# Defense Contractors---1AC

## Plan---1AC

The United States federal government should substantially increase its prohibitions on anticompetitive business practices by the private sector by at least expanding the scope of its core antitrust laws to prohibit defense contracting.

## Contractors---1AC

The advantage is contractors:

#### They militarize foreign policy, immiserating millions and embroiling the globe in forever war---only antitrust solves.

Marshall ’20 [Shana; Spring 2020; associate director of the Institute for Middle East Studies and assistant research professor at The George Washington University; Middle East Research and Information Project, “The Defense Industry’s Role in Militarizing US Foreign Policy,” <https://merip.org/2020/06/the-defense-industrys-role-in-militarizing-us-foreign-policy/>]

As the welfare state shrinks, one of the last sure bets for big government spending is the maintenance of the warfare state. As the global coronavirus pandemic has made incredibly clear, the US government is disinclined to pump federal resources into health programs, social insurance or food security infrastructure. But even this unprecedented pandemic and a string of the largest single-day job losses in US history have not tempered the appetite of the political and economic ruling class for ruinous levels of war expenditure.

Appended to the Congressional HEROES legislation to fund payroll for shuttered businesses was a [provision](https://www.propublica.org/article/hidden-in-the-new-house-coronavirus-relief-bill-billions-for-defense-contractors) designed by a defense and intelligence contractors’ association to expand coverage beyond payroll to include nearly any of those firms’ expenses. The legislation amounts to a bailout by taxpayers of the entire private sector defense and intelligence industry—one large contractor [estimated](https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2020/06/10/defense-industrys-covid-costs-could-tank-dod-modernization-plans/) that their request for funds would be around $1 billion. It is precisely such features of the military industrial complex in the United States—the bailouts, the subsidies, the profit guarantees, the federally-backed export insurance, the research and development funds—that have made the sector so lucrative.

Defense industry profits do not simply disappear into the pockets of executives and shareholders. They are deployed strategically to build support for a highly militarized form of US foreign policy. Their methods are diverse, and formal lobbying through registered agents is just the tip of the iceberg.

Defense firms finance think tanks and research agendas to provide policy papers for legislators and their staffers who are arguing for military intervention; they place their executives and allies on the National Security Council and other agencies via formal industry exchange programs; and they use their privileged regulatory position to steer the priorities of finance capital in the direction of investing more money in weapons technologies. The frequency of US wars and the fortunes of the weapons industry move in tandem; as the industry has become unassailable and immune to demands for belt-tightening or rationalization, so the United States finds itself in a state of forever war. Severing this deadly linkage, which has brutalized those abroad while immiserating Americans at home, is key to winding down the US imperial project.

The only way to cut that cord is to nationalize the military industrial sector, which would disconnect industry profits from processes of policy making, redirect private investment away from military technologies, turn research and development towards civilian applications, enhance transparency and allow for greater public accountability around questions of war and peace.

The False Promise of Leverage Through Arms Sales

Status quo commitments to the defense industry hinge on policy justifications linking arms sales and US interests. In the 1970s and 1980s, as American weapons sales to the Middle East began their stratospheric ascent, Congress expressed fears that Arab recipients would use them against Israel. The Carter Doctrine’s promise of a Rapid Deployment Force that could move to the Gulf in times of threat, however, allowed massive weapons sales—to Saudi Arabia in particular—to be characterized as prepositioned equipment that would ultimately be used by US, not Arab, soldiers.

As the Rapid Deployment Force concept gave way to permanent US basing and direct interventions in the Gulf, the policy argument for massive arms exports shifted. The new claim was that these sales gave the United States leverage over regional outcomes, both political and military. Such narratives are demonstrably false. Not only have decades of American arms sales, training and service now birthed Gulf military forces capable of (and increasingly eager to) wield their high-tech weapons, but the imagined leverage these sales were to have generated is glaringly absent. Despite the dependence of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on US and British weapons (and spare parts) neither has demonstrated any restraint in their assault on Yemen, despite public protestations from both exporters. The two largest regional recipients of free weapons (Egypt and Israel), presumably the most dependent on US weapons and therefore most likely to cave to US demands, have flagrantly violated the most basic desires of the US foreign policy establishment: maintaining lines of contact with the United States during the uprisings in 2011 and the coup in 2013 in Egypt, and putting a halt to new illegal Israeli settlements.

The reality is, after decades of flooding the globe with weapons, their export is thoroughly routinized. Threats to withhold weapons are pretense at best: The networks formed between the executives of private firms and the officials and intermediaries in major purchasing countries are so dense and well-developed they can easily mobilize the necessary political and financial resources to overcome potential opposition to specific arms transfers. In the rare case of a ban, either the language is conceived so narrowly as to have little or no impact, another supplier quickly steps in to resume supply (as Australia recently did when Britain instituted a ban on granting new weapons licenses to the Gulf countries bombing Yemen) or the physical and legal structures meant to block transfers are easily circumvented. Major exporting countries are so desperate to subsidize their own domestic industries that they often compete to offer better financing terms to even the most abusive governments.

The argument that weapons exports are a strategic military choice that allows the exporter to influence outcomes without deploying their own troops is farcical. First, the United States has [troops](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/where-us-troops-are-in-the-middle-east-and-could-now-be-a-target-visualized/2020/01/04/1a6233ee-2f3c-11ea-9b60-817cc18cf173_story.html) in 150 countries, including 70,000 in the Middle East and Afghanistan, so weapons sales are not replacing boots on the ground. Second, the smuggling and proliferation of US weapons in conflict zones where they end up being a force equalizer in the enemy’s favor suggests that flooding a place with weapons is (if anything) a basic tactical error that somehow gets repeated ad nauseum. Even in the hands of trusted regional allies like Jordan, US weapons (supplied by the CIA) have been used directly in [attacks](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/27/world/middleeast/cia-arms-for-syrian-rebels-supplied-black-market-officials-say.html) on American personnel.

If arms sales are not a policy tool designed to provide leverage or influence, what are they for? The short answer is that they are for profit. The linkage between war and profit is direct and clear. For example, in the 24-hour period after the US assassination of Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the stock holdings of just five individual weapons industry executives [increased](https://inequality.org/great-divide/war-profiteering-iran/) by $7 million. Multiply this number by tens of thousands of executives and shareholders spread throughout the industry and it is clear why there are an enormous number of white collar professionals committed to a militant US posture that serves their own professional and personal livelihood.

#### Defense contractors are merchants of nuclear war---unchecked industrial control of the military will cause intentional AND miscalculated nuclear aggression.

Owens ’20 [Jasmine; September 18; M.A. Candidate in the Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, B.A. International Studies and certificates in Environmental Studies and African Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison; Responsible Statecraft, “The merchants of nuclear war are striving and thriving through the pandemic,” <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2020/09/18/the-merchants-of-nuclear-war-are-striving-and-thriving-through-the-pandemic/>]

More Americans than ever today have begun to question the efficacy of the systems that govern it, specifically the policing and justice systems. Add to the mix the current and ongoing threats from climate change and global pandemic, and it becomes clearer that this movement of change must make its way to the nuclear defense system before it is too late.

For example: the Air Force awarded a contract for the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent to Northrop Grumman on September 8, expediting the production of more nuclear missiles in a time when arms control and cooperation is deteriorating, and the reimagining of a Nuclear Arms Race 2.0 is on the horizon.

There is no doubt that the Trump administration, with help from the military-industrial complex, is dismantling the U.S. arms control regime, and more recently, seemingly using the pandemic as a distraction.

President Trump has so far withdrawn the United States from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the Open Skies Treaty, while destroying any trust countries may have had in the United States for future cooperation.

As the expiration of New START looms on the horizon, the U.S. Presidential Envoy for Arms Control, Marshall Billingslea, has stated that the United States is unlikely to extend the treaty despite the fact that New START is currently the only treaty preventing an all-out nuclear arms race between the United States and Russia (and potentially other nuclear weapon states as well).

