

# PRIMER ON FOREIGN POLICY

## *FOR U.S. CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES*

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Voters are often told that candidates for the U.S. Congress lack any foreign policy platform because they don't know enough about the topic and don't plan to focus on it. The following is meant to quickly remedy that situation.

### WRITTEN BY

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**RootsAction**»  
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## FOR U.S. CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES

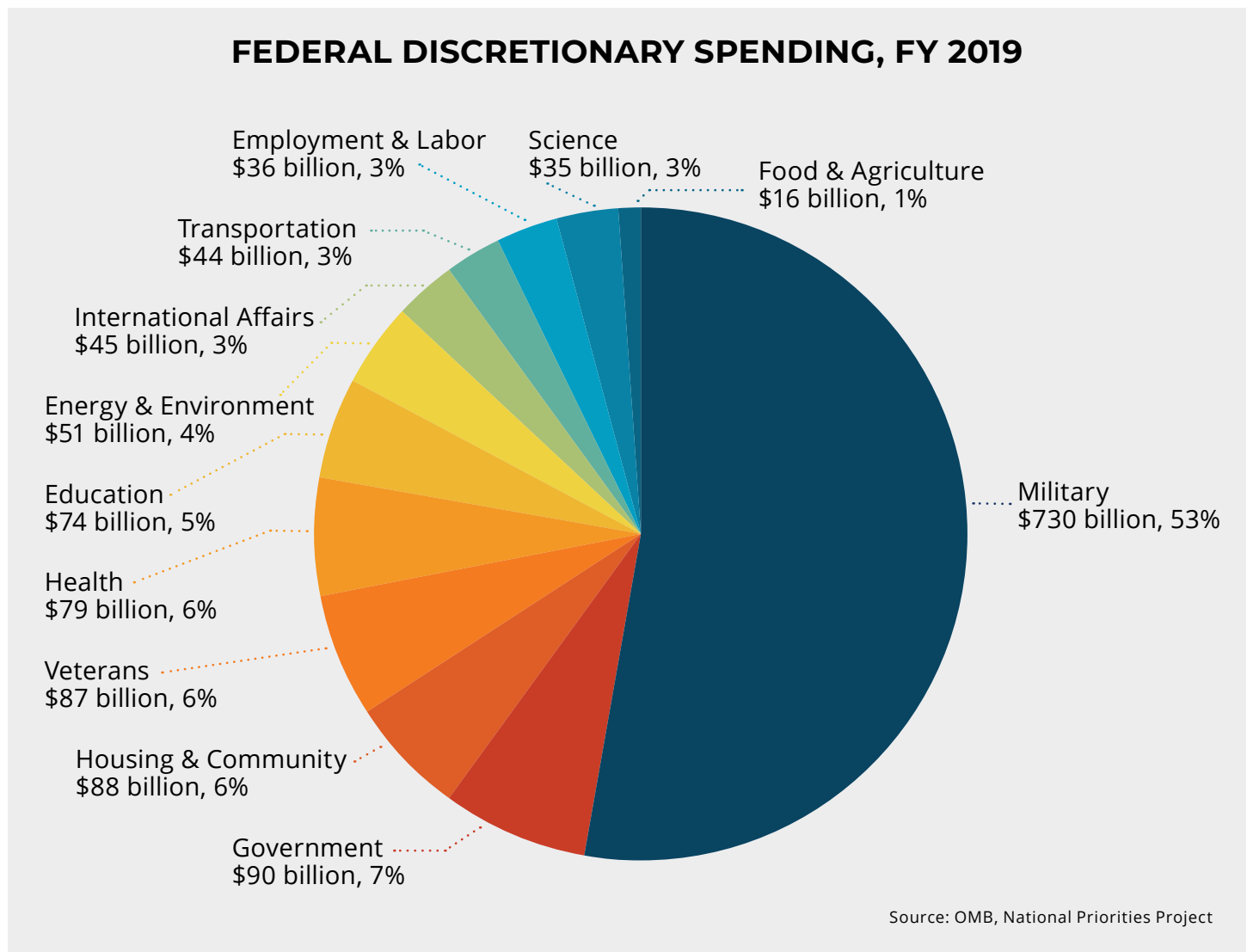
Voters are often told that candidates for the U.S. Congress [lack](#) any foreign policy platform because they don’t know enough about the topic and don’t plan to focus on it. The following is meant to quickly remedy that situation. Below is information on:

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# The Federal Budget

Setting aside mandatory spending (including Social Security, Medicare, and other spending that Congress does not address annually) as well as payments on debts, and looking only at discretionary spending (the money Congress spends each year at its discretion), [over half](#) in recent years [has gone to](#) military spending.

Military spending (discretionary and otherwise) [includes](#) a budget of three-quarters of a trillion dollars for the Pentagon, plus hundreds of billions more for nuclear weapons in the Energy Department, military activities of other departments including Homeland Security, the budgets of 17 secretive agencies, debt for past wars, and the Veterans Affairs budget.





U.S. military spending dwarfs the cost of most infrastructure and social needs spending legislation, the cost of any other item (or dozen items) of discretionary spending, and the military spending of any other nation. In 2020, U.S. military spending [was more than](#) the military spending of the next 11 biggest spenders combined, nine of which nations were U.S. weapons customers pressed by the U.S. government to increase their military spending. The next 14 biggest spenders below the top 12 were the only others to spend over 1% of U.S. military spending, and of those 14, 11 were U.S. weapons customers.

#### **PERCENTAGE OF U.S. MILITARY SPENDING SPENT ON THE MILITARIES OF CERTAIN NATIONS:**

China	32.4%
Russia	7.9%
Iran	2.0%

In 2020 military spending [per capita](#), the U.S. government led all others, and 21 of the next 22 were U.S. weapons customers.

# The Militarization of Other Nations

The United States is responsible for [almost 80%](#) of foreign military weapons sales.

