

Budgetary Savings from Military Restraint

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My colleague Benjamin Friedman and I have a new Cato Institute Policy Analysis out today titled "[Budgetary Savings from Military Restraint](#)." In the study we argue for \$1.2 trillion in cuts to U.S. military spending over the next 10 years in conjunction with a move toward military restraint. That, we argue, would not only save us money, but keep us out of trouble that actually harms our security.

Our op-ed in today's *Politico*, "[Drop the Pretension to Supremacy](#)," explains these cuts and outlines the major points of the paper. Unfortunately, *Politico* decided to scrap our title and go with the one above, which implies that we are against military supremacy over all rivals. We do not make that argument. We point out in the paper that our recommended cuts would not endanger supremacy:

As for our potential great power rivals—Russia and China—we would have no good reason to fight a war with either in the foreseeable future if we did not guarantee the security of their neighbors. Both lag far behind us in military capability. That would remain the case even with the reductions proposed here. As it stands today, the United States spends about five times more on defense than those states collectively. We account for nearly 50 percent of all military spending; our allies and potential strategic partners contribute much of the rest.

More from the op-ed:

Despite Obama's professed concern about the huge budget deficit, the president has taken no meaningful steps to rein in military spending. Citing the need for austerity, Pentagon officials have a goal of 1 percent real growth in the Defense Department budget over the next decade. Not exactly a revolution of fiscal discipline.

...

If our military had less to do, the Pentagon could spend less — at least \$1.22 trillion less over the next 10 years, according to a Cato Institute report released Tuesday.

Washington confuses what it wants from its military (global primacy or hegemony) with what it needs (safety).

Policymakers exaggerate the capability of existing enemies and invent new ones by defining traditional foreign troubles — geopolitical competition among states and instability within them, for example — as major U.S. security threats. In nearly all cases, they are not.

Read the rest of the op-ed [here](#). The study can be found [here](#).

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