Now, the Trump administration is causing more lasting damage as it seeks to expedite the contracts of the Long-Range Standoff weapon, which will bolster U.S. air nuclear forces, and the GBSD, the new missile that will be replacing the Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile leg of the U.S. nuclear-triad.

In April, the Air Force awarded the LRSO contract to Raytheon, two years ahead of schedule, with no real explanation as to why. It’s no coincidence that Secretary of Defense, Mark Esper, was the top lobbyist and vice president of governmental relations at Raytheon before joining the Trump administration.

The Air Force awarded the GBSD contract to Northrop Grumman, which became the sole bidder in 2019 after Boeing dropped out. This sparked controversy and even a federal investigation after Boeing’s complaints of unfair competition. The lack of competition on the contract has caused the price tag to surge to $85 billion and counting. It shouldn’t come as a surprise that not only did Northrop Grumman spend $5.6 million in 2018 campaign contributions, but that it has also given more than $4 million to important members of the Senate and House Armed Services Committees.

Some experts posit that the LRSO and GBSD contracts have been expedited to finalize the contracts so that if there will be a change in administration come November, a new administration will have less power to stop them, particularly if the weapons are already being manufactured.

The expedition of these contracts and production of these weapons is worrisome. Experts say the it’s dangerous to add a cruise missile to the U.S. arsenal — the LRSO — that can carry both a conventional and nuclear payload because it would seriously raise the risk of miscalculation and the potential for nuclear war. Critics of the GBSD contract assert that these types of land-based weapons aren’t even necessary. Indeed, in addition to being an obscenely expensive contract, ICBMs are the most vulnerable leg of the nuclear triad and could be phased out without weakening the US’ nuclear deterrent.

The claws of the military-industrial complex reach further than just the Trump administration. Not only do members of the Senate and House Armed Services Committees receive sizable campaign contributions from defense contractors, there is also an entire Senate Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Coalition that works to ensure contracts like these succeed. Northrop Grumman has provided $1.6 million to the coalition since 2012 to protect the ICBM program and prevent the implementation of any alternatives.

Why is this happening? The simple answer is that arms races are effective business strategies. Dismantling the U.S. arms control regime is the first step to removing impediments to building more weapons. With virtually no arms control treaties or agreements to adhere to, the United States can do what it wants.

Expediting weapons contracts and paying off members of Congress ensures that these defense contractors like Raytheon and Northrop Grumman get their business, no matter who is in office. Further, the number of nuclear weapons and their related technologies necessary to “win” an arms race can be limitless. This means that as long as there is the appearance of an imminent threat from an adversary like Russia or China, these companies will continue to build more weapons and make more money.

Billingslea actually made note of this, saying that the United States knows “how to win these races and [knows] how to spend the adversary into oblivion.” The fact that his main argument revolves around spending as a means of winning and not encouraging rigorous diplomacy, illustrates where his and the administration’s priorities lie.

But just because arms races are a good business strategy, does not mean they are a good defense strategy. Building new and increasingly complex nuclear weapons will only sow distrust amongst states like Russia and China and increase the risk of both accidental and intentional nuclear war.

Now more than ever, it is crucial that we look beyond the surface of the systems in place designed to protect us and evaluate if they are truly working for the public, or if they are solely benefiting key stakeholders. Since President Trump entered into office, he has chipped away at the global arms control. The surface level explanations for this have pointed back to claims of nefarious action by other actors. But looking deeper, it’s clear that the military-industrial complex is having free reign over the U.S. government at the expense of security systems that will actually keep us safe.

#### Nuclear war makes everyday violence worse by intensifying physical and psychic suffering.

ICRC ’18 [International Committee of the Red Cross; August 7; Humanitarian institution based in Geneva, Switzerland and funded by voluntary donations; ICRC, “Nuclear weapons - an intolerable threat to humanity,” <https://www.icrc.org/en/nuclear-weapons-a-threat-to-humanity>]

The most terrifying weapon ever invented

Nuclear weapons are the most terrifying weapon ever invented: no weapon is more destructive; no weapon causes such unspeakable human suffering; and there is no way to control how far the radioactive fallout will spread or how long the effects will last.

A nuclear bomb detonated in a city would immediately kill tens of thousands of people, and tens of thousands more would suffer horrific injuries and later die from radiation exposure.

In addition to the immense short-term loss of life, a nuclear war could cause long-term damage to our planet. It could severely disrupt the earth's ecosystem and reduce global temperatures, resulting in food shortages around the world.

Think nuclear weapons will never be used again? Think again.

The very existence of nuclear weapons is a threat to future generations, and indeed to the survival of humanity.

What's more, given the current regional and international tensions, the risk of nuclear weapons being used is the highest it's been since the Cold War. Nuclear-armed States are modernizing their arsenals, and their command and control systems are becoming more vulnerable to cyber attacks. There is plenty of cause for alarm about the danger we all face.

No adequate humanitarian response

What would humanitarian organizations do in the event of a nuclear attack? The hard truth is that no State or organization could deal with the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear bomb.

The Red Cross' first-hand experience

In August 1945, in the aftermath of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese Red Cross, supported by the ICRC, attempted to bring relief to the many thousands of dying and injured. The magnitude of the needs made us feel helpless and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has been a strong advocate for a world free of nuclear weapons ever since.

“Thousands of human beings in the streets and gardens in the town centre, struck by a wave of intense heat, died like flies. Others lay writhing like worms, atrociously burned. All private houses, warehouses, etc., disappeared as if swept away by a supernatural power. Trains were flung off the rails (...). Every living thing was petrified in an attitude of acute pain.”

- Dr Marcel Junod, an ICRC delegate and the first foreign doctor in Hiroshima in 1945 to assess the effects of the atomic bombing and to assist its victims.

#### American contracting outsources war---reliance on private industry normalizes and bloats global supply, creating a free market for force.

McFate ’19 [Sean; December 2019; Professor of Strategy in the College of International Security Affairs at the National Defense University, Ph.D. in International Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science, M.A. in Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government; National Defense University Press, “Mercenaries and War: Understanding Private Armies Today,” <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/strat-monograph/mercenaries-and-war.pdf>]

The U.S. Role in Resurrecting Mercenarism

The 1990s were only a prelude for what was to come. What truly revitalized the ancient mercenary trade was the chum-slick of American war contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan. One would assume failing states needing strong militaries would defibrillate mercenarism, but it was a superpower seeking political top-cover that resurrected the industry. Like everything else in those wars, it was not planned. It just happened.

The United States contracted out its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. For every American Soldier in Iraq or Afghanistan, there was at least one contractor—a 1:1 ratio or greater. At the height of these wars, contractors comprised over 50 percent of the U.S. force structure in Iraq and 70 percent in Afghanistan. By comparison, only 10 percent of the force was contracted in World War II.21 Most contractors were unarmed and performed innocuous tasks like cooking food or repairing trucks. About 15 percent were mercenaries, but do not let the small numbers fool you.22 Failures of private force have an outsize strategic impact, as evidenced by Nisour Square, and this 15 percent has been enough to revive mercenarism around the world.

Contractors did most of the bleeding, too. In 2003, contractor deaths represented only 4 percent of all fatalities. At the wars’ height, more contractors were killed than military personnel, marking the first time in history that corporate casualties outweighed military losses on U.S. battlefields.23 These are conservative estimates since the United States does not track this data, and companies underreport their wounded and dead because it is bad for business. Wounded or dead contractors save clients money because they do not have to pay contractors’ hospital bills or veteran benefits. Ultimately, contractors are disposable people, like mercenaries in the past.

Contracting has become a new American way of war, and trendlines indicate the United States may outsource 80 to 90 percent of its future wars. Certainly, Erik Prince, the founder of Blackwater International, thinks it should. In 2017, he pushed replacing all American troops in Afghanistan with contractors—in other words, privatizing the war in Afghanistan with 100 percent mercenaries. Invoking neocolonialism, he insisted an American “Viceroy” backed by a mercenary army could fix the place. A year later, he posted a short video on the Internet titled The Way Forward in Afghanistan. In it, he lambasts senior military leadership. “The Pentagon does what it does and wanted to keep doing the same thing it has done for the last 17 years,” Prince states in the video, calling the Pentagon’s plans “the definition of insanity.” Instead, he states the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and 6,000 mercenaries should take charge of the conflict, ending it.24 Outlandish as this might seem, Prince’s proposal has attracted national media attention.

