



UNIVERSITY of  
**SOUTH FLORIDA**

Global and National Security Institute

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### About the Author

Frank Hoffman, PhD, is a retired defense analyst and former senior Pentagon official. He retired in 2024 after 46 years in the Defense Department including active service in the Marine Corps and a decade at the National Defense University as a research fellow. He holds degrees from the Wharton Business School, and the U.S. Naval War College, and earned his Ph.D. in War Studies at King's College London.

# Matching Ends with Means

## Tomorrow's Defense Budget

---

by Frank Hoffman

In 2010, Admiral Mike Mullen, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, quipped that “the most significant threat to our national security is our debt.”<sup>1</sup> At the time, many thought he was out of line with this bold but prescient statement. Currently, most analysts take for granted that drastic action is needed to fix the deep hole that spending and deficit financing have dug in the U.S. treasury. The scale of debt limits the U.S. government from sustaining key functions such as income security and health care, as well as national security. Unfortunately, at the same time, rising competitors and revanchist regimes such as China and Russia are challenging national interests in all regions. This may seem to present a straightforward dilemma between prosperity or security, but that’s a false choice. If the security order falls apart and the Axis of Upheaval dominates Eurasia, the U.S. will have no prosperity.<sup>2</sup>

The next National Security Strategy needs to rebalance the desired goals of American ambitions with the finite means expected to be available.<sup>3</sup> Additional resources for security are warranted; however, even with additional budget resources, defense policymakers will find that significant risk remains, and careful prioritization and critical tradeoffs are warranted to satisfy U.S. security objectives.

Numerous security experts criticize past Department of Defense (DoD) defense strategies for inadequate funding and acceptance of growing shortfalls in capacity and capabilities.<sup>4</sup> Congress never supported the 3-5% real growth that the DoD reported as necessary to develop a larger, modernized force, build up stockpiles in case of protracted wars, and remodel the industrial base needed to sustain America’s competitive edge. On its current trajectory, within the next five years, the share of the nation’s economic capacity dedicated to defense will decline from 3.4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to under 3%.

Scholars find the U.S. is “strategically exposed, militarily overextended, or much more reliant on highly escalatory options that lack credibility.”<sup>5</sup> Part of the problem lies with the evident ambitions of China’s leaders and the relentless military expansion and modernization of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). Their military modernization effort has been described as “the biggest peacetime military buildup by any country, anywhere, since before World War II.”<sup>6</sup> To meet this challenge, Senator Roger Wicker, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has called for at least 5% of GDP to be dedicated to defense activities, raising the Pentagon’s budget from \$850 billion to \$1.4 trillion.<sup>7</sup> A bipartisan panel conducted an independent assessment of the U.S. defense strategy in 2024 and drew the same conclusion.<sup>8</sup> It warned that on the current spending trajectory; the U.S. was taking unwarranted risks and might even lose a conflict. Additionally, aerospace advocates have argued for 5-6% of GDP as the new ceiling.<sup>9</sup> If “peace through strength” has any stock among the members of Congress, then they should consider raising the Pentagon’s budget to at least 4% of GDP to close the gap between Washington’s commitments and its capabilities, if a full match is not feasible.<sup>10</sup>

Regardless of the defense spending solution, it has to be negotiated in the midst of a serious budget situation.

## The Present Problem

The U.S. national debt currently stands at \$36 trillion and is projected to grow further. The Congressional Budget Office’s (CBO) estimated shortfall for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 is 1.8 trillion.<sup>11</sup> Tax cuts enacted in the first Trump Administration expire in 2026. Congress is negotiating an extension to that legislation that will add an additional \$4.8 trillion to the national debt to be offset by \$2 trillion in reductions to government spending.<sup>12</sup> It remains to be seen how Congress will address the proposed tax cut extension and how much the Administration’s efficiency efforts will help reduce the annual deficit.

