenue and recruitment requires alleviating local drivers to conflict rooted in local disenfranchisement, lack of accountable governance, human rights abuses, and inability to access economic opportunity — not exacerbating these grievances by destroying communities.

In addition to its ineffectiveness, the U.S.' military-first approach to security also comes with unwelcome side-effects. The Pentagon's large weapons purchases and endless wars result in surplus equipment being sold to local police departments through the Pentagon's 1033 Excess Property program. In total, the program has distributed more than \$4.3 billion worth of equipment since the 1990s, including \$450 million worth of equipment in 2013.⁶⁷ Weapons of war do not belong in American neighborhoods — or anywhere else for that matter — and particularly threaten the security of people of color.

Additionally, the U.S. must address its role in fueling the global arms trade, as the largest exporter of arms in the world. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the United States was the largest exporter of arms from 2014-2018 (the last year for which data is available). During that period, 22 percent of U.S. exports went to Saudi Arabia and 6.7 percent of U.S. exports went to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — the top and third highest recipients of U.S. arms exports, respectively.⁶⁸

Many of these weapons have been used in potential war crimes in the Saudi-led coalition's military intervention in Yemen that began in March 2015. These weapons transfers — in the face of their likely use in civilian harm events — make the United States complicit in the coalition's apparent violations of the law of armed conflict.⁶⁹ In addition, continuing to arm one side of the conflict further provides political backing for the coalition's continuing prosecution of the war, no matter



the humanitarian cost. This policy not only undermines the United States' ability to act as a credible actor for peace in the conflict, but also signals that the United States values profits from weapons sales over the lives of millions of Yemeni civilians who are on the brink of famine.

The U.S. role in Yemen is not isolated. The U.S. also arms repressive regimes and nonstate actors around the world who regularly use U.S. military assistance and weapons in gross violations of human rights – whether in the Philippines, Egypt, Israel, Afghanistan or Burma. There are robust human rights protections in U.S. domestic law, namely the Foreign Assistance Act and the Arms Export Control Act, to prevent the provision of U.S. military equipment and assistance to foreign militaries and security forces that have a track record of human rights abuses. However, both the executive branch and Congress' failure to robustly enforce these provisions consistently has effectively allowed U.S. arms manufacturers to export weapons to some of the most repressive regimes in the world.

Furthermore, both the State Department and the Defense Department are required to implement each department's "Leahy Laws" (22 U.S. Code § 2378d and 10 U.S. Code § 362, respectively), which prevent the provision of U.S. military assistance and training to units of foreign security forces that have committed gross violations of human rights. Yet because the Leahy Law does not define "assistance" and lacking vetting resources, the executive branch interprets the vetting process to only be required for the provision of training to foreign security forces, instead of equipment and other security assistance.

To reject its role in fomenting militarism around the world, the United States must first enforce its own laws to protect human rights. It must also end its reliance on military tools to achieve political goals and invest in other nonmilitary tools of statecraft.

Military-first approaches to security challenges jeopardize people's security around the world, including in the United States. Rather than investing in militarism, the United States should invest in:

- diplomacy by doubling the State Department's budget;
- community policing initiatives that bring communities together rather than divide them;
- limiting the influence of defense contractors and other war profiteers by passing laws that close the revolving door, limit the influence of lobbyists, and cut the Pentagon's budget;
- fully enforcing human rights protections in U.S. law for the provision of U.S. security assistance and weapons sales;
- establishing a Department of Peacebuilding to target the root causes of domestic and international violence, and promote policies to create a sustainable, peaceful world; and
- foreign assistance to rebuild areas impacted by the militarization of U.S. foreign policy, like reconstruction funding for Raqqa and Mosul.

SECURITY SPENDING FOR TODAY & TOMORROW

Rather than continuing to expand the Pentagon's bloated budget, policymakers and legislators should instead take a holistic view of U.S. security spending to assess the trade-offs associated with continuing to pursue an expensive and ineffective military-first approach. The following illustrative examples demonstrate how legislators can make investments in domestic and international priorities by drawing down or eliminating redundant, wasteful, or counterproductive hard security spending in the federal budget.