How did we get here? Surely the world’s sole superpower has no need of hired guns. It has it all: the best troops, training, technology, equipment, and resources. But it does not have the will, and this is why it turns to military contractors. Contracting enables bloodless wars, at least from the perspective of the client. Like super technology, mercenaries are a crutch for a nation that wants to fight but does not wish to bleed. This happened not by design but rather by accident. There was an unanticipated collision between American domestic politics and the all-volunteer military, a source of national pride. When the United States went to war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the White House assumed they would be short conflicts. “Five days or five weeks or five months, but it certainly isn’t going to last any longer than that,” Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated on the eve of the Iraq War. The U.S. military can “do the job and finish it fast.”25 Over a decade later, America is still entangled in both places, unwilling to admit defeat but unable to declare victory.

Soon Iraq and Afghanistan together became “The Long War,” as journalists dubbed it, and America’s all-volunteer force discovered it could not recruit enough volunteers to sustain them. This left policymakers with three terrible options. First, they could withdraw and concede defeat in disgrace. Second, they could reinstate a national draft to fill the ranks, like during the Vietnam War. This would be political suicide. Third, they could use contractors to fill the ranks, relying on them mostly for nonlethal tasks. Unsurprisingly, policymakers chose contractors.

Few realize that most of the contractors who fight in U.S. wars are not even American. To keep costs down, military companies hire personnel from the developing world where military labor is cheap, making these firms densely international. According to a Department of Defense (DOD) report, nearly 50,000 contractors worked for U.S. Central Command in 2018. Of these, only 20,000 were American. Most of these contractors were unarmed and performing nonmilitary jobs, therefore not mercenaries. There were 2,002 armed contractors, 746 of whom were Americans and 1,256 whom were foreigners.26

When I was in the industry, I worked alongside ex–special forces troops from places like the Philippines, Colombia, and South Africa. We did the same missions, but they got developing world wages and I did not. Mercenaries are just like T-shirts; they are cheaper in developing countries. Call it the globalization of private force. What is significant for the future of the industry is that these foreigners have gained valuable trade knowledge that can be exported around the world, in search of new clients once the United States does not renew its contract. This spreads mercenarism.

U.S. outsourcing of security has normalized the market for force, inspiring warlords and other conflict entrepreneurs to start their own private military companies. Today, most of the private military companies operating in Iraq and Afghanistan are local and less picky than their U.S. counterparts about whom they work for and what they do. The United States is partly to blame. For example, take its “Host Nation Trucking” contract in 2010. Under this $2.16 billion contract, the U.S. Army hired eight civilian trucking firms to transport supplies to bases in Afghanistan, and also required the companies to provide their own security. In some ways this arrangement worked well; it effectively supplied most U.S. combat outposts across difficult and hostile terrain while only rarely needing the assistance of U.S. troops. However, a U.S. congressional investigation revealed that most of the prime contractors hired local Afghan private military companies for armed protection of the trucking convoys. The congressional report, titled Warlord, Inc., found that

the principal private security subcontractors on the [Host Nation Trucking] contract are warlords, strongmen, commanders, and militia leaders who compete with the Afghan central government for power and authority. Providing “protection” services for the United States supply chain empowers these warlords with money, legitimacy, and a raison d’etre for their private armies.27

Like the medieval market for force, the report concludes that these indigenous “private armies” fuel warlordism, extortion, corruption, and likely collaboration with the enemy. It determined that “the logistics contract has an outsized strategic impact on U.S. objectives in Afghanistan.”28

That same year a U.S. Senate report confirmed the localization of the industry. In a comprehensive investigation into private military companies, the Senate discovered that the industry was going native or, as one observer explained, “What used to be called warlord militias are now Private Security Companies.” 29 American and British private military companies unwittingly produced the native industry by creating local subcontractors that went into business for themselves. For example, the British firm ArmorGroup subcontracted two Afghan security companies that it called “Mr. White” and “Mr. Pink” to provide a guard force. The Senate investigation found evidence that they were linked to murder, kidnapping, bribery, and anti-coalition activities, and concluded that the “proliferation of private security personnel in Afghanistan is inconsistent with the counterinsurgency strategy.”30

Problematically, the only local organizations in conflict-affected states capable of providing private security are warlords, militias, and insurgents who swell the ranks of the marketplace. Bagram Air Base, a strategic U.S. military facility in Afghanistan, employed a local security company run by Asil Khan, a former commander in the Northern Alliance, a guerrilla fighting force. The Afghanistan company Navin also supplied a guard force of 500 men and armed convoy escorts to the air base and is owned by former mujahideen commander Lutfullah. A now-defunct American company called U.S. Protection and Investigations partnered with Northern Alliance military commanders like General Din Mohammad Jurat to provide protection to former militia members. Other examples of indigenous Afghan paramilitary firms include Watan Risk Management, Kandahar Security Group, Strategic Security Solutions International, NCL Holdings, Elite Security Services, and Asia Security Group. This model of force provision did not exist before the United States arrived.

In some cases, these native mercenary groups have restored order yet undermined the very institutions the Americans sought to build—a public police force, a national army, provincial administrations—elements of a Westphalian state. For example, Commando Security is a company that escorts convoys between Kandahar and Helmand Province to the west. Ruhullah, the company’s chief, is suspected of colluding with the Taliban, like most of his peers. According to one official at the Interior Ministry, the “rule seems to be, if the attack is small, then crush it. But if the presence of Taliban is too big to crush, then make a deal.” However, bribing the enemy does not eradicate the problem and perhaps makes it worse. Afghan officials believe another company called Watan Risk Management secretly pays the Taliban to attack North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) convoys in order to keep the private military companies in business. Supply can generate its own demand in a free market for force.

Like medieval mercenaries, this new breed of mercenary can prove overly brutal when executing contracts, with little or no concern for human rights. Ruhullah deals ruthlessly with those who impede the flow of his trucks regardless of whether they are Taliban or civilian. “He’s laid waste to entire villages,” stated one Afghan official. Watan Risk Management and Compass Security were both banned from escorting NATO convoys on the highway between Kabul and Kandahar after a pair of bloody confrontations with Afghan civilians. The industry’s over-utilization of subcontractors or “subs” has produced an indigenous free market for force, replete with homegrown mercenaries. When asked about why NATO would contract these native private military companies, one senior NATO official stated, speaking on the condition of anonymity, “I can’t tell you about the sub to the sub to the sub.”31

All this has led to major investment in private warfare, making war even bigger business. The market for force’s value remains unknown since there is no Bureau of Labor and Statistics for mercenaries. DOD spent about $160 billion on private security contractors from 2007–2012, worth almost four times the United Kingdom’s entire defense budget.32 Moreover, this entails only military contracts and does not include those paid by other government agencies. For example, Blackwater was on a State Department contract during the Nisour Square incident. The total amount the United States paid for private security is unknown, and even Congress does not know despite the fact that it writes the checks.

Contracting is now part of the American way of war. It is one of the few issues in Washington that enjoys true bipartisan support, as Republican and Democratic White Houses rely on military contractors more and more, perhaps for the wrong reasons. The implications are significant, especially for civil-military relations and democratic control of the armed forces, since using contractors may allow the executive branch to circumnavigate congressional oversight. Additionally, the United States has grown strategically dependent on the private sector to sustain wars, creating vulnerabilities that a clever adversary could exploit.

Market Globalization

Heavy U.S. reliance on military contractors has catalyzed the international mercenary trade, with supply and demand diversifying and expanding in chilling ways. On the supply side, the United States has marshaled a global labor pool of mercenaries. Thousands of mercenaries got their start in Iraq or Afghanistan, and when those wars shrank, they set out looking for new conflict markets (that is, war zones) around the world, enlarging the wars there. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan allowed the private military industry to mature, with networks of mercenaries established and some modicum of best practices. Others are imitating the American model, and every day new private military groups emerge from countries like Russia, Uganda, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Colombia. Their services are more robust than Blackwater, offering greater combat power and the willingness to work for the highest bidder with scant regard for human rights. They are mercenary in every sense of the word.