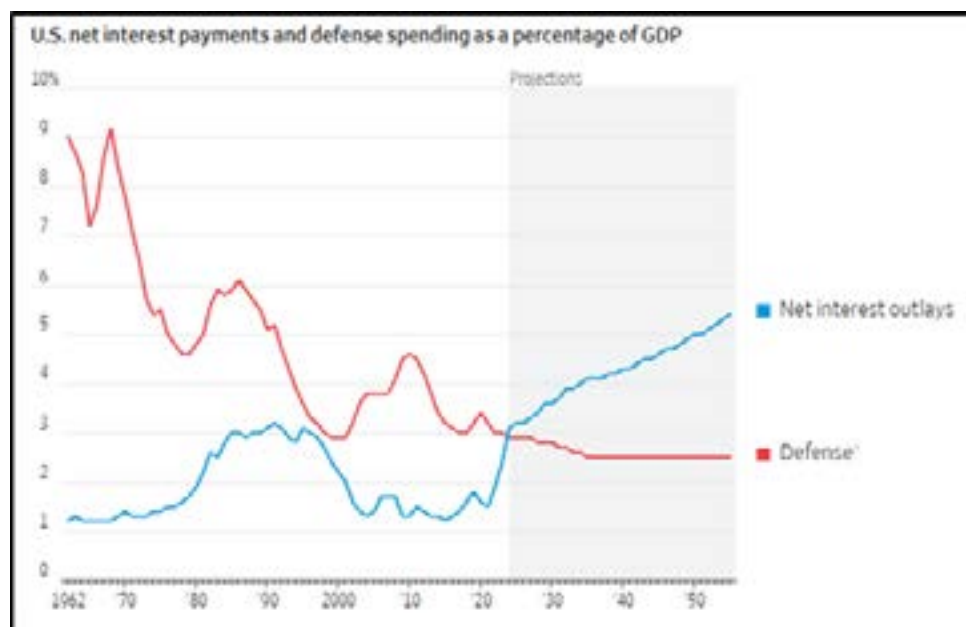


Figure 1. Trends in Defense Spending and Net Interest Payments

Interest payments on the debt are the fastest growing part of the Federal budget, nearly doubling from \$345 billion in FY 2020 to \$659 billion in 2023. Total interest payments reached \$881 billion last year and will continue growing as the national debt level rises. Experts calculate that interest costs will total \$12.9 trillion over the next decade.<sup>13</sup> The bulk of U.S. debt is held by domestic investors and taxpayers, nearly \$29 trillion, while \$8.5 trillion is held by foreign investors including China and Japan.<sup>14</sup> The efforts by the Trump Administration to rein in spending may alter these trends. But to be clear: paying for the interest on its mounting debt in FY24 has already exceeded the entire defense budget (see Figure 1). Historians think this crossover has serious implications for the fiscal health of major powers.<sup>15</sup>

## Defense Discretionary Spending (% of GDP)

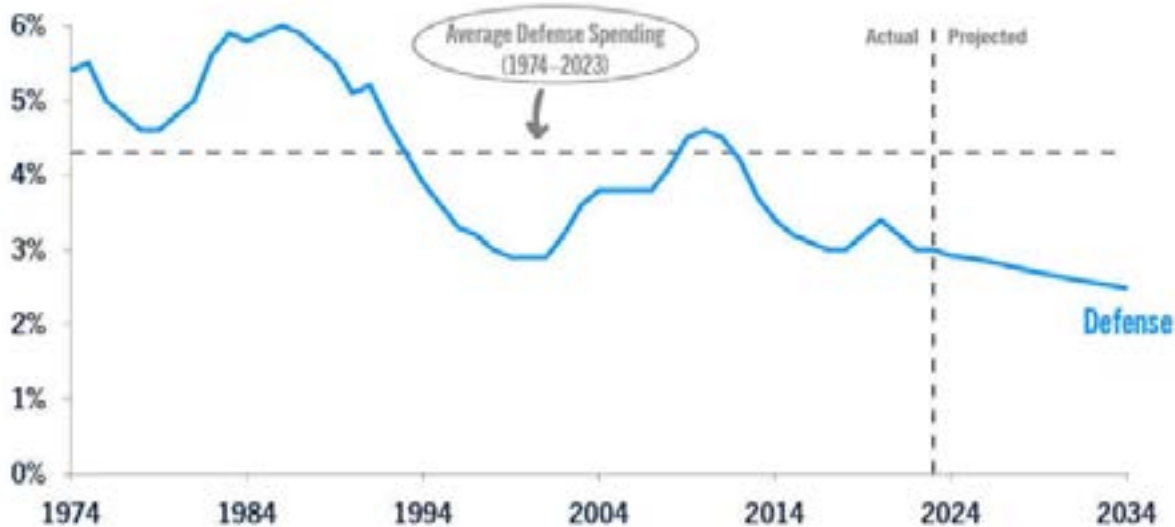


Figure 2. U.S. Defense Spending as a Percentage of GDP (Source: Pete Petersen Foundation, <https://www.pgpf.org/article/infographic-the-facts-about-us-defense-spending/>)

With such large deficits and the lack of a bipartisan consensus on U.S. foreign policy, Washington will find it challenging to play its historical role as a leader and guarantor of a stable global system. It must better balance U.S. policy aims with projected means, including the contributions of allies and partners. A disciplined and measured approach may help U.S. policy leaders navigate security, diplomatic, and economic objectives effectively.