Security Spending Trade-offs			
\$97.9 billion	Proposed OCO funding for "base requirements" in FY2020	OR	Revitalize the U.S.' crumbling education system by raising the salaries of more than half of America's 3.2 million teachers to a \$60,000 federal minimum ⁷⁵
\$45 billion	A year of the war in Afghanistan ⁷⁶	OR	Nearly double the State Department's budget to help rebuild America's gutted diplomacy program ⁷⁷
\$40 billion	23% of Department of Defense service contracting, out of a total of \$175 billion of DoD service contracting in FY2018 ⁷⁸	OR	Begin building an electrical "smart power grid" for the entire country, as proposed in the Green New Deal ⁷⁹
\$13 billion	Total development and production of the redundant Long-Range Standoff (LRSO) Weapon and its associated warhead in the Department of Energy ⁸⁰	OR	Reinvigorate U.S. investment in the United Nations by paying U.S. back dues to peacekeeping AND doubling contributions to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Program, the World Health Organization, and the UN Children's Fund ⁸¹
\$7- \$12 billion	Maintaining one third of the overseas bases and personnel in Europe and Asia ⁸²	OR	Triple funding for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) to tackle the opioid crisis and rising national suicide rates ⁸³
\$3 billion	Half of the State Department's annual investment in international security assistance, including foreign military financing and international military education	OR	Fully fund the Advanced Research Projects Agency - Energy (ARPA-E) at \$1 billion, the level recommended by the National Academy of Sciences ⁸⁴ AND pay the remaining \$2 billion the United States pledged to the Green Climate Fund in 2014 ⁸⁵
\$1 billion	About a year of troop deployment on the U.S. Southern Border ⁸⁶	OR	Nearly double U.S. investments in economic growth, food security, rural and social development, good governance, transparency, and human rights in Central America ⁸⁷
\$230 million	17 out of more than 1,058 days of military operations against IS in Iraq and Syria at the average cost of \$13.6 million per day ⁸⁸	OR	Renew all stabilization aid to Syria that, for example, clears rubble, fixes water systems, disarms unexploded mines, and facilitates reconstruction ⁸⁹

RECOMMENDATIONS

Dramatically reimagining U.S. security spending will require a multi-year process of recalibrating U.S. engagement with the world. Members of Congress focused on budget and appropriations negotiations can begin the process of realigning security spending with true security needs by working towards the following goals for 2021 and beyond.

Following the expiration of the current budget caps deal, cut \$2 – 3.5 trillion from the Pentagon's budget over the next ten years by cutting the annual budget by \$200 – 350 billion per year.

Before the recent deal to increase defense and nondefense spending caps, the current cap on defense spending, excluding OCO, set by the Budget Control Act was \$576 billion. Following the budget deal, Congress should oppose any increase and instead seek to cut Pentagon spending by \$200 billion to \$350 billion per year over the next 10 years. Such cuts would not harm readiness; instead it would require the Pentagon to prioritize missions, reform its budgeting and accounting practices, reduce contractor use, crackdown on waste, fraud, and abuse, and cancel redundant, unnecessary, or outdated weapons systems.



The Project on Government Oversight offers \$174.4 billion per year of saving options, cutting the Pentagon's budget by \$1.744 trillion over the next 10 years. The Center for International Policy's Sustainable Defense Task Force offers \$120 billion per year of saving options, cutting the Pentagon's budget by \$1.2 trillion over 10 years. The Moral Budget by the Poor People's Campaign identifies approximately \$350 billion in cuts per year that would save \$3.5 trillion over the next 10 years. A sampling of these common sense cuts include:

- saving \$2.6 billion by not creating an independent Space Force, which would further militarize space;
- maintaining the historical average for naval ship construction to save \$50 billion over 10 years;
- closing 60 percent of overseas military bases and corollary troop reductions (excluding combat troops) to save \$90 billion per year;
- converting the military health system into a universal health system, saving \$33.3 billion per year;
- cancelling ineffective or redundant programs like the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense System, the Long-Range Standoff Weapon, the Ford class carrier program, the B-21 bomber, and the F-22 to save almost \$10 billion;
- replacing future expensive and much-delayed F-35s with F-16s and F-18s to save \$2.4 billion per year. In total, eliminating the F-35 program would save \$253 billion;
- and ending endless wars in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and elsewhere, and bring our troops home, saving \$66 billion per year.

Eliminate the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) fund.



With the Trump administration requesting a massive increase in funding for OCO for FY2020 while simultaneously stating its intent to withdraw troops from Syria and Afghanistan, it is clear that the OCO account has evolved into a slush fund for the Pentagon to circumvent spending restraints with little oversight.⁹⁰ To end this budget gimmick, Congress should not appropriate any funds for OCO and require any war funding to be included in the Pentagon's base budget.

In the event that the United States is forced to wage a war, any additional war funding above the Pentagon's base budget should be financed through the implementation of a war tax. Not only is a war tax more fiscally responsible than continuing to add to the national deficit, but a tax hike will help Americans feel the impact of U.S. military engagement and likely deter dangerous and costly military misadventures abroad.⁹¹



Force the Pentagon to pass an audit and impose real consequences until it does.