On the demand side, the United States has de facto legitimized mercenaries by using them so heavily. Can the United States really tell Russia not to use private military troops in Syria? No, it cannot. New consumers are appearing everywhere, seeking security in an insecure world: oil and mining companies guarding their drill sites against militias, shipping lines defending their vessels against pirates, humanitarian organizations protecting their workers in dangerous locations, oligarchs who need professional muscle, countries that want to wage proxy wars, regimes fighting civil wars, guerrillas fighting back, and the super rich for any reason you can think of, no matter how petty.

#### That causes escalatory violence in every region and theatre---the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe will erupt with privatized war.

McFate ’19 [Sean; December 2019; Professor of Strategy in the College of International Security Affairs at the National Defense University, Ph.D. in International Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science, M.A. in Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government; National Defense University Press, “Mercenaries and War: Understanding Private Armies Today,” <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/strat-monograph/mercenaries-and-war.pdf>]

An Emerging Threat

When people think of private military contractors, they imagine Blackwater Security Consulting in Iraq circa 2007. However, the market for force has moved on. Firms like Blackwater are quaint compared to the Wagner Group and other contemporary mercenaries. Curiously, this trend is overlooked by scholars, the mainstream media, and the Intelligence Community.2 Consequently, there is a dangerous lacuna of understanding concerning this emerging threat.

Private force has become big business, and global in scope. No one truly knows how many billions of dollars slosh around this illicit market. All we know is that business is booming. Recent years have seen major mercenary activity in Yemen, Nigeria, Ukraine, Syria, and Iraq. Many of these for-profit warriors outclass local militaries, and a few can even stand up to America’s most elite forces, as the battle in Syria shows.

The Middle East is awash in mercenaries. Kurdistan is a haven for soldiers of fortune looking for work with the Kurdish militia, oil companies defending their oil fields, or those who want terrorists dead. Some are just adventure seekers, while others are American veterans who found civilian life meaningless. The capital of Kurdistan, Irbil, has become an unofficial marketplace of mercenary services, reminiscent of the Tatooine bar in the movie Star Wars—full of smugglers and guns for hire.

The United Arab Emirates secretly dispatched hundreds of special forces mercenaries to fight the Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen. Hailing from Latin American countries like Colombia, Panama, El Salvador, and Chile, they were all tough veterans of the drug wars, bringing new tactics and toughness to Middle East conflicts. They were a bargain, too, costing a fraction of what an American or British mercenary would charge, so the Emirates hired 1,800 of them, paying two to four times their old salaries. Allegedly, African mercenaries are also fighting in Yemen for Saudi Arabia and come from countries like Sudan, Chad, and Eritrea. Private force has proved a useful option for wealthy Arab nations, particularly Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the Emirates, that want to wage war but do not have an aggressive military. Their mercenaries have fought in Yemen, Syria, and Libya in recent years.

Turning profit motive into a war strategy, Syria rewards mercenaries who seize territory from terrorists with oil and mining rights. At least two Russian companies have received contracts under this policy: Evro Polis and Stroytransgaz. These oil and mining firms then hired mercenaries to do the dirty work. For example, Evro Polis employed the Wagner Group to capture oil fields from the so-called Islamic State (IS) in central Syria, which it did. Reports show there are about 2,500 Russia-bought mercenaries in Syria. Russia also uses them in Ukraine, and the Ukrainians fight back with their own mercenaries. The war there is awash in Russian, Chechen, French, Spanish, Swedish, and Serbian mercenaries, fighting for both sides in eastern Ukraine’s bloody conflict.

Mercenaries were ubiquitous in the Ukraine conflict. Companies like the Wagner Group conducted a wide range of secret missions, all denied by the Russian government. Ukrainian oligarchs hired mercenaries, too, but not for the country’s sake. Billionaire Igor Kolomoisky employed private warriors to capture the headquarters of oil company UkrTransNafta in order to protect his financial assets.

Nigeria secretly hired mercenaries to solve a big problem: Boko Haram. This Islamic terrorist group fights to carve out a caliphate in Nigeria, and the Nigerian army fights back, its methods no better. There is a saying in Africa: When elephants fight, the grass gets trampled. Tens of thousands of people were killed, and 2.3 million more were displaced from their homes. Boko Haram abducted 276 schoolgirls for “wives,” many of whom were never seen again. International outrage was swift but impotent.

That’s when the Nigerian government secretly turned to mercenaries to fight Boko Haram. These were not the lone gunmen of B-grade movies, but a real private army. They arrived with special forces teams and Mi-24 Hind helicopter gunships—flying tanks. Conducting search and destroy missions, they drove out Boko Haram in a few weeks. The Nigerian military could not achieve this task in 6 years. Some wonder if we should hire mercenaries to hunt and kill terrorists in the Middle East, given the slow progress of national armies and United Nations (UN) absenteeism.

Even terrorists hire mercenaries. Malhama Tactical is based in Uzbekistan, and they only work for jihadi extremists. Malhama’s hired guns are all Sunni, but not all are not ideological like their clients. Their services are standard for today’s market, functioning as military trainers, arms dealers, or elite warriors. Most of their work is in Syria for Nusra Front, an al Qaeda–affiliated terrorist group, and the Turkistan Islamic Party, the Syrian branch of a Uighur extremist group based in China. In the future, jihadis may hire mercenary special forces for precision terrorist attacks.

If terrorists can hire mercenaries, why not humanitarians? Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as CARE, Save the Children, CARITAS, and World Vision are increasingly turning to the private sector to protect their people, property, and interests in conflict zones. Large military companies like Aegis Defense Services and Triple Canopy advertise their services to NGOs, and NGO trade associations like the European Interagency Security Forum and InterAction provide members with guidelines for hiring them. Some think the UN should augment its thinning peacekeeping missions with certified private military companies.3 The option of private peacekeepers versus none at all, which is the condition in many parts of the world today, is a Hobson’s choice. What’s to stop a millionaire from buying a humanitarian intervention in the future? Stopping atrocities would leave quite the legacy. Actress Mia Farrow considered hiring Blackwater to end the genocide in Darfur in 2008.4

Multinational corporations are the biggest new clients of mercenaries, especially the extractive industries. Companies working in dangerous places are tired of relying on corrupt or inept security forces provided to them by host governments, and they are turning to private force. For example, mining giant Freeport-McMoRan employed Triple Canopy to protect its vast mine in Papua, Indonesia, where there is an insurgency. The China National Petroleum Corporation contracts DeWe Security to safeguard its assets in the middle of South Sudan’s civil war. Someday ExxonMobil or Google may hire an army, too.

There are mercenaries on the sea as well, similar to privateers 2 centuries ago. International shipping lines hire them to protect their ships traveling through pirate waters in the Gulf of Aden, Strait of Malacca, and Gulf of Guinea. Here’s how it works. Armed contractors sit on “arsenal ships” in pirate waters and chopper to a client freighter or tanker when called. Once aboard, they act as “embarked security,” hardening the ship with razor wire and protecting it with high-caliber firepower. After the ship passes through pirate waters, the team returns to its arsenal ship and awaits the next client. The industry is based in London, and seeks legitimacy through ISO 28007 certification.5 Some would like to see true privateers: private naval vessels that could hunt and kill pirates. Americans will be pleased to know that Congress is authorized to hire privateers under Article 1, Section 8, of the U.S. Constitution, and this could prove more efficient than sending Arleigh Burke–class destroyers after pirate zodiacs.