Overall, given the security dynamics of the last few years, strategic risk is no longer moderate, even with a defense budget of \$850 billion.<sup>16</sup> Attracting and retaining a lethal and agile joint war-fighting force prepared to conduct the full range of assigned missions will require additional resources. The scenarios U.S. planners must now consider are not just protracted efforts like Afghanistan, but higher intensity and more lethal ones, such as a defense of Taiwan or the Baltics.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the sheer scale of contemporary warfare is changing in each domain, as it did at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>18</sup> At the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, military planners had to address the impact of machine guns, submarines, airplanes, and Marconi's wireless. Now commanders must incorporate new forms of AI-enabled autonomous systems, hypersonic missiles, and robots. The illusion of short and decisive battles against peer competitors like China should be shelved.<sup>19</sup> More importantly, the force must be modernized for this century and not the last and must have sufficient weapons and munitions stocks to address high-intensity combat over an extended time.

This leads to the proverbial challenge of figuring out “how much is enough” for the Defense Department’s budget.<sup>20</sup> During the Cold War, the U.S. spent a far higher share of its gross economic production for its security than it does today, even though it arguably faces a similar challenge today with perhaps even more lethal consequences.<sup>21</sup> The U.S. could do so again, but it would necessitate major changes to the nation’s tax laws and spending. Yet, even with a greater share of the treasury, U.S. policy leaders should realize that they can never fully eliminate risk, as the world is too unpredictable. It must prioritize the greatest security threats. Washington can deal with the most consequential threats to global stability, which come from Asia.

Defense modernization has yet to deliver the requisite capabilities needed for the new era of warfare. Sharply varying Congressional appropriations and continuing resolutions have impacted the efficiency of defense investment programs, and inflation has cut into the defense portfolio. The U.S. defense budget “failed to keep pace with inflation in any of the four years of his [Biden’s] term. The U.S. military has lost ground rather than gained it in those four years.”<sup>22</sup>

To fund sustained modernization in critical domains, strengthen fragile supply chains and restore production capacity, the defense budget needs both greater efficiency and some disciplined growth that accounts for inflation, depleted weapons stocks, and revitalization of an inadequate industrial base.<sup>23</sup>

A Solution

The Brookings scholar Michael O’Hanlon has calculated that the U.S. defense establishment can be strengthened with a \$60B a year increase.<sup>24</sup> This would be an improvement and help in critical initiatives to fund lethal enhancements for U.S. forward defense capabilities in the Pacific region and a modest missile defense program,<sup>25</sup> but it will not sufficiently aid the recovery of U.S. shipbuilding, munitions production, and aerospace investments. Further, it’s doubtful that a funding increase would materially impact the overdue modernization of the aging U.S. strategic deterrence systems.

The defense formulation budget below has two lines of effort, combining both budget reprogramming inside the Pentagon’s current plan and a tiered three-year increase to cover the Trump Administration’s “peace through strength” agenda. DoD should be tasked immediately to identify \$50B in efficiency savings from its FY25 budget and reapportion those for critical requirements. According to one defense expert, the Pentagon’s budget includes \$110B that does not contribute directly to warfighting capability.<sup>26</sup> That should be the first target to find this initial \$50B, which appears to be consistent with the Secretary of Defense’s direction.<sup>27</sup> However, while needed, internal efficiencies will not provide the real program growth needed to build up the capabilities and capacity required to address all DoD missions within reasonable levels of risk.