ARMS EXPORTS BY COUNTRY		
Ten largest arms exporters for the period 2007 to 2017		
Country	Share of Total	Average Annual Exports 2007-17 (USD)
United States	79.5%	<div></div> \$143.2B
Russia	5.4%	<div></div> \$9.7B
France	2.3%	<div></div> \$4.1B
United Kingdom	2%	<div></div> \$3.6B
Germany	2%	<div></div> \$3.6B
China	1.6%	<div></div> \$2.9B
Italy	1.1%	<div></div> \$1.9B
Israel	0.9%	<div></div> \$1.7B
Sweden	0.7%	<div></div> \$1.3B
Spain	0.7%	<div></div> \$1.3B

Source: World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfer (WMEAT) 2019 from the U.S. Department of State, CNBC calculations. Arms transfer values in constant U.S. dollars. Values include only trade among countries covered by WMEAT and unspecified or multinational entities.

Using a U.S.-funded listing (by [Freedom House](#)) of the 50 most oppressive governments, one [finds](#) that the U.S. government approves U.S. weapons shipments to 82% of them, provides military training to 88% of them, funds the militaries of 66% of them, and assists in at least one of these three ways 96% of them.

Few [war-torn regions](#) manufacture significant weapons. Few wars fail to have U.S.-made weapons on both sides. Examples of wars with U.S.-made weapons on both sides are: [Syria](#), [Iraq](#), [Libya](#), the [Iran-Iraq war](#), the [Mexican drug war](#), [World War II](#).

## Foreign Aid

It is sometimes imagined that foreign aid makes up 15% or 20% of the federal budget. In reality it is far less than 1 percent. It is routinely claimed that the U.S. government gives the most aid to the world of any government on Earth, though less than Europe as a single whole. If this were true, it [would not be](#) anywhere close to true as [a percentage of gross national income](#) or per capita. In fact, as a percentage of GNI, the U.S. [trails behind](#) most wealthy nations. The reason it is not true that the U.S. government provides the most aid is that 30% to 40% of what it calls aid is [military spending](#), that is to say, primarily U.S. tax dollars being [funneled](#) through [foreign governments](#) and into U.S. weapons companies.

We've mentioned foreign aid as a percentage of a national economy, whereas above we did not mention military spending as a percentage of an economy. The reason for this is that more aid is very clearly needed and ought to be provided to the extent possible, whereas more military spending is not clearly needed and not clearly needed for each country in proportion to its wealth.

## U.S. Bases

The U.S. military maintains [at least 80%](#) of the military bases in the world that are on foreign soil. The United States has nearly three times as many bases abroad (750) as U.S. embassies, consulates, and missions. While there are approximately half as many installations as at the Cold War's end, U.S. bases have spread geographically — to twice as many countries and colonies (from 40 to 80), with large concentrations of facilities in the Middle East, East Asia, parts of Europe, and Africa. U.S. bases abroad cost taxpayers an estimated \$55 billion annually. Bases abroad have helped the United States launch wars and other combat operations in at least 25 countries between 2001 and 2021. Bases, like military spending, have an established [record](#) of making wars more, not less, likely. U.S. installations are found in at least 38 non-democratic countries and colonies.

**\$55 Billion**

U.S. bases abroad cost taxpayers an estimated \$55 billion annually.

**80%**

The U.S. military maintains at least 80% of the military bases in the world that are on foreign soil.

# The Rule of Law

Since 1907, all parties to the [Hague Convention of 1907](#) have been obliged to “use their best efforts to ensure the pacific settlement of international differences,” to appeal to other nations to mediate, to accept offers of mediation from other nations, to create if needed “an International Commission of Inquiry, to facilitate a solution of these disputes by elucidating the facts by means of an impartial and conscientious investigation” and to appeal if needed to the permanent court at the Hague for arbitration.

Since 1928, all parties to the [Kellogg-Briand Pact](#) have been legally required to “condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it, as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another,” and to “agree that the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them, shall never be sought except by pacific means.”

Since 1945, all parties to the [UN Charter](#) have been compelled to “refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state,” albeit with loopholes added for UN-authorized wars and defensive wars, loopholes that do not apply to any recent wars, but loopholes the existence of which create in many minds the vague idea that wars are legal.

Since 1949, all parties to [NATO](#), have agreed to a restatement of the ban on threatening or using force found in the UN Charter, even while agreeing to prepare for wars and to join in the defensive wars of other members of NATO.

Since 1970, the [Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons](#) has required its parties to “pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”

Since 2017, where it has jurisdiction, the [International Criminal Court](#) (ICC) has had the ability to prosecute the crime of aggression.

The U.S. government has not only refused to join the ICC but sought to punish other nations for doing so. The U.S. government is the top user of the veto at the UN Security Council, a leading holdout on human rights and disarmament treaties, the only nation not to have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and one of four not to have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The U.S. government is a lonely hold out, with limited and often rather disreputable company, on the

- International Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights optional protocols
- Convention Against Torture optional protocol
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
- International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities
- International Convention Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing, and Training of Mercenaries
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court
- Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity
- Principles of International Cooperation in the Detection, Arrest, Extradition, and Punishment of Persons Guilty of War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity
- Convention on Cluster Munitions
- Land Mines Convention
- Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

War or threat of war, or economic sanctions that inflict collective punishment, violate the UN Charter, the Geneva Conventions, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and in some cases the Genocide Convention.