There are even mercenaries in cyberspace, called hack back companies. These computer companies attack hackers, or “hack back” those who assail their client’s networks. Hack back companies cannot undo the damage of a network breach, but that is not the point. They serve as a deterrent. If hackers are choosing targets, and they know that one company has a hack-back company behind it and the other does not, they select the softer target. Also known as active defense, this practice is currently illegal in many countries, including the United States, but some are questioning this edict since the National Security Agency offers scant protection for nongovernmental entities. For example, the WannaCry ransomware attack in May 2017 infected more than 230,000 computers in over 150 countries. Victims included the United Kingdom’s National Health Service, Spain’s Telefónica, Germany’s Deutsche Bahn, and U.S. companies like Federal Express. If countries cannot protect their people and organizations from cyber attack, then why not allow them to protect themselves?

Private force is manifesting everywhere. After 150 years underground, the market for force is returning in just a few decades and is growing at an alarming rate. In military strategy, there are five domains of war: land, sea, air, space, and cyber. In less than 20 years, private force has proliferated among every domain except space, but that too may change. Space is already privatized with companies like SpaceX, and it is possible that private armed satellites may one day orbit the Earth.

Worse things are to come. In just 10 years, the market for force has moved beyond Blackwater in Iraq and become more lethal. Mercenaries are appearing everywhere, and no longer just in the fringe. Contract warfare has become a new way of warfare, resurrected by the United States and imitated by others.

The rise of mercenaries is producing a new kind of threat—private war—that threatens chaos. It is literally the marketization of war, where military force is bought and sold like any other commodity. It is an ancient form of armed conflict that modern militaries have forgotten how to fight. Should this trend develop, the super-rich could become superpowers, leading to wars without states. In such a world, states would be mere prizes to be won rather than agents of their own destiny. This has the potential to upend international relations as we know it.

#### Defense spending is unsustainable---contracting allocations are mismanaged and exacerbate non-military crises by systematically draining resources from marginalized communities.

Negin ’20 [Elliott; September 14; Media Director at the Union of Concerned Scientists, M.A. from Columbia University; Scientific American, “It’s Time to Rein in Inflated Military Budgets,” <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/its-time-to-rein-in-inflated-military-budgets/>]

The devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic and its economic fallout provide ample reason to reconsider what truly constitutes national security.

Such a reassessment is long overdue. Despite the trillions of dollars Congress and successive administrations have lavished on the Pentagon since the turn of the century, the massive U.S. arsenal and fighting force deployed worldwide are powerless against grave, nonmilitary threats to national security—from a raging pandemic to the fact that tens of millions of Americans breathe foul air, drink tainted water, and struggle to pay for food, housing and health care.

When it comes to U.S. spending priorities, the numbers seem especially misguided in an era of tight budgets to come. By the Department of Defense’s own accounting, taxpayers spent [$13.34 trillion](https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2019/FY19_Green_Book.pdf) on the U.S. military from 2000 through fiscal year 2019 in inflation-adjusted 2020 dollars. Add to that another [$3.18 trillion](https://www.statista.com/statistics/200507/outlays-of-the-us-department-of-veterans-affairs-since-2000/) for the Veterans Administration, and the yearly average comes to a whopping $826 billion.

No other country’s military outlays come close. In FY 2019, the Pentagon’s budget was nearly three times bigger than China’s defense spending and more than 10 times larger than Russia’s. All told, the U.S. military budget in 2019 exceeded the next 10 countries’ defense budgets combined and singlehandedly accounted for a hefty 38 percent of military spending worldwide.

While the Pentagon budget routinely eats up more than half of annual U.S. discretionary spending, a host of other interrelated threats that undermine national security writ large go chronically underfunded, including the current public health, environmental and climate crises, all of which disproportionately harm low-income communities and communities of color.

Certainly, these crises predate the Trump administration. But in its zeal to dismantle government regulations and slash critical programs, it has greatly exacerbated them. At the same time, its fiscal year (FY) 2021 budget calls for spending [$740.5 billion](https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2079489/dod-releases-fiscal-year-2021-budget-proposal/) on the Pentagon, $100 billion more than when President Trump took office and the most since World War II. In late July, both houses of Congress approved that request.

The Pentagon Wastes Your Money

There are plenty of reasons to cut the Pentagon’s budget, but its track record of profligate spending is among the most obvious. If the Pentagon were a private corporation, gross mismanagement would have forced it into bankruptcy years ago. Dysfunctional internal controls, aided and abetted by years of lax congressional and administration oversight, have enabled it to waste tens of billions of dollars annually, and the last 20 years are littered with a parade of overpriced, botched and bungled projects.

In just the first decade of this century, the Pentagon was forced to cancel a dozen ill-conceived, ineffective weapons programs that cost taxpayers [$46 billion](https://www.military.com/defensetech/2011/07/19/46-billion-worth-of-cancelled-programs). They included the [Future Combat Systems program](https://www.defensenews.com/30th-annivesary/2016/10/25/30-years-future-combat-systems-acquisition-gone-wrong/), a fleet of networked high-tech vehicles that did not work; the [Comanche helicopter](https://nation.time.com/2012/05/25/real-lessons-from-an-unreal-helicopter/), which—after 22 years in development—was never built; and the 40-ton [Crusader artillery gun](https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-2002-05-09-0205090111-story.html), which never even made it to the prototype stage.

To put this example of managerial malfeasance in context, these canceled programs collectively cost more than the federal government [spent](https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/budget) on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over the last five years.

At least the Pentagon killed those projects before they wasted any more money. All too often, it does not know when to pull the plug. The Army’s attempt to replace its outmoded Bradley tank is a case in point. Over the last 17 years, it has blown an estimated $22.9 billion on three flawed prototypes, but in February—just three weeks after rejecting the third failed design—it issued yet another request for proposals from defense contractors.

Then there are programs the Pentagon continues to green-light with zero assurance they will ever perform as advertised. Exhibit A: The Pentagon has wasted more than [$67 billion](https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/692136.pdf) since the late 1990s on a ballistic missile defense system that has never been demonstrated to work in a real-world situation. A spawn of Ronald Reagan’s Star Wars fantasy, the system—based in Alaska and California—will never be able to defend the continental United States from a limited nuclear attack. Any country capable of launching a ballistic missile could easily foil the system with [decoys and other countermeasures](https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/decoys-used-missile-defense-intercept-tests).

Another prime example is the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Expected to cost [$1.5 trillion](https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/f35-fighter-jet-pentagon/) over its lifespan, it has the dubious distinction of being the Department of Defense’s most expensive weapons program of all time. The 490 F-35s built since the first prototype flew 20 years ago continue to be [plagued](https://www.popularmechanics.com/military/aviation/a30718538/f-35-flaws/) by a dozen serious flaws and nearly 900 software defects, and roughly half of the fleet in 2017 and 2018 was grounded for maintenance. Regardless, the Pentagon still plans to buy [2,400 more](https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/f-35-takes-flak-but-still-flying-high) F-35s over the next 25 years.

The F-35 is just one of the malfunctioning weapons systems on the Pentagon’s current [$1.8-trillion](https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-20-439#summary) shopping list of overpriced aircraft, missiles, ships, satellites and tanks. Other poor performers include the $22-billion Zumwalt destroyer, a warship without a mission; the $30-billion [littoral combat ship](https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/navy-spent-30b-16-years-fight-iran-littoral-combat-ship-ncna1031806), which the Navy is already mothballing because it is virtually unusable; and the Air Force’s problem-plagued $43-billion [KC-46 refueling tanker](https://www.defensenews.com/air/2020/06/09/the-air-force-delays-a-full-rate-production-decision-for-the-kc-46/), which offers little improvement over current refuelers.

#### Resource tradeoff risks extinction.

MacDonald ‘5 [Rhona; August 23; Executive Programs Manager at Warwick Business School; Plos Medicine, “Nuclear Weapons 60 Years On: Still a Global Public Health Threat,” vol. 11]

Impacts on Health

“There are the enormous impacts on health and environment, documented in numerous studies, resulting from the development, manufacture, testing, stockpiling, maintenance, transport, dismantling, storage, and disposal of nuclear weapons,” said Michael Christ. “Every one of these steps poses direct risks to the health of the personnel involved and the general population. We [IPPNW] estimated 430,000 deaths worldwide from fatal cancer as a consequence of US atmospheric nuclear testing, from 1945 to 1963. Nuclear programs worldwide have left behind a toxic legacy that will affect human health and the environment for thousands of years. In the US alone, this folly cost taxpayers $5.5 trillion between 1940 and 1996. And spending is on the rise.”