	2025	2026	2027	2028	Increase
Current Defense Plan (\$B’s FY25 \$)	864.9	849.9	860.3	862.5	-2
Proposed Ramp (\$B’s)	864.9	915	965	1,015	+250

Table 1 Proposed Budgetary Growth for DoD

Thus, the second component is a ramped increase in obligational authority, phased across three years in \$50B increments from FY26 through FY28. This will take the Defense budget over \$1.0T. (See Table 1.) This proposal addresses only the Trump Administration’s term, which admittedly is a short horizon for defense planning. It is hoped that further defense increases after FY28 beyond inflation would not be necessary and that the ongoing efforts to bend the curve on government growth would reduce the annual deficit and interest costs. This should enhance economic security for the U.S. and minimize any drag on the economy or impact on key government healthcare programs. Future defense needs at the end of this period should be reassessed based on a) the Pentagon’s efforts at generating internal efficiencies, b) the PLA’s posture in Asia, c) NATO’s progress at deterring Russia, and finally d) the health of the defense industrial base for shipbuilding and aerospace capabilities. The health of the U.S. economy would also be a key metric, as it is the underlying foundation for the country’s prosperity and its ability to provide for its security in the long term. A stronger economy, a more efficient government, and capable allies should contribute to an overall stronger posture for American security.

It is envisioned that this additional \$500B (\$250B in internal efficiencies and \$250B in additional budget authority) over four years would be centrally held by the Secretary of Defense to fund critical priorities to ensure that priority investments are made to ensure “peace through strength” is attained.<sup>28</sup> This may sound like a lot, but a country that was willing to consider \$4 trillion in tax cuts can afford the resources needed to advance its national security. This approach will give the DoD’s leadership the investment capital it needs to ensure its joint warfighters retain their competitive edge in multiple theaters and in expanding warfare domains including space, cyber and unconventional modes of conflict.<sup>29</sup> The wars of the future are here, and the U.S. is not yet as prepared as it should be.<sup>30</sup>

These resources could be applied to achieve overmatch in the key military competitions relevant to war in East Asia,<sup>31</sup> including an expansion of the expendable, autonomous drones that former Pentagon officials describe as Precision Mass.<sup>32</sup> Instead of very exquisite and high-cost platforms like long-range manned stealth bombers and nuclear aircraft carriers, more funding should be placed into unmanned systems that can be produced in larger quantities. The Biden Administration made a good head start with its nascent Replicator program which funded an array of drones and loitering munitions.<sup>33</sup> Some additional resources should be allocated to expand the U.S. capacity for undersea warfare as well; both manned and unmanned. These are harder to track and target and thus are more survivable.<sup>34</sup> Some advanced systems will be needed to provide long-range strike key nodes of any adversary defense. The U.S. needs to find the sweet spot between its high-end and costly legacy systems that provide overmatch, and the lower-cost systems that impose costs on future adversaries.<sup>35</sup>

Public support for increased budget allocation is not guaranteed.<sup>36</sup> While Americans routinely respond positively to polls about their support for a strong military, they're never asked about their willingness to pay additional taxes for it. While the current administration focuses on trimming back the growth in federal bureaucracies, pursuing entitlement reform to drive down debt, and establishing a sound foundation for the economy cannot be avoided.<sup>37</sup> Social Security and Medicare/Medicaid represent the largest expenditures (70 % of federal spending) and are climbing steadily as healthcare costs rise even faster. Yet only 12% of the federal budget goes to defense, and there is only so much to squeeze out of outdated legacy programs—especially considering that while the PRC has announced increased defense budgets of 7.2% for this year and next, U.S. budgets have been flat for several years after accounting for inflation.<sup>38</sup>

Domestic support would be more likely if the Pentagon was leaner and if costs were shared with a more productive contribution from allies.<sup>39</sup> If European powers invested more and strategically on their military capacity, the United States would not need to posture as large a force in Europe and underwrite the continent's security. Right now, NATO members are doing better at meeting their pledged defense spending, but most members' forces remain underwhelming in hard power terms.<sup>40</sup> U.S. allies and partners will need to make a larger contribution to stabilize their security landscape.<sup>41</sup> There seems to be a growing consensus for this, with discussions about raising NATO spending levels to at least the 3% of GDP level as an output of the upcoming 2025 Hague Summit. The suggested GDP level still represents a 50% increase for several European states and will not occur in the near future.

## Conclusion

The U.S. has flailed at formulating a grand strategy for the past two decades. The attacks of September 11, 2001, distracted American leaders about long-term trends and the need to adapt the instruments of power to sustain our economic and security interests over the next generation. The U.S. underestimated its supposed strengths in business and innovation, while underestimating China's ambitions and accomplishments. U.S. economic advantages were lost to the allure of globalization, as it consciously promoted China's economic growth in hopes of its transformation into a benign partner. Instead, this approach facilitated the development of a global competitor whose interests are inimical to the U.S. Furthermore, underinvestment in research and development led to an erosion of the U.S. lead in critical technologies such as biotech, 5<sup>th</sup> generation information systems, space, hypersonic missiles and quantum sciences. Government leaders claimed a pivot to the Asian challenge and sought to maintain the illusion of global hegemony and the American-led liberal order. Too many desired ends were being pursued with inadequate means.