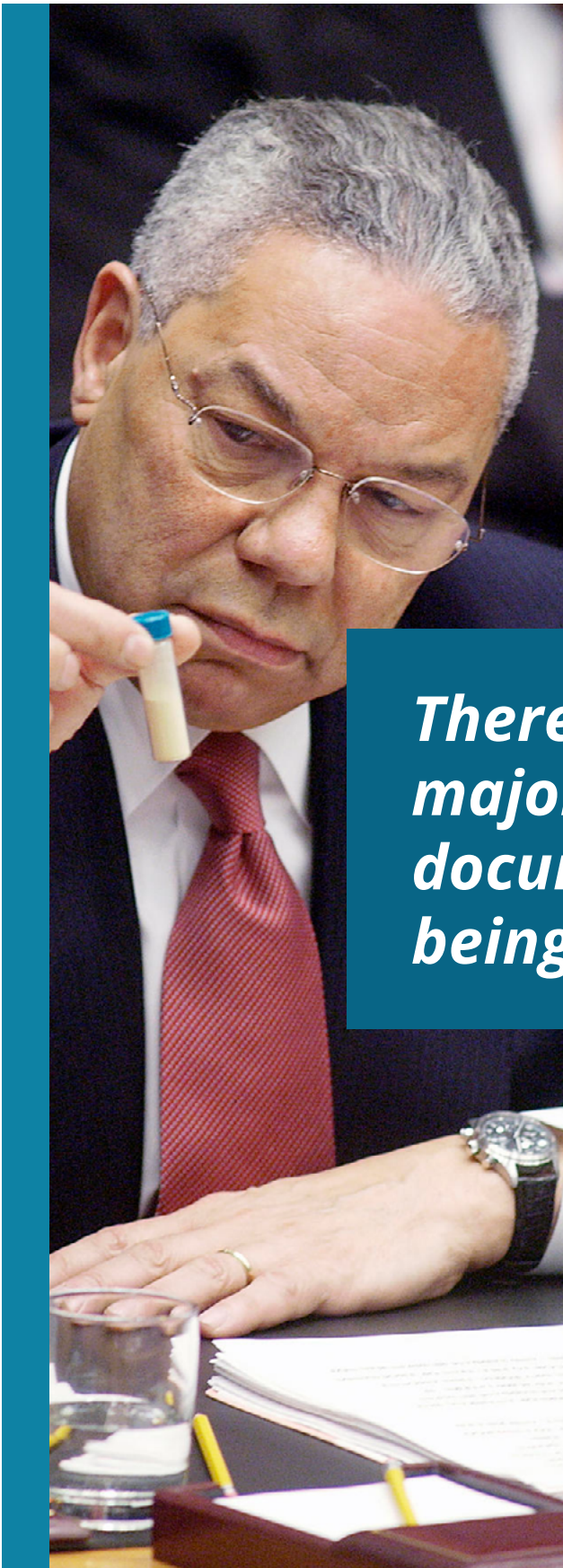
# War Powers

The U.S. Constitution makes treaties the supreme law of the land, including treaties that forbid war. But as long as war was legal, or as long as it is effectively treated as legal, the Constitution also very clearly gives Congress the power to begin and end wars. The War Powers Resolution of 1973 arguably has many flaws. [Bills](#) have been introduced repeatedly in Congress that would weaken and strengthen it in various ways. But the chief failure is that of not using it. On various occasions, a single Congress Member has been able to compel a debate and vote on whether to end a war, but only in the case of a single war (the U.S.-Saudi war on Yemen) has such a vote succeeded in both houses, and in that case, a veto by then-President Donald Trump had been accurately predicted.



# Wars

Since WWII, the U.S. government [has](#) overthrown at least 36 governments, interfered in at least 85 foreign elections, attempted to assassinate over 50 foreign leaders, and dropped bombs on people in over 30 countries. Its wars have tended to be very one-sided, with U.S. casualties making up a tiny fraction, and the leading cause of U.S. death in 21st-century wars being suicide.



There has never been a major U.S. war without [documentation](#) of Congress being [lied to](#) by the White House and/ or the Department of War / Defense (the name was changed in 1947). Congress has been falsely told that Mexicans invaded the United States, that Iraqis were taking infants out of incubators in Kuwait, that Spain blew up a ship, that U.S. ships sunk by Germany were not taking part in wars, that Canada would welcome U.S. troops, that Vietnam had attacked U.S. ships, that Germany had drafted plans to divide up the Americas and rid the world of religion,

***There has never been a major U.S. war without documentation of Congress being lied to***

that Iraq was working with Al Qaeda and stockpiling vast quantities of weapons of mass destruction, and on and on. Congress Members have far more often regretted their actions (and lack of actions) that created wars than their actions that prevented them. Senate votes in 2002 in favor of war on Iraq were famously major stumbling blocks in failed presidential campaigns of John Kerry, John Edwards, and Hillary Clinton.

# Nuclear Weapons

## NUCLEAR WARHEADS BY COUNTRY

1	Russia	6,257
2	United States of America	5,550
3	China	350
4	France	290
5	Great Britain	195
6	Pakistan	165
7	India	160
8	Israel	90
9	Korea (DPR)	40

In addition to this approximate [count](#) of nuclear warheads, the United States -- arguably in violation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons -- keeps nuclear weapons in Turkey, Germany, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

## “National Security”

In a 2006 [Politico article](#), unnamed “senior Pentagon officers” denounce claims of a Russian threat as motivated by bureaucratic and profit interests. “‘This is the ‘Chicken-Little, sky-is-falling’ set in the Army,’ the senior Pentagon officer said. ‘These guys want us to believe the Russians are 10 feet tall. There’s a simpler explanation: The Army is looking for a purpose, and a bigger chunk of the budget. And the best way to get that is to paint the Russians as being able to land in our rear and on both of our flanks at the same time. What a crock.’”

Congress [routinely funds](#) weapons that the Pentagon does not want.

Not only is the motivation for military spending not purely defensive, while being uniquely unaccountable (the Pentagon being the one department [never](#) successfully audited), but in defensive terms it is often counterproductive. Terrorism [increased](#) from 2001 through 2014, principally as a predictable result of a war on terrorism. Some [95%](#) of all suicide terrorist attacks are conducted to encourage foreign occupiers to leave some country or countries.

On March 11, 2004, Al Qaeda bombs killed 191 people in Madrid, Spain, just before an election in which one party was campaigning against Spain's participation in the U.S.-led war on Iraq. The people of Spain [voted](#) the Socialists into power, and they removed all Spanish troops from Iraq by May. There were no more bombs in Spain. This history stands in strong contrast to that of Britain, the United States, and other nations that have responded to blowback with more war, generally producing more blowback.

A December 2014 [Gallup poll](#) of global public opinion across 65 nations found the United States to be far and away the country considered the largest threat to peace in the world, and a [Pew poll](#) in of 30 countries in 2017 found majorities in most countries polled viewing the United States as a threat.

It has become almost routine for U.S. military commanders, usually just after retiring, [to argue](#) that various wars or tactics are creating more new enemies than the number of enemies they are killing.