He explained what IPPNW is doing to publicise the threat of nuclear weapons: “We are emphasizing the medical and moral imperative of nuclear disarmament. We must stigmatize nuclear weapons not on the basis of who owns them but for what they are and what they can do. These are not weapons at all—they are instruments of indiscriminate mass murder. They are Nazi crematoria mounted on missiles.”

The world's major health problems are all related, and are ultimately affected by how much money is spent on weapons, according to Douglas Holdstock: “Poverty, under-development, disease, [and] war, which [are] fuelled by the arms trade, climate change, and other environmental threats, such as over-population, are all inter-linked.” And reducing nuclear and other arms spending will free resources for better causes, he said.

What Can International Health-Care Workers Do?

Michael Christ reminds us what is at stake: “We are moving inexorably towards a major nuclear disaster of some form, and the medical dangers are just too profound to ignore for those concerned about and responsible for public health.”

He continued: “The heart of the problem is a lack of political will to rid the world of the only weapons that could extinguish most life on earth in a matter of hours. Creating that political will is our focus for the future.”

Douglas Holdstock said, “[Nobel Peace Laureate] Sir Joseph Rotblat says that to prevent nuclear war we must prevent all war, as the knowledge of how to make nuclear weapons will indeed always be with us. Rotblat ended his Nobel Prize acceptance speech by saying, ‘remember your humanity.’”

“At this difficult and dangerous time it is vital that we work for peace in the world,” said Ruth Tanner. “Nuclear weapons are a threat to the planet and its people and the rogue states that insist on maintaining their destructive arsenal are a minority in a world that wants to be free of nuclear weapons.”

“The NPT is still valid,” said Gunnar Westberg. “A strong international movement for a nuclear weapons convention, prohibiting nuclear weapons, is needed, and may be developing just now. It may work along the pattern of the Campaign to Ban Landmines.”

He continued: “We [physicians] are used to talking to people about questions of life and death. So we must tell the general public that nuclear weapons are the greatest threat to the survival of mankind, and the only intervention that will work is the complete abolition of all nuclear weapons. Now is the time to do this, in this period of low tension between the big powers, and before nuclear weapons proliferate to many more countries.”

“Nuclear weapons and mankind,” he added, “can in the long run not coexist. Either will be abolished. We have a choice.”

Conclusion

The world is in turmoil: terrorism, or at least the fear of terrorism, seems to have a stranglehold; world governments and the United Nations have an arbitrary way of dealing with “rogue states” (notice, for example, the differences in their treatment of Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, and Myanmar); and international treaties can be broken on a whim, such as the recent deal in which the US agreed to share its civilian nuclear knowledge with India. Now is not the time to be gambling with the world's future and that of the human race by holding on to weapons that could destroy the planet thousands of times over. The countries that continue to have such weapons are potential destroyers, not the guardians of democracy, or the defenders of peace, or whatever they choose to call themselves. Democracy should be better than this.

## Solvency---1AC

Finally, solvency:

#### Nationalization is the only path to combatting military excesses---severing the linkage between profits and war demilitarizes foreign policy and restrains provocative posture through democratic control.

Brenes ’19 [Michael and Peter-Christian Aignes; February 26; Associate Director of the Brady-Johnson Program in Grand Strategy and Lecturer in History at Yale University; Deputy Director of the Gotham Center at the City University of New York; The Nation, “Shrinking the Military-Industrial Complex by Putting It to Work at Home,” <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/military-industrial-complex-green-new-deal/>]

If you needed further proof of Bernie Sanders’s argument that most Americans stand with him on the issues, consider the reaction to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s Green New Deal. Despite attacks from the leadership in, or around, both parties, over 80 percent of voters support the litany of proposals advocated by the House [resolution](https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hres109/BILLS-116hres109ih.pdf): job and income guarantees, universal health care, a cleaner environment, and lower socioeconomic inequality. Americans turn out, [yet again](https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/D/bo27316263.html), to be far less conservative than elites have maintained over the last half-century.

Nowhere has the [gap](https://www.jstor.org/stable/3014003?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents) between majority will and elite consensus been more conspicuous or longstanding than on US foreign policy. Trump’s election is perhaps the best demonstration of that fact. But there is strong evidence that most Americans were never “liberal internationalists” either. While it is notable that support for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan [has waned](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/05/after-17-years-of-war-in-afghanistan-more-say-u-s-has-failed-than-succeeded-in-achieving-its-goals/) in recent years, in [polls](http://www.people-press.org/2017/10/05/3-foreign-policy/3_4-13/) Americans have consistently preferred diplomacy to military “solutions” before (and not long after) 9/11. Nonetheless, US soldiers and mercenaries are now prosecuting the latter in 80 countries, [nearly half the planet](mailto:https://www.thenation.com/article/america-empire-war-terror-counterterrorism/).

This situation has prompted the left to call for a comprehensive alternative in US foreign policy. But the question remains, how, exactly, the left can make inroads against the “American empire,” as it is now casually described even on the right. Any talk of dramatically changing foreign policy must give serious attention to reforming the institutions shaping it. In part, that means creating organizations to compete with the “[foreign-policy establishment](https://us.macmillan.com/books/9780374280031)”—“[the blob](https://www.thenation.com/article/matt-duss-bernie-sanders-foreign-policy-blob/),” to use its apt nickname. But the left might also do well to consider another idea that has fallen into obscurity: converting the military-industrial complex to peacetime work.

Since the end of the Cold War, the military has seemingly become “[everything](https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/How-Everything-Became-War-and-the-Military-Became-Everything/Rosa-Brooks/9781476777870)”—[gas-station operators](https://www.pogo.org/analysis/2015/11/dod-pays-premium-for-gas-station-in-afghanistan/) in Afghanistan, concert promoters in Africa, and now, potential contractors to build Trump’s wall. Yet the defense industry has gone unchecked, even as the evidence is clear that it has corrupted the democratic process. Just as the popularity of the Green New Deal—and its focus on the job guarantee—can help us fight global warming, so too might it go a long way toward humanizing our foreign policy and creating a better economy.

Defense conversion is most closely associated with South Dakota Democrat and 1972 presidential candidate George McGovern, who made it his signature issue in Congress. A recession in the mid-1950s and the military cuts following the Cuban missile crisis gave him the opportunity to push the idea through the Senate, and in 1964 he called for a National Economic Conversion Commission (NECC) that would oversee the work. McGovern wanted to get the defense industry out of job creation, recognizing, as many liberal and conservative elites did privately, that the military-industrial complex was essentially a “[gigantic WPA](https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/12/19/green-new-deal-congress-history-mcgovern-223315).” McGovern also wanted to free up hundreds of millions of federal monies for domestic welfare, to shore up the welfare state. But the Vietnam War killed the project, as his fellow Democrats denounced him as a “radical” in the middle of a war.

McGovern drew his ideas from the Columbia economist Seymour Melman, who made defense conversion his lifelong project. In his most famous book, The Permanent War Economy (1974), Melman argued that the military economy was a form of “state capitalism” whose “relentlessly predatory effects” had caused America’s economic decline. Melman brought an economists’ predilection for statistics and an activist’s zeal to what he called “Pentagon capitalism.” Americans, he insisted, had to eliminate unnecessary military spending if they wanted to prevent any future “Vietnam-type interventions.”

Melman had a comprehensive vision for defense conversion. He thought a combination of community-based groups, alternative-use committees, and federal mandates (such as a revitalized NECC) to enforce conversion could lead the country out of the war economy. The military-industrial complex, he argued, had robbed Americans of a manufacturing-based economy, with stable wages for the working class. The result was a “[post-industrial economy](https://books.google.com/books/about/Profits_Without_Production.html?id=g8ixAAAAIAAJ)” where wealth was stratified, jobs were scarce, and a few wealthy elites controlled the labor of most workers. It was the [inequality](https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/01/02/more-power-to-the-workers-the-political-economy-of-seymour-melman/) produced by the military-industrial complex, he felt, that was the true tragedy of the Cold War, not just military adventurism and bloated defense budgets.