Grand strategy is about coherently balancing ends and means. Washington could afford an ill-disciplined approach during the brief unipolar period when American might was unchallenged. Now, in an era of great power competition, we must think strategically and prioritize our interests and investments. The U.S. must seek to provide for its security with a sustainable defense budget. Defense planners should build on enduring strengths and enhancing-deterrence capacity. The administration has embarked on a dramatic reshaping of U.S. foreign and domestic policy and should work to close the dangerous gap between goals and resources. Washington appears to understand the scope and urgency of the problem, but finding efficiencies in discretionary spending will not be sufficient. Recapitalizing the arsenal of democracy will not be cheap but it's a far better investment than paying for wars.

Measured and disciplined investments should be made to ensure that the Nation's security is not put at further risk. As one Senator recently put it, "You cannot defeat tomorrow's enemies with yesterday's budgets."<sup>42</sup> Nor can the U.S. win with yesterday's weapons.

## (Endnotes)

- <sup>1</sup> Quoted in Kate Brannen, “Mullen focuses on debt as threat,” Politico, December 2012, <https://www.politico.com/story/2012/12/mike-mullen-focuses-on-debt-as-security-threat-084648>.
- <sup>2</sup> Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Richard Fontaine, “The Axis of Upheaval: How America’s Adversaries Are Uniting to Overturn the Global Order,” Foreign Affairs (May/June 2024).
- <sup>3</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *On Grand Strategy* (New York: Penguin, 2018), 21.
- <sup>4</sup> Final Report, Commission on the National Defense Strategy, Washington, DC, 2024; Senator Roger Wicker, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Peace Through Strength: A Generational Investment in the U.S. Military, Washington, DC, 2024; Robert D. Blackwill and Richard Fontaine, *Lost Decade: The U.S. Pivot to Asia and the Rise of Chinese Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024).
- <sup>5</sup> Hal Brands and Evan Braden Montgomery, “One War in Not Enough,” Texas National Security Review 3, no. 2 (Spring 2020): 81.
- <sup>6</sup> Hal Brands, *The Eurasian Century: Hot Wars, Cold Wars, and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Norton, 2025), 183.
- <sup>7</sup> See Senator Roger Wicker, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Peace Through Strength: A Generational Investment in the U.S. Military, Washington, DC, 2024, 6–7.
- <sup>8</sup> Final Report, page xii, Commission on the National Defense Strategy, Washington, DC, 2024.
- <sup>9</sup> Richard B. Andres, General T. Michael Moseley, USAF (Ret.), and Major General Larry Stutzriem, USAF (Ret.), “A Call for a New NSC-68 and Goldwater Nichols Reform,” Policy Paper, Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies Arlington, VA, January 21, 2025.
- <sup>10</sup> Hal Brands, “The Renegade Order: How Trump Wields American Power,” Foreign Affairs (March/April, 2025): 31, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/rene-gade-order-trump-hal-brands>.
- <sup>11</sup> Congressional Budget Office, *Budget and Economic Outlook, 2025-2035*, Washington, DC, January 2025, 1.
- <sup>12</sup> Margot Sanger-Katz and Alicia Parlapiano, “The House Wants to Pass Trump’s Agenda in One Big Bill. Here’s What’s in It,” New York Times, February 21, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/02/21/upshot/house-gop-budget-blueprint.html>. For additional specifics see the text of the House resolution, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-concurrent-resolution/14/text>.
- <sup>13</sup> Peter G. Petersen Foundation, “What is the National Debt Costing Us?” December 2024, at <https://www.pgpf.org/article/what-is-the-national-debt-costing-us/>.
- <sup>14</sup> See the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank data, “Federal Debt Held by Foreign and International Investors,” as of March 2025, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/FDHBFIN>.