War abroad increases [hatred](#) at home and the [militarization of police](#). While wars are fought in the name of "supporting" those fighting in the wars, veterans are given little assistance in dealing with the deep moral guilt, trauma, brain injury, and other hurdles in the way of adapting to nonviolent society. Those trained in mass killing by the U.S. military are disproportionately those who become [mass shooters](#) in the United States. And militaries [lose or have stolen](#) huge numbers of guns that are used in violent crimes that are not war.

The threat of nuclear apocalypse is currently [higher than ever](#). The threat of climate apocalypse, greatly [contributed to](#) by militarism, is currently higher than ever.



# Sanctions

Boycotts of a government that are supported by and led by a huge section of its own population and which effectively target a government rather than a population (such as the boycott against Apartheid South Africa) can sometimes be justified as legal and moral.

But sanctions that the United States unilaterally imposes on numerous nations, sometimes explicitly intended to harm, and often effectively harming, broad populations (imposing what the Geneva Conventions call “collective punishment” and what President Richard Nixon called “making an economy scream”) tend to be illegal, immoral, and counterproductive of the purported goal of generating a popular overthrow of the targeted government. To cite one example: the nearly 60-year U.S. blockade of Cuba, which has caused great hardship to the Cuban population.

Sanctions have been used to weaken nations as a form of warfare, and as a prelude to or continuation of traditional warfare -- as in their use on Iraq between the Gulf War and the Iraq War, or their use on Afghanistan following the 2021 withdrawal of U.S. and allied troops. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) found that many thousands of Iraqi children had died due to sanctions. We should carefully question the acceptance of U.S. sanctions as an alternative to war, and propose less hostile and harmful alternatives.

## Global Cooperation

Actual defense and security would require globally addressing the threats of environmental collapse, nuclear war or accident, disease pandemics, poverty, unsafe working conditions, and lack of adequate healthcare. But nations’ working together on disarmament, environmental protection, and health is greatly hindered by the hostility, secrecy, and distrust generated by militarism.

Studies over the past century [have found](#) that nonviolent tools are more effective in resisting tyranny and oppression and resolving conflicts and achieving security than violence is.



# Intersectionality

Addressing numerous public policy issues without a comprehensive plan that addresses militarism and military spending can make as much sense as serving tea while ignoring the presence of a gorilla in the room. A budget is a life-saving or life-eliminating document. Militarism kills far more through the expenditure of resources than the use of weapons.

**\$30 billion**

It would cost about \$30 billion per year to end starvation around the world.

It would cost about [\\$30 billion per year to end starvation around the world](#). It would cost about [\\$11 billion per year to provide the world with clean water](#). About \$70 billion per year would help eliminate poverty in the United States. Christian Sorensen writes in *Understanding the War Industry*, "The U.S. Census Bureau indicates that 5.7 million very poor families with children would need, on average, \$11,400 more to live above the poverty line (as of 2016). The total money needed . . . would be roughly \$69.4 billion/year."

**\$11 billion**

It would cost about \$11 billion per year to provide the world with clean water.

Military spending diverts public funds into increasingly privatized industries through the least accountable public enterprise and one that is hugely profitable for the owners and directors of the corporations involved. As a result, war spending works to concentrate wealth in a smaller number of hands, from which a portion of it can be used to corrupt government and further increase or maintain military spending.

War and war propaganda have often fueled and been fueled by racism, xenophobia, religious hatred, and other types of bigotry. Historian Kathleen Belew [says](#) there has always been a correlation in the United States between the aftermath of war and the rise of white supremacist violence. "If you look, for instance, at the surges in Ku Klux Klan membership, they align more consistently with the return of veterans from combat and the aftermath of war than they do with anti-immigration, populism, economic hardship, or any of the other factors that historians have typically used to explain them," she says. Dr. Martin Luther

King Jr. famously said that we would need to tackle three interlocking problems together: racism, militarism, and extreme materialism.

Since 2001, the U.S. military has [emitted](#) 1.2 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases, equivalent to the annual emissions of 257 million cars on the road. The U.S. Department of Defense is the largest institutional consumer of oil (\$17B/year) in the world, and the largest global [landholder](#) with 750 foreign military bases in 80 countries. A major motivation behind some wars is the desire to control resources that poison the earth, especially oil and gas. In fact, the launching of wars by wealthy nations in poor ones does not correlate with human rights violations or lack of democracy or threats of terrorism, but does strongly correlate with the [presence of oil](#). War does most of its environmental damage where it happens, but also devastates the natural environment of military bases in foreign and home nations. The U.S. military is the [third-largest polluter of U.S. waterways](#). Yet militarism is omitted from climate agreements. As the environmental crisis worsens, thinking of war as a tool with which to address it threatens us with the ultimate vicious cycle.

We're often told that wars are fought for "freedom." But, predictably and consistently, what wars bring is just the reverse. It is the idea of the wartime enemy that allows government secrecy, and allows liberties to first be taken away from devalued people, later predictably expanded to taking them away from valued people as well.

The moral and cultural impact of investing in an enterprise of mass killing is not easily quantified, but clearly significant.

## Jobs

It is common to think that, because many people have jobs in the war industry, spending on war and preparations for war benefits an economy. [In reality](#), spending those same dollars on peaceful industries, on education, on infrastructure, or even on tax cuts for working people would produce more jobs and in most cases better paying jobs -- with enough savings to help everyone make the transition from war work to peace work.





## “Leading the World”

The best relationship commonly proposed for the U.S. government with the rest of the world is one in which it switches direction on some policy, such as environmental pollution or protection of whistleblowers or incarceration, and suddenly begin to lead everyone else. This mode of thinking can seem out-of-touch, arrogant, and misdirected in areas where a sensible relationship with some other parts of the world would include learning rather than leading. The United States does not lead, and often [trails](#) at least the rest of the wealthy world, in such matters as freedom (by all kinds of measures), education, environmental damage, incarceration, health coverage, parental leave, life expectancy, elimination of poverty, and maintenance of infrastructure of various sorts. The alternatives to leading the world are not limited to following the world. There exists also the option of joining the world. It’s worth remembering not to describe this as the world’s wealthiest country joining the world, since per capita the United States is not the world’s wealthiest country.

