

Excerpts from Four Publications

Excerpt 1: From “Strong and Sustainable: How to Reduce Military Spending While Keeping Our Nation Safe,” Introduction and Summary

By Lawrence J. Korb and Laura Conley - Center for American Progress, September 2010

Unlike most other federal agencies, the base or the regular defense budget is projected to grow by about 5 percent in real terms over that period [2011–2015]...*

The defense budget can and should be substantially reduced without harming national security for three reasons: First, we can afford to make cuts... the portion of the world’s military expenditures the United States consumes compared to our potential adversaries has grown from 60 percent to 250 percent. This means that even if the United States were to cut its spending in half it would still be spending more than its current and potential adversaries...

Second, the global security environment has changed, which allows us to change our spending priorities. The need for permanently deployed U.S. forces in Europe to act as a direct deterrent has steadily declined in the two decades since the end of the Cold War...

And third, significant technological advances make our fighting forces far more efficient than even in the near past. The extension of precision-guided munitions and the introduction of night-fighting and all-weather capabilities to the entire air combat force have resulted in a more flexible, effective force...

* *Note:* Although these projections were accurate at the time this article was written, the defense budget actually declined approximately 15% between 2011 and 2015. This is due to the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan and the budget sequestration of 2011, according to PolitiFact (Jacobson & Sherman, 2015).

Source: Korb, L. J., & Conley, L. (2010). Strong and sustainable: How to reduce military spending while keeping our nation safe. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2010/09/pdf/defensecuts_execsumm.pdf

Questions

- What changes have occurred concerning global security that will allow the United States to reduce its military spending while remaining secure?
- Which of the reasons for reducing the national defense budget is the strongest? Why?

Excerpt 2: From “Why We Must Reduce Military Spending”

By Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) and Rep. Ron Paul (R-Tex.) The Huffington Post, July 6, 2010

...For decades, the subject of military expenditures has been glaringly absent from public debate. Yet the Pentagon budget for 2010 is \$693 billion—more than all other discretionary spending programs combined. Even subtracting the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, military spending still amounts to over 42% of total spending.*

It is irrefutably clear to us that if we do not make substantial cuts in the projected levels of Pentagon spending, we will do substantial damage to our economy and dramatically reduce our quality of life...

Immediately after World War II, with much of the world devastated and the Soviet Union becoming increasingly aggressive, America took on the responsibility of protecting virtually every country that asked for it. Sixty-five years later, we continue to play that role long after there is any justification for it and currently American military spending makes up approximately 42% of all such expenditures worldwide. The nations of Western Europe now collectively have greater resources at their command than we do, yet they continue to depend overwhelmingly on American taxpayers to provide for their defense...

* *Note:* As of 2015, this figure had declined to 38% of world spending according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies World Military Balance.

Source: Frank, B., & Paul, R. (2010, July 6). Why we must reduce military spending. Huffington Post. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rep-barney-frank/why-we-must-reduce-milita_b_636051.html

Questions

- Measured as a percentage of military spending worldwide, how big was the U.S. military budget in 2010, and how big was it in 2015?
- What is notable about the author's relationship, and what does that imply about this issue? What more might you want to know about the authors to understand their point of view?
- Why might we "do substantial damage to our economy" if we do not reduce the projected levels of Pentagon spending?

Excerpt 3: From “Defense Spending Would Be Great Stimulus”

By Martin Feldstein

Wall Street Journal, December 24, 2008

... A 10% increase in defense outlays for procurement and for research would contribute about \$20 billion a year to the overall stimulus budget. A 5% rise in spending on operations and maintenance would add an additional \$10 billion. That spending could create about 300,000 additional jobs. And raising the military’s annual recruitment goal by 15% would provide jobs for an additional 30,000 young men and women in the first year.

... A substantial short-term rise in spending on defense and intelligence would both stimulate our economy and strengthen our nation’s security.

[Martin] Feldstein, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers under President Reagan, is a professor at Harvard and a member of The Wall Street Journal’s board of contributors.

Source: Feldstein, M. (2008, December 24). Defense spending would be great stimulus. *Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123008280526532053.html>

Questions

- How much money does Feldstein project it would cost to create 300,000 additional jobs?
- What would be the benefit of increasing the military's annual recruitment goal by 15%?
- What might the downside be to increasing military spending?

Excerpt 4: From “UAB Study Confirms Military Spending Helps States Survive Poor Economy”
University of Alabama at Birmingham, June 17, 2010

The researchers found, for example, that an increase in a state’s dependence on military spending, from 5 to 10 percent of its total GSP, increased employment about 1 percent—despite nationwide declines in manufacturing—and a \$14,000 per household increase in median family income...Poverty rates fell about 2 percent.

Source: University of Alabama-Birmingham. (2010, June 17). UAB study confirms military spending helps states survive poor economy. Retrieved from <https://www.uab.edu/newsarchive/78097-uab-study-confirms-military-spending-helps-states-survive-poor-economy>

Questions

- How do increases in military spending related to gross state product (GSP) affect a state's employment rate?
- Why might military spending be related to employment, median family income, and poverty rates?