- <sup>15</sup> Niall Ferguson, “Debt Has Always Been the Ruin of Great Powers Is the U.S. Next?” Wall Street Journal Times, February 22-23, 2025, C1-C2. See also U.S. House Committee on the Budget, “Interest Costs Surpass National Defense and Medicare Spending,” June 2024, [https://budget.house.gov/press-release/interest-costs-surpass-national-defense-and-medicare-spending#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Congressional%20Budget%20Office%20%28CBO%29%2C%20interest,in%202034%E2%80%94%20the%20highest%20level%20in%20American%20history;Jacob%20Bogage,%20National%20debt%20will%20hit%20\\$50.7%20trillion%20by%202034,%20federal%20debt%20agency%20projects,Washington%20Post,June%2019,%202024.The%20chart%20is%20from%20Ferguson,%20Wall%20Street%20Journal,C2.](https://budget.house.gov/press-release/interest-costs-surpass-national-defense-and-medicare-spending#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Congressional%20Budget%20Office%20%28CBO%29%2C%20interest,in%202034%E2%80%94%20the%20highest%20level%20in%20American%20history;Jacob%20Bogage,%20National%20debt%20will%20hit%20$50.7%20trillion%20by%202034,%20federal%20debt%20agency%20projects,Washington%20Post,June%2019,%202024.The%20chart%20is%20from%20Ferguson,%20Wall%20Street%20Journal,C2.)
- <sup>16</sup> Hal Brands, “Even With \$1 Trillion a Year the U.S. Military Is Falling Behind,” Bloomberg Opinion, September 16, 2024.
- <sup>17</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr. “Protracted Great-Power War: A Preliminary Assessment,” Center for a New American Security, Washington, DC, February 2, 2020; Andrew Metrick, *Rolling the Iron Dice: The Increasing Chance of Conflict Protraction*, Center for a New American Security, November, 2023; John Nagl and George Topic, “On (Protracted) War: The Challenge of Sustained Large-Scale Combat Operations,” Modern Warfare Institute, October 9, 2024, at <https://mwi.westpoint.edu/on-protracted-war-the-challenge-of-sus>
- <sup>18</sup> For a look at ongoing dynamics and their implications, see Lieutenant General Clint Hinote, U.S. Air Force (ret.) and Major General Mick Ryan, Australian Army (ret.), “The Character of Future War to 2030,” Special Capabilities Study Project, Arlington, VA, 2024.
- <sup>19</sup> Evan Montgomery and Julien Ouelette, “American Defense Planning in the Shadow of Protracted War,” War on the Rocks, November, 2023, <https://warontherocks.com/2024/11/american-defense-planning-in-the-shadow-of-protracted-war/>.
- <sup>20</sup> Alain Enthoven and K. V. Smith, *How Much Is Enough? Shaping the Defense Program, 1961–1969* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).
- <sup>21</sup> Todd Harrison, “How Much is Too Much,” in Mackenzie Eaglen, ed., *Affording Defense: Investing in American Strength to Confront a More Dangerous World* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2025), at <https://www.aei.org/articles/affording-defense-how-much-is-too-much/>.
- <sup>22</sup> For a hard-hitting assessment see Kori Schake, “Why Biden’s Foreign Policy Fell Short,” Foreign Policy, January 2025.
- <sup>23</sup> For the argument on the need for budget growth, see Mackenzie Eaglen, “DOGE for Defense: How to Ensure Success in Pentagon Reform,” American Enterprise Institute, January 2025, 3-4.
- <sup>24</sup> Michael E. O’Hanlon, “Achieving ‘Peace Through Strength,’ in the 2020s,” Brookings Institution, February 21, 2025, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/achieving-peace-through-strength-in-the-2020s/>.
- <sup>25</sup> Donald J. Trump, “The Iron Dome for America,” Executive Order, Washington, DC, The White House, January 27, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/the-iron-dome-for-america/>; and for comments about affordability and strategic stability see Stephen J. Cimbala and Lawrence J. Korb, “Trump’s Iron Dome for America is Ambitious,” Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, February 28, 2025
- <sup>26</sup> For a breakdown on the nearly \$110B see Elaine McCusker, “Defense Budget Transparency and the Cost of Military Capability,” American Enterprise Institute, November 2022, at <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Defense-Budget-Transparency-and-the-Cost-of-Military-Capability.pdf?x85095>.