Congress should not reward the Pentagon's audit failure with an increased budget. Rather, Congress must demand greater fiscal responsibility from the Pentagon and refuse to consider increasing Pentagon spending until the Pentagon finally passes an audit.

Double the State Department's Budget.

As a principal alternative to military force, diplomacy, international development, and peacebuilding are essential components of U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. security budget should reflect that. Congress must begin the process of rebuilding the State Department by doubling the agency's budget in order to rehire staff, as well as fully fund international organizations that prevent conflict and protect human rights. It can also use additional resources to begin the process of giving USAID more control over stabilization and other peacebuilding initiatives to demilitarize U.S. foreign assistance.

Congress, however, should be sure to specify that renewed State Department funds must be used for diplomacy and development programs, like expanding the Complex Crises Fund or Millennium Challenge Corporation, and not on security assistance and security cooperation programs for foreign security forces that perpetuate a military-first approach to stabilization and conflict resolution.

Reinstate a reporting requirement for climate change spending in FY2021 appropriations and invest in climate research, mitigation, and adaptation.

Congress should institute a permanent reporting requirement in FY2021 appropriations that requires the president to submit a comprehensive report of all federal agency funding for climate change programs, projects, and activities in a fiscal year — including projects with fiscal exposure to climate change, such as the costs associated with repairing military installations from weather damage. Without truly understanding what resources are being used to address climate change, Congress will be incapable of providing effective oversight and funding accordingly.

Legislators should also fully fund climate research, mitigation, and adaptation programs and resist the Trump administration's cuts. For example, members of Congress should oppose Donald Trump's proposed elimination of the Department of Energy's Advanced Research Projects Agency - Energy (ARPA-E) and Weatherization Assistance Program, as well as his drastic cuts to DOE's clean energy and Research and Development programs. In the Federal Emergency Management Agency budget, for example, legislators should resist cuts to the Flood Hazard Mapping and Risk Analysis Program and cuts to the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program, which not only help shield communities before disaster strikes, but also reduce the risk and cost associated with disasters in the long run.

To ensure a commitment to combating the climate crisis in the long term, members of Congress should also consider creating an interagency task force assigned with developing a whole-of-government approach to implementing the Green New Deal to mitigate the climate crisis in the next ten years.

Authorize a Commission on Budgeting for National Security and International Affairs

As proposed by the Task Force on a Unified Security Budget for the United States, Congress should authorize a commission to analyze the current security budgeting process and recommend changes that would "enable decision-making on security that more effectively considers the overall balance of security tools."⁹² The siloing of security within the Pentagon has benefited defense contractors, to the detriment of investments in initiatives to address human needs and help build true, human security. A unified security budgeting analysis is a helpful tool to force both the president and Congress to consider national security spending holistically rather than in militarized, often siloed, terms.



CONCLUSION

A militarized conception of national security has continually failed to reflect American values at home and abroad. Prioritizing use-of-force solutions to complex 21st century challenges has, by and large, served to harm people around the world, rather than addressing complex problems with tailored solutions. The Trump administration continues to adhere to this flawed approach, expanding military spending while eschewing investments in alternatives like development, peacebuilding, and diplomacy.

Current federal security spending jeopardizes national and global security by failing to invest in the solutions to today and tomorrow's major challenges. A military-first approach has not only exacerbated the challenges the United States faces but also weakened American society by undermining civil liberties and taking vital resources away from domestic priorities – a trend mirrored in countries around the world. This has resulted in continual investment in hypothetical, ill-advised, and improbable wars while ignoring tangible realities that affect all of humanity.

However, the American public is ready and willing to transform the U.S.' global engagement. A recent study found that Americans, regardless of political affiliation, prefer a less militarized and less interventionist foreign policy.⁹³ Policymakers should reject the Trump administration's militarization of security and instead listen to the American public.

A security budget that invests in alternatives to military force and prioritizes true security challenges like the climate crisis would better reflect the range of tools needed to protect human security today and tomorrow. By resisting a continued increase in Pentagon spending and fighting for non-military funding, policymakers and legislators can begin the vital process of reimagining U.S. security spending to meet the needs of the 21st century and beyond.



LEARN MORE

- **#PeopleOverPentagon Campaign:**
<https://peopleoverpentagon.org/>
- **The Task Force on a Unified Security Budget for the United States:**
<https://ips-dc.org/tag/unified-security-budget/>
- **The Sustainable Defense Task Force:**
<https://www.internationalpolicy.org/sustainable-defense-task-force>
- **Poor People's Campaign Moral Budget:**
<https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/budget/>

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