How Melman’s conversion plans would have solved the issue of donor pressure—of Pentagon lobbying—remained a question, however, even without Vietnam. Melman’s answer to this problem was to “send representatives to Congress who would reflect a non-militarist organization,” but even the most liberal Democrats were consistently opposed to military cuts in their districts, as they would be in later decades. The problem of the profit motive for military contractors, and how military profits insidiously influenced electoral politics and politicians (ones who aimed to squash conversion efforts), plagued reformers of the military-industrial complex.

The solution was left to Harvard’s John Kenneth Galbraith, who had a grander vision for defense conversion: nationalizing the military-industrial complex. His argument was straightforward. Arms manufacturers depended on Washington: Congress funded the research and development. Privately made weapons also routinely underperformed, and [cost far more than estimated](https://books.google.com/books?id=sKYeAQAAMAAJ&q=The+C-5A+scandal&dq=The+C-5A+scandal&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjJ5uuGusXgAhUNPN8KHSk0B2EQ6AEIKDAA). By converting these already highly concentrated, essentially public firms into governmental nonprofits, Galbraith believed voters could “substantially civilize the incentive structure.”

Obviously, nationalizing arms production would not (immediately) eliminate the military-industrial complex. Like Eisenhower, Galbraith understood that private “merchants of war” were no more puppet masters than were generals, shadowy CIA directors, or presidents. All pushed for greater internationalism; all saw their powers, and budgets, grow enormously. But the only real way to shrink the military-industrial complex, to eliminate the private incentives for increased military spending, lay in severing the connections of for-profit business to national security. Nationalization was thus a necessary first step, before any systematic plan for conversion might be implemented.

#### Fiat and the government are vital---defense contractors infiltrate academia by masquerading pro-military scholarship as independent research---combatting this by advocating nationalization is key.

Marshall ’20 [Shana; Spring 2020; associate director of the Institute for Middle East Studies and assistant research professor at The George Washington University; Middle East Research and Information Project, “The Defense Industry’s Role in Militarizing US Foreign Policy,” <https://merip.org/2020/06/the-defense-industrys-role-in-militarizing-us-foreign-policy/>]

Defense Industry Financing of Pro-War Policy Research

The defense industry’s enormous appetite for consultants and marketing services has spawned a collection of complementary industries such as business intelligence analysts, industry journalists, niche financial advisors, and organizers of arms fairs and industry conferences. These businesses exist to service defense firms: to market them, to promote their products, to facilitate their growth and expansion.

The industry’s greatest asset, however, is the vast troves of seemingly independent research that supports interventionist foreign policies and loose weapons export regimes. Foreign policy and military policy intellectuals, and the think tanks they staff, form an extensive infrastructure interwoven with the global military-industrial complex, which has a dramatic impact on US foreign policy. Twelve of the 25 most-cited US think tanks receive [big money](https://fair.org/extra/who-pays-for-think-tanks) from weapons manufacturers.[[1]](https://merip.org/2020/06/the-defense-industrys-role-in-militarizing-us-foreign-policy/" \l "_edn1) The security justifications produced by these researchers and the weapons industry’s drive for profit are mutually [reinforcing](https://merip.org/2020/06/the-defense-industrys-role-in-militarizing-us-foreign-policy/,%20https:/www.investors.com/news/defense-stocks-rally-iran-nuclear-deal-middle-east-conflict).[[2]](https://merip.org/2020/06/the-defense-industrys-role-in-militarizing-us-foreign-policy/" \l "_edn2) Most Washington, DC-based think tanks like the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the Brookings Institution, the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Arab Gulf States Institute, produce material that promotes an aggressive foreign policy. Consider the Center for Security and International Studies (CSIS), one of the leading foreign policy think tanks in the United States: Among its 17 largest donors are six of the largest weapons makers (Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, SAAB AB and Huntington Ingalls, the largest military shipbuilder in the United States).

Even donors that do not initially look like defense firms are often financial firms with major interests in the defense industry: Starr Insurance is one of the largest insurers of US military contractors and other US government personnel operating overseas and Duquesne Family Capital LLC (run by infamous hedge fund manager Stanley Druckenmiller) has at various points held significant stakes in major defense firms. A scroll down the list of smaller tier donors reveals most of the rest of the military industrial complex, including General Dynamics, BAE, Bell Helicopter, Airbus and Thales.

The major think tanks draw their research fellows overwhelmingly from the national security establishment, where they have spent years cultivating ties with industry. These ties directly impact the research they produce, which directly impacts the policies that are implemented. Take a recent example: the above-mentioned CSIS authored a report sponsored (paid for) by the Aerospace Industries Association, the defense industry’s largest lobby group, on the status of the US defense industrial base. The CSIS report [states](https://www.csis.org/analysis/measuring-impact-sequestration-and-drawdown-defense-industrial-base), “the number of prime vendors declined from an average of approximately 78,500 to 61,700” between 2011 and 2015, driven (they assert) by sequestration and slower growth in defense spending.[[3]](https://merip.org/2020/06/the-defense-industrys-role-in-militarizing-us-foreign-policy/" \l "_edn3) This finding percolates through specialized defense industry media until it reaches the mainstream (in this case The Wall Street Journal) where it [becomes](https://www.wsj.com/articles/defense-consolidation-continues-as-spending-priorities-shift-11560245580), “Cuts to US military spending…contributed to an estimated 17,000 US firms leaving the industry between 2011 and 2015.”[[4]](https://merip.org/2020/06/the-defense-industrys-role-in-militarizing-us-foreign-policy/" \l "_edn4) The report itself, however, states that, “due to the limitations in the subcontract database, CSIS cannot say whether these companies have exited the industrial base,” meaning they could have changed their name, merged with a competitor, incorporated in a different country, been assigned a different industrial code (so they would no longer show up in the relevant database), been acquired by a larger firm or dropped their civilian production lines and become smaller to focus only on defense items.

For an industry lobbying association, the cost of financing a think tank report is peanuts compared to the payoff of getting your biased narrative into the major dailies and in front of the eyeballs of policymakers and their staff members. The fact that a large organization like CSIS with substantial resources and personnel that specializes in researching the defense industry cannot even disentangle corporate filings and government statistics to make a more declarative statement about the fate of these firms also hints at decades of industry efforts to deceive, inveigle and obfuscate, making it impossible for critics of militarism to muster truly comprehensive figures.

Major customers of the US defense industry also finance think tanks to help promote looser export regimes. In 2016 the UAE paid $250,000 for a policy paper at the Center for a New American Security (a major liberal think tank) that argued for loosening the Missile Technology Control Regime that prohibited the export of sophisticated drones to the UAE. Two months after the paper was released, a bipartisan group of House members wrote to President Trump [pressing him](https://www.cnn.com/2017/04/17/politics/congress-sales-drones-jordan-uae-trump/index.html) to approve the UAE drone sale, using the same arguments cited in the paper. Language is often cribbed directly from literature produced by lobbying groups and reproduced in the statements made by elected representatives and the content of the legislation they pass, yet another marker of the blurred lines between the fortunes of private business and the careers of public officials in the United States. It also begs the question, if industry groups (directly or indirectly) are dictating the terms of policy, why bother electing representatives in the first place? In order to devise a democratic and accountable foreign policy it is necessary to divorce questions of war from questions of executive compensation and shareholder dividends, through processes of nationalization as outlined by Pete Moore elsewhere in this issue.