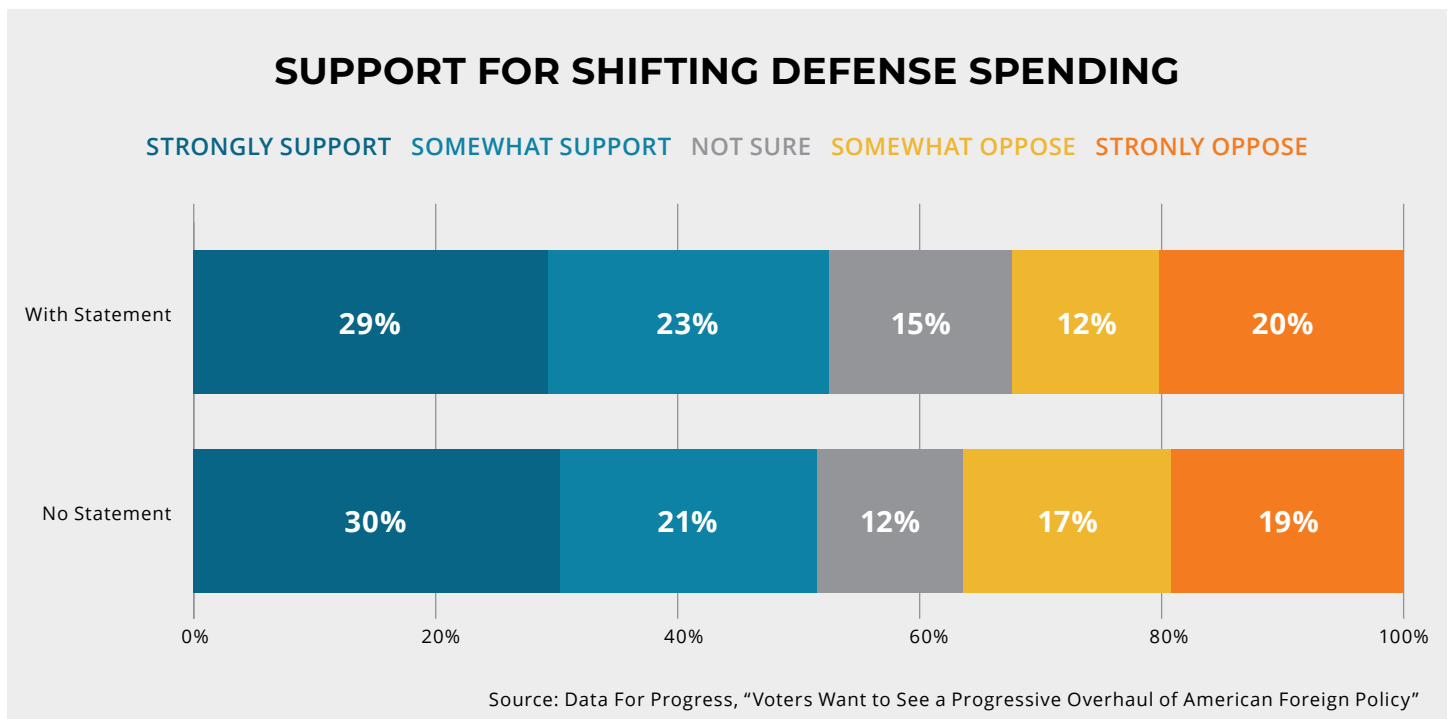
## U.S. Public Opinion

U.S. public opinion [favors a progressive overhaul of foreign policy](#). Pollsters at Data for Progress asked this question:

**Q** “According to the Congressional Budget Office, the United States is expected to spend \$738 billion on its military in 2020. That’s more than the next seven countries combined and more than the U.S. budget for education, federal courts, affordable housing, local economic development, and the State Department combined. Some say that maintaining a dominant global military footprint is necessary to keep us safe, and is worth the cost. Others say that money could be better spent on domestic needs like health care, education, or protecting the environment. Based on what you’ve just read, would you support or oppose reallocating money from the Pentagon budget to other priorities?”

They got this answer:

**A** A majority of 52% supported or “strongly supported” that idea (29% strongly supported it), while 32% opposed (20% strongly). If the sentence beginning “That’s more than . . .” was left out, 51% supported the idea (30% strongly), while 36% opposed (19% strongly).



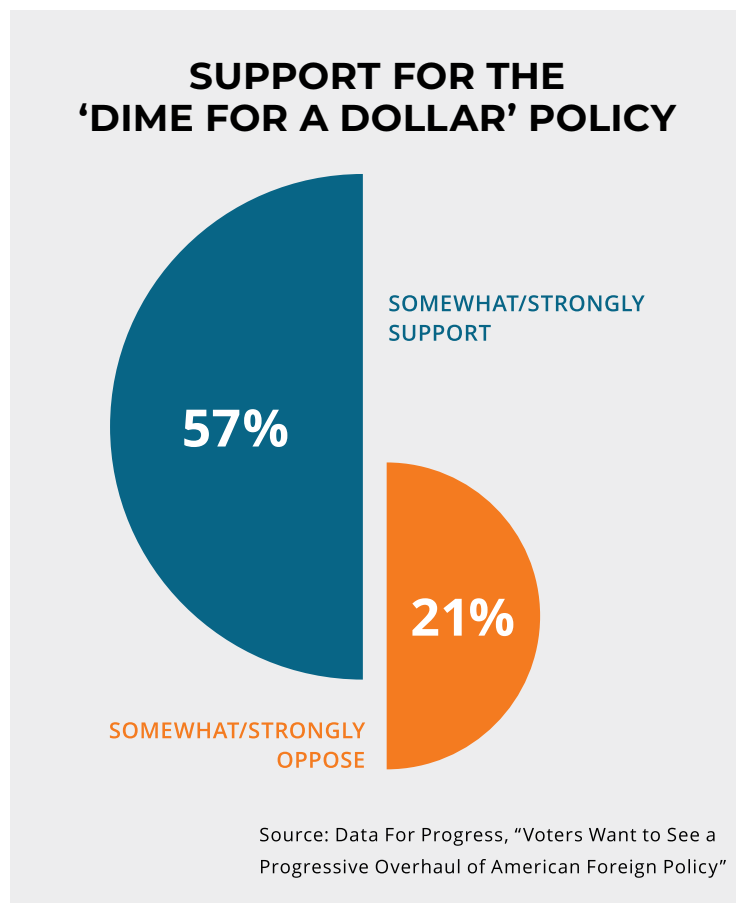
When the University of Maryland sat people down and showed them the federal budget in a pie chart (a more significant education than a single sentence) the [results](#) were dramatic, with a strong majority wanting to move serious money out of militarism and into human and environmental needs. Among other details revealed, the U.S. public would cut foreign aid to dictatorships but increase humanitarian assistance abroad.