- <sup>27</sup> Eric Schmitt and Helene Cooper, “Hegseth’s Plans to Reshape the Military Start With Cuts,” New York Times, March 4, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/04/us/politics/hegseth-military-cuts.html>.
- <sup>28</sup> To pay for this increase, the extension of tax cuts for corporations and wealthy Americans would be deferred. Instead of further reducing corporate taxes below the current 21% level, future business taxes would be pegged at 24% to cover the necessary Pentagon increase.
- <sup>29</sup> On irregular and unconventional conflict see Liam Collins and Jacob Shapiro, “Great Power Competition Will Drive Irregular Conflicts,” War on the Rocks, April 8, 2024, <https://warontherocks.com/2024/04/great-power-competition-will-drive-irregular-conflicts/>; David Maxwell, “A Modern National Security Decision Directive for Irregular Warfare: Guidance from President Reagan’s NSDD 32,” Small Wars Journal, November 26, 2024, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/2024/11/26/a-modern-national-security-decision-directive/>; Daniel Ross, “Special Forces Mission & Mindset: Reclaiming Unconventional Warfare in the Renewed Age of Irregular Conflict,” Small Wars Journal, January 23, 2025, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/2025/01/23/special-forces-mission-mindset-reclaiming-unconventional-warfare-in-the-renewed-age-of-irregular-conflict/>.
- <sup>30</sup> Mark A. Milley and Eric Schmidt, “America Isn’t Ready for the Wars of the Future: And They’re Already Here,” Foreign Affairs (September/October 2024), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/ai-america-ready-wars-future-ukraine-israel-mark-milley-eric-schmidt>.
- <sup>31</sup> Michael J. Mazarr, “Defending Without Dominance: Accelerating the Transition to a New U.S. Defense Strategy,” Strategic Perspective, RAND, January 2023, 31–35; On overmatch, see Nadia Schadlow, “How America Can Regain Its Edge in Great-Power Competition: A Second Trump Term Would Require a New Strategy,” Foreign Affairs.com, November 9, 2024, at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/how-america-can-regain-its-edge-great-power-competition-trump>.
- <sup>32</sup> Michael Horowitz, “Battles of Precise Mass: Technology Is Remaking War—and America Must Adapt,” Foreign Affairs (November/December 2024): 34–40.
- <sup>33</sup> On the Replicator program, see the fact sheet from the Defense Innovation Unit, “Replicator,” undated, at <https://www.diu.mil/replicator>.
- <sup>34</sup> Bryan Clark and Timothy A. Walton, “Fighting into the Bastions: Getting Noisier to Sustain the US Undersea Advantage,” Hudson Institute, June 2023.
- <sup>35</sup> For details see Stacey Pettyjohn, et al, Build a High-Low Mix to Enhance America’s Warfighting Edge and Deter China, Center for a New American Security, January 20, 2025.
- <sup>36</sup> Kori Schake at the American Enterprise Institute, thinks otherwise, noting a poll that showed that 70% of respondents supported increases to defense spending. See Kori Schake, “The Case for Conservative Internationalism,” Foreign Affairs (January/February 2024).
- <sup>37</sup> James A. Baker III and John W. Diamond, “DOGE Won’t Be Enough to Get the Federal Debt Under Control,” Wall Street Journal, February 25, 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/opinion/doge-wont-be-enough-to-get-debt-under-control-nondefense-discretionary-spending-entitlements-social-security-medicare-45016e0f?msocid=1516da18cc-9e67321d93d2ccc89e61a1>.
- <sup>38</sup> Alexandra Sharp, “China Orders Major Boost to Defense Spending,” Foreign Policy, March 5, 2025.
- <sup>39</sup> King Mallory, “What Do Allies Really Contribute to the Costs of Global Security,” Commentary blog, RAND, January 9, 2025, at <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2025/01/what-do-us-allies-really-contribute-to-the-costs-of.html>.
- <sup>40</sup> See Walter Landgraf, Douglas Lute and Jordan Becker, “In Conversation with Amb. Doug Lute and Col. Jordan Becker: The NATO Burden-sharing Debate,” Conversations, Foreign Policy Research Institute, October 1, 2024.
- <sup>41</sup> For a pessimistic assessment see Hugo Meijer and Stephen G Brooks, “Illusions of Autonomy: Why Europe Cannot Provide for Its Security If the United States Pulls Back,” International Security 45, no. 4 (2021): 7–43; for more details on progress and gaps in European defense, see James Hackett and Ben Schreer, eds., “Building Defense Capacity in Europe: An Assessment,” London, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Strategic Dossier, November 2024.
- <sup>42</sup> Mitch McConnell, “You Cannot Defeat Tomorrow’s Enemies with Yesterday’s Budgets,” Washington Post, March 4, 2025, A19.