Data for Progress also asked this question:

**Q** “The United States currently spends more than half of its discretionary budget on military spending, which is considerably more than it spends on other foreign policy tools such as diplomacy and economic development programs. Some argue that maintaining U.S. military superiority should be the top foreign policy goal, and we should continue spending levels as they are. Others argue that rather than pouring money into war we should invest in preventing wars before they happen. Do you support or oppose a proposal to spend at least ten cents on non-military war prevention tools for every dollar we spend on the Pentagon?”

The answer:

**A** “A clear majority of voters support the ‘dime for a dollar’ policy, with 57 percent somewhat or strongly supporting and just 21 percent opposing the policy. This includes a plurality of Republican voters, 49 percent of whom support and just 30 percent of whom oppose the policy. The dime for a dollar policy is overwhelmingly popular among Independents and Democrats. A net +28 percent of Independents and a net +57 percent of Democrats support the dime for a dollar policy.”



Data for Progress also found that a plurality (and a strong majority among Democrats) wants to withhold free weapons from Israel to curb its human rights abuses against Palestinians. A strong majority wants a no-first-use nuclear policy. A strong majority wants more humanitarian aid to Latin America. A strong majority wants to ban all use of torture. (We should properly say “re-ban” given how many times torture has been banned and re-banned.) Notably, the U.S. public, by a significant majority, wants a peace agreement with North Korea, but the group that wants it the most is Republicans (possibly merely because the U.S. president was a Republican when the poll was done).

Data for Progress also found that huge majorities wanted to end the endless U.S. wars in Afghanistan and across the Middle East. Those who supported continuing these wars were a tiny fringe group, something one might never have guessed from media coverage. Overall we’re talking about 16% of the U.S. public. Among Democrats it was 7%.

Data for Progress also found a strong majority against allowing U.S. weapons sales to governments that abuse human rights.

Every successful U.S. presidential candidate since George W. Bush (himself against “nation building”) has sought to be depicted as in favor of peace (although the policy details have not always fully matched the rhetoric). According to one [analysis](#), Hillary Clinton would have won two key states and the presidency if not for the perception that she was too eager for war. Candidate Richard Nixon had a secret plan for peace that we’re still waiting to see, and his predecessors back to FDR presented themselves as antiwar, including FDR in the election of 1940, similar to Woodrow Wilson in 1916. Lyndon Johnson chose not to run for reelection because of his unpopularity, driven by his warmaking in Vietnam. George H.W. Bush thought a war might get him reelected; it did not. Peace, as a general rule, is popular, and when it becomes an election issue, as in the Congressional elections of 2006 it can [lead](#) all the exit polls as the top motivation for voters. It’s a good idea to be on the right side of peace when such moments arise.

## Examples of Successful Candidates' Platforms

The following are all quotes from the websites, social media feeds, and statements of successful candidates for Congress prior to their first election victories. Some bits are dated, but most are still relevant:

### Cori Bush (on Twitter):



"Militarization makes up 64% of our federal budget. Medicare & Health are 6%. Education is 5%. Social Security, Unemployment, and Labor together are 3%. Ignorance is thinking those priorities keep our families safe."

"220K+ people, including 1,700 healthcare workers, have died from COVID-19 due to our government's inability to protect its citizens & pass pandemic relief. Ignorance is Trump's Pentagon taking \$1 billion in funding designated for PPE production to make jet engine parts."

"@BernieSanders and @EdMarkey proposed a 10% cut on the Pentagon budget to use to fund health care, housing, childcare and educational opportunities for cities and towns experiencing a poverty rate of 25% or more. Ignorance is blocking this bill knowing it would save lives."

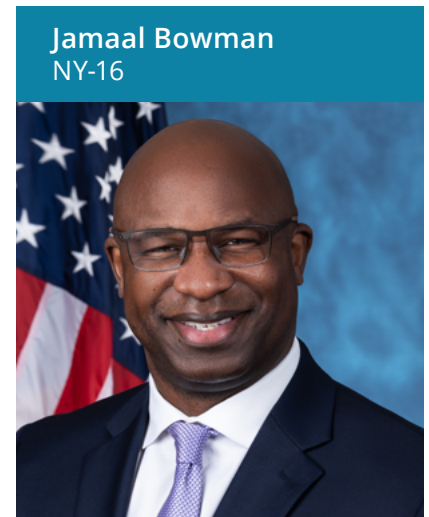
"Ignorance is paying Lockheed Martin more than \$1 trillion over the course of a 60 year contract for a dysfunctional F-35 program. Ignorance is letting their CEO take a \$20 million dollar salary while military veterans go homeless."

"The Department of Defense has never passed an independent audit, yet we continue to give them money unchecked. Ignorance is the Trump administration \*INCREASING\* the Pentagon budget by more than \$100 billion since he was elected."

"Ignorance is giving weapons of war to local police departments with no accountability or oversight. Ignorance is calling us radical for saying that's wrong."

**Jamaal Bowman (public statement):**

“My opponent, Representative Eliot Engel, and I do not share the same foreign policy vision. He voted for one of the worst policy disasters of my lifetime — an unjust and costly 2 trillion dollar war in Iraq. He voted against President Obama’s signature foreign policy achievement which put a lid on Iran’s nuclear program. He went on CNN this past year and said he didn’t want to tie Trump’s hands when it came to strikes on Iran. He was one of only 16 House Democrats in 2016 to vote against an amendment that blocked the transfer of cluster bombs to Saudi Arabia which has been relentlessly dropping them on Yemeni civilians.



***“He supports a hawkish and costly foreign policy agenda instead of focusing on the communities in our district that have been neglected for far too long.”***

***– Jamaal Bowman***

My opponent accepts donations from corporations and arms manufacturers like Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon. He supports a hawkish and costly foreign policy agenda instead of focusing on the communities in our district that have been neglected for far too long. We must dramatically reduce the Pentagon’s budget over the next ten years, end the forever wars, and rebuild a diplomacy-first approach through the State Department. We have been in Afghanistan for 19 years, in Iraq for 17 years, and in Syria for five years. Congress must reassert its authority to bring our troops home.”

**Mondaire Jones (campaign website):**

“The United States has been at war for most of my life — wars that have led to hundreds of thousands of people being killed and millions more displaced. We were led into the disastrous war in Iraq under false pretenses. The war in Afghanistan has been raging for almost 19 years. We are contributing to the world’s worst humanitarian crisis, in Yemen, by providing weapons to the Saudi-led coalition. Extreme war powers, and a reluctance by members of Congress to exert oversight, have enabled the Trump Administration to bring us dangerously close to the brink of war with Iran. . . . Enough is enough. Our national security depends on a sane approach to American foreign policy that centers diplomacy, peace, human rights, and cooperation on the challenges facing our world. We must stop fighting endless



***“I will fight to finally repeal the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force”***

***– Mondaire Jones***

wars. As a member of Congress, I will fight to finally repeal the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), which has given the executive branch a blank check to pursue foreign wars having nothing to do with the September 11th attacks. I will work to bring an end to existing conflicts, including the war in Afghanistan, through inclusive peace processes that center human rights, including women’s rights. I will support barring the sale of weapons to human rights violators, including Saudi

Arabia, and I will support redirecting funds towards conflict prevention, including through development aid to reduce poverty and inequalities and combat climate change. . . . Our budgets reflect our values and priorities. Currently, the United States has chosen to prioritize investing in war and weapons ahead of providing for the basic needs of our people. The 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) allocates a whopping \$738 billion dollars for military spending. We spend

more than approximately the next seven countries combined. It is estimated that we have spent almost \$6 trillion dollars on the Global War on Terror alone. The United States maintains hundreds of costly military bases in dozens of countries throughout the world. Meanwhile, the Trump administration has gutted funding for the State Department and USAID, making the United States less able to lead on diplomatic and humanitarian efforts to address our world's biggest challenges. As a member of Congress, I will push to reduce military spending and reinvest this money in the State Department, to strengthen diplomacy and peacebuilding, as well as domestically, in programs that meet the needs of our civilian population. I will fight to prioritize investment in human security approaches, which focus on meeting the human needs of people and protecting our environment."

**Ayanna Pressley (campaign website):**

"The United States spends more on its military than the next seven countries with the largest military budgets [combined](#), and over the last 21 months Donald Trump and a Republican-controlled Congress have increased military spending by [more than \\$200 billion dollars](#). The administration's policy to significantly increase military spending while pushing forward massive tax cuts will have a devastating impact on America's ability to fund domestic priorities like healthcare, infrastructure, education, and housing. In Congress, I will:

- Support cutting the US defense budget by 25 percent, resulting in nearly \$180 billion in savings that could be used to better support our domestic priorities.
- Prioritize spending on updated training protocols and equipment, including investments in a hardened election and cyber defense system, and expanded intelligence and information sharing capabilities with our allies.
- Advocate for greater oversight and accountability of how defense funding is distributed across the military and in active conflict zones.
- Significantly increase our spending on foreign aid, with a particular emphasis on programs that benefit women and girls, who are essential to the health of communities around the world. Increasing foreign aid will not only benefit the international community, but help ensure the long-term security of the United States.



"I believe our involvement in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan – like Vietnam before them – have taught us devastating lessons about the commitment of American military resources without sufficient forethought, planning, or international support. Thousands of lost and wounded American service members, and civilians tell the story of the consequences of our decisions to go to war. I would strongly support any efforts to quickly end U.S. military involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria. It's time to end the wars and the monetary incentives that perpetuate them.

"I also think it is essential to engage our international partners before making any long-term decision about our approach to conflict overseas. Unilateral U.S. military support should only be used as a last resort to defend the nation. It is important that Congress have significant oversight of U.S. involvement in international conflicts; I would support repealing the 2001 AUMF that gave the Executive wide ranging authority to commit military resources in the War on Terror, and I believe that Congress must have final approval on any commitment of US military resources overseas.

"Climate change is clearly a matter of national security. Despite the current administration's attempts to say otherwise, scientists around the world agree that the earth is getting warmer, sea levels are rising, weather patterns are changing, and our countries are

becoming increasingly susceptible to flooding and natural disasters. Responding appropriately to the threat of climate change will require partnership with the international community – like that enshrined by the Paris Climate Accords. In Congress, I will push for America to rejoin the accords and reverse our currently policy of withdrawing from the international community on issues of climate change, while simultaneously advocating for domestic policies that will decrease our carbon footprint."

***"It's time to end the wars and the monetary incentives that perpetuate them."***

*– Ayanna Pressley*

### Rashida Tlaib (public statement):



Rashida Tlaib  
MI-13

"I don't support military operations. If you go to the Department of Defense website, every day, Monday through Friday, there is an area called 'contracts.' Go there. You want to pay for college? Medicare for All? Pay to take care of Americans dying from famine to basic human rights abuses? Look at those contracts. I'm floored at how much money [they're spending]."

When asked "Do you want to divert the DOD budget into social services?" Tlaib replied: "Yes. We can build safer and more vibrant communities. I am tired of the earmarks for corporations. They aren't going to Americans. They're going to private companies.

Not only have we made prisons into private corporations, wars are a for-profit industry. The [DoD is] a cesspool for corporations to make money."

### Ilhan Omar (campaign website):

"Promote Peace & Prosperity

"We must end the state of continuous war, as these wars have made us less safe. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been killed, entire countries have been destabilized, and we are currently in the midst of an extreme global migration crisis. Meanwhile at home, there have been increasingly cuts to spending on healthcare, infrastructure, education, and housing. We must scale back U.S. military activities, and reinvest our expansive military budget back into our communities. Once this happens, we can begin to repair the harm done, repair America's broken image, and invest in diplomatic relationships."

- We spend by far the most on our military budget, and more than the next seven countries on the list of top spenders combined
- In 2017, the United States spent over \$700 billion dollars—well over half the country's discretionary budget



Ilhan Omar  
MN-5

- The Pentagon has spent \$400 billion dollars on the F-35 fighter jet program, and will eventually spend over 1 trillion dollars in costs and maintenance
- American intervention in democratically-elected governments has contributed to the migration crisis
- The executive branch has escalated U.S. involvement in Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen, with no authorization from Congress

"Vision and Policy Priorities: End funding for perpetual war and military aggression

***"End sanctions and embargoes against countries, which ultimately only hurt the working families of those countries"***

*– Ilhan Omarr*

"We are currently engaged in a number of wars that have no end in sight—Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Somalia. These wars have destabilized regions, created massive humanitarian crises, and continue to hurt our image across the world. We must end these wars, and we must avoid military-use as a last resort in the future.

- Reduce total spending on the military from its projected FY 2019 levels of \$886 billion and reinvest that money into healthcare, education, housing, jobs, clean energy, and infrastructure
- Cut the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) that has been called the Pentagon's 'slush fund'.

In 2017, the OCO budget increased by 41% to \$82.4 billion.

- Eliminate wasteful military programs like the F-35 fighter jet program, saving taxpayers \$1 trillion dollars total
- Scale back the number of US military bases across the world

"Repeal harmful sanctions and oppose all U.S. intervention into democratically-elected governments

“Sanctions and economic blockades have been used to hurt the economies of countries outside of the U.S. sphere of influence. These measures hurt working people in other countries and foster animosity towards our government.

- End sanctions and embargoes against countries, which ultimately only hurt the working families of those countries
- Support diplomatic solutions to the conflicts in both North Korea and Iran, and avoid military conflict at all costs
- Support the JCPOA, and advocate for a deal that does not disproportionately impose economic sanctions on the people of Iran.

“Fully fund programs to care for our veteran population

“We must ensure that veterans who have returned home from conflict-zones are taken care of. It is unacceptable that politicians have send soldiers to fight in wars, and refuse to fund the programs they need when returning home. We must ensure that all veterans are housed, have access to healthcare, and mental health care services.

- Eliminate homelessness among veterans by expanding the HUD-VASH program and Supportive Services for Veterans Families
- Oppose the privatization of the Veterans Affairs healthcare system and expand funding for physical and mental healthcare for veterans

“Support a peace that affirms the safety and rights of both Palestinians and Israelis

“Stability in the Middle East depends on the establishment of a lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis. But without justice, there will never be peace. The United States must work with the international community, and not unilaterally, to work towards a solution. I will use my voice in Congress and work with communities on the ground to center the ultimate goal of self-determination and peace.

- Fight against efforts from the Trump administration to undermine the peace process, and support the autonomy for the Israeli and Palestinian peoples to define what a solution looks like
- Uplift the voices of Palestinians demanding an end to the occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and end the siege of Gaza
- Oppose the killing of civilians in Gaza and the expansion of settlements into the West Bank

## Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (campaign website):



"Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the United States has entangled itself in war and occupation throughout the Middle East and North Africa. As of 2018, we are currently involved in military action in Libya, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, and Somalia. Hundreds of thousands of civilians in these countries have been killed either as collateral damage from American strikes or from the instability caused by U.S. interventions. Millions more have fled their broken countries, contributing to the global refugee crisis.

"This continued action damages America's legitimacy as a force for good, creates new generations of potential terrorists, and erodes American prosperity. In times when we're told that there's not enough money, Republicans and corporate Democrats seem to find the cash to fund a \$1.1 trillion fighter jet program or a \$1.7 trillion-dollar nuclear weapon 'modernization' program. The costs are extreme: the Pentagon's budget for 2018 is \$700 billion dollars: to continue fighting an endless War on Terror and refighting the Cold War with a new arms race that nobody can win.

"According to the Constitution, the right to declare war belongs to the legislative body, and yet many of these global acts of aggression have never once been voted on by Congress. In some cases, we've even acted unilaterally, without the backing of the United Nations.

"America should not be in the business of destabilizing countries. While we may see ourselves as liberators, the world increasingly views us as occupiers and aggressors. Alexandria believes that we must end the 'forever war' by bringing our troops home, and ending the air strikes that perpetuate the cycle of terrorism throughout the world.

"By bringing our troops home, we can begin to heal the wounds we're opening by continuing military engagement. We can begin to repair our image. We can reunite military families, separated by repeated deployments. We can become stronger by building stronger diplomatic and economic ties, and by saving our armed forces only for when they're truly needed."



## Unwarranted Influence

President Eisenhower: "We annually spend on military security more than the net income of all United States corporations. This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence -- economic, political, even spiritual -- is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the Federal government. ... In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist."

The unwarranted influence comes in the form of financial investments in weapons companies by Congress Members (both direct stock holdings and investments through investment funds), in campaign "contributions" (and journalists are often able to show the correlation between this funding and the legislative actions of those funded), in prior employment or future job offers to Congress Members or staffers by war contractors or by the U.S. military, in the actual provision of staffers to Congressional offices by the military, in the (misleading and counterproductive but real) jobs in states or districts created by military funding and used as leverage even though decreasing the military funding would increase the number of jobs, in free trips to Israel, and in corporate media access provided for pro-war statements. That's a lot to guard against, but guarding against it is a key part of the job of Congress Member.

## Recommendations

Voters should expect a campaign platform to include a basic, rough budget (a pie chart of federal discretionary spending), a position on military spending with a number in it, a plan for advancing a reverse arms race and the process of economic conversion to peaceful, sustainable, just, and prosperous industries. A voter should be able to know what treaties and international institutions a Congressional candidate supports and opposes, what position he or she takes on foreign weapons sales, and what position he or she takes on actual or possible wars. Such a platform should include steps that will be taken on foreign bases, nuclear weapons, and areas of international relations currently in need of action. A campaign platform can also serve an educational function on topics not everyone is yet well informed on.

The logo for RootsAction Education Fund. It features a green vertical bar on the left, followed by the text "RootsAction" in a large, white, sans-serif font, and "Education Fund" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font below it. To the right of the text is a small icon of three curved lines, resembling a stylized ")))".

**RootsAction**)))  
Education Fund

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