Like defense firms, the Gulf states spend large sums to influence political campaigns and are major donors to US think tanks, [providing](https://bahrainwatch.org/blog/2017/06/12/qatar-gcc-think-tank-cheatsheet) over $85 million to nine such organizations between 2010 and 2017. Most of these funds were disbursed to deflect criticism of the Saudi-UAE bombing campaign in Yemen and to undermine the Iran nuclear deal. This financial support partly explains the limited opposition to the war on Yemen from establishment US foreign policy circles and Congress (until the Saudi government murdered journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018), as well as the promotion of new weapons exports and defense programs. Other states, including Libya, Syria, Tunisia and Egypt, retain highly-paid lobbying firms to plant op-eds in American newspapers, secure private meetings with influential government officials and fund friendly policy memos, often in anticipation of opposition to big defense export deals—another way that government policy and spending patterns are shaped by the arms trade and military prerogatives.

Well-funded think tanks—such as the Foundation for the Defense of Democracy (FDD), a hard-right neoconservative think tank—can even bankroll their experts directly into the executive foreign policy apparatus. As [reported](https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2020/01/09/fdd-war-iran-paid-salary-of-departing-trump-nsc-staffer/) by the Institute for Responsible Statecraft, Richard Goldberg, one of the National Security Council’s most outspoken Iran hawks, sat on the council while his salary and partial expenses were paid by FDD. Nor is this an isolated incident, as researchers from similar organizations, such as the pro-Israel Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), also make rotations onto the council. Overlap of this kind is not surprising, given the formal institutionalization of the revolving door between the private sector and government through legislation like the Intergovernmental Personnel Act, meant to loan industry and academic experts to the government on a temporary basis. Nonetheless, the bias of the program is clear, since the Department of Defense has four such exchange programs directly funneling personnel into its units, while other major agencies with equally complex scientific and technical mandates (such as the Department of Energy and the Treasury) have only one such dedicated program.

#### The plan catalyzes a shift to non-military solutions by de-embedding private control and introducing opportunity costs to military spending.

Marshall ’20 [Shana; Spring 2020; associate director of the Institute for Middle East Studies and assistant research professor at The George Washington University; Middle East Research and Information Project, “The Defense Industry’s Role in Militarizing US Foreign Policy,” <https://merip.org/2020/06/the-defense-industrys-role-in-militarizing-us-foreign-policy/>]

Budgeting for War, Indefinitely

Beyond hawkish think tanks and structural changes in the economy, there are many spending and budgetary practices that promote the continuation of existing wars by further embedding private profit in the decision-making process. Being in a constant state of war necessarily uses up stockpiles of existing weapons, and defense profits come disproportionately from adding additional production runs of existing weapons. The process of designing and building new weapons systems (not just minor modifications) that will not be fed directly into existing stockpiles, by contrast, is riskier and less profitable. Firms thus spend money on research and lobbying to promote looser export regimes and hawkish policy on existing conflicts because both ensure continued demand for weapons already designed and in production. And it is not only the declared wars whose battlefields are stocked with weapons. The large numbers of US overseas bases and forward deployment sites often have their own stockpiles, which can (unsurprisingly) [influence](https://www.cato.org/blog/will-covid-bring-troops-home-maybe-some-them) officials who are deciding whether or not to launch a new US military intervention nearby.

An additional mundane practice that promotes and perpetuates war is the design of budgeting under conditions of war—mainly how Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) interact with the normal defense budgeting process. Actual defense priorities can be moved into the OCO budget, which funds the global war on terror, making more room in the normal defense authorization process to pay for things that are [not necessary](https://www.niskanencenter.org/the-repercussions-of-defense-pork/), like additional production runs of weapons systems that will keep firms’ assembly lines humming but have not been requested by any of the uniformed military service branches.

Current conflicts also act as laboratories to facilitate the use of emerging weapons technologies that exacerbate tensions and produce new rounds of fighting. Such test runs are often less about performance and more about publicity, as they garner significant media attention but often lack a tactical purpose. Two examples are the use of the Massive Ordnance Air Blast Bomb (MOAB) in [Afghanistan](https://theintercept.com/2017/04/13/mother-of-all-bombs-never-used-before-due-to-civilian-casualty-concerns/?comments=1) to target a small number of ISIS fighters and when Israel became the first air force to fly Lockheed Martin’s F-35 in combat. When allies like Israel, which carries out regular military operations in Palestine, Lebanon and elsewhere in the region, publicly use new weapons systems, their actions can drum up additional commercial interest and further solidify the relationships between major firms and their biggest clients. In this case, the jet was used in Gaza against Hamas, which does not even possess radar or air defense systems (much less its own air force) so it was tactically pointless. But it did terrorize Palestinians and increase tensions on the ground—and its maiden voyage was widely reported in defense industry dailies.

Where to Go from Here?

By recognizing that industry profits help drive the war machine, the question then becomes how to remove those profits from the foreign policy equation. If driving profits into shareholder dividends and executive pay were less of a priority because defense companies were publicly owned, many of the perverse incentives for continued war would be short circuited. A policy of nationalizing the defense industry would remove the linkage between profit and policy, but it would also have additional upsides, like encouraging more research that has civilian applications. So-called cost plus contracting, for example, which is dominant in defense procurement and incentivizes keeping costs high, prevents spillover of technologies into commercial industry where the impetus is to develop low-cost technologies that are affordable to average consumers.

Nationalization would also mean greater transparency since the industry could no longer use claims of proprietary information to obscure much of its inner workings (including details that have absolutely nothing to do with sensitive technology, like what percentage of a specific weapons system is produced in overseas factories). Currently, the information needed to track the industry’s global supply chain or allow for independent oversight of procurement spending is either classified or so opaque as to defy systematic examination. Public control and greater oversight would inaugurate political processes and pressures that can help put non-military solutions on an equal footing.

In this environment, military spending can be properly framed as an [opportunity cost](https://www.cato.org/blog/comparing-military-spending-covid-19-related-medical-costs): for example, how many hospital beds and ventilators are worth one F-35 sitting in a hanger in Germany? Highlighting the disparities in funding for war versus funding to protect human life, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, could become a routine budgetary conversation with decidedly unroutine effects on the continuation of the US imperial project.

#### It solves durably and sufficiently. Removing private influence from the military subjects defense to rigorous democratic and public controls.

Moore ’20 [Pete; Spring 2020; Associate Professor of Political Science at Case Western Reserve University; Middle East Research and Information Project, “A Not-So-Modest Proposal to Nationalize the Defense Industry,” <https://merip.org/2020/06/a-not-so-modest-proposal-to-nationalize-the-defense-industry/>]

Shifting the course of catastrophic American policy in the Middle East requires bolder steps than changes in doctrine and grand strategy. A substantially less militarized foreign policy necessitates altering the structural political economies that have justified, nurtured and rewarded the carnage. Ending taxpayers’ support for defense industry profits would threaten little of the dynamism and technological achievement of the past. A transition to public control and oversight, however, could prove a powerful tool to democratize foreign policy making.

Subordinating the industry’s profit drive to the messiness of democratic consensus building can dismantle the current collusive networks that have kept the United States engaged in constant war for most of our lifetimes. The insular world of industry executives and their professional foreign policy advocates could be opened to wider agendas for what constitutes national defense—like redirecting funds to buttress agricultural supply chains and rural hospitals. A nationally decentralized public defense sector could incentivize the growth of a more civilian-oriented cadre of defense experts.

Calls to nationalize America’s defense industries are not new—they typically come when high defense spending is punctuated by domestic economic crisis or when the US military is engaged in an unpopular war. At the height of the Vietnam War, the liberal economist John Kenneth Galbraith argued for making the defense industry de jure what it already was: a public corporation that relied heavily on public support and subsidy. He was motivated to make this argument because of the role that a profit-driven industry plays in militarizing US foreign policy, and in part because he knew that increasing spending on defense would decrease investment in President Kennedy’s New Frontier package of economic and social programs.

Since that time, formal US military spending has gone from $45 billion to nearly $700 billion annually. As social programs have atrophied, the major defense industry corporations have diversified their sectors to take on essential government functions, including data management and healthcare administration, further expanding their share of government contracting. And thanks to axiomatic public subsidies, defense firms have little to fear from any market discipline that might endanger their high annual profits and essentially recession-proof stock valuations. Governments, of course, keep secrets, but the spread of hidden bureaucracies and obscured financial networks around defense contracting push more and more decision making into the shadows. Deeper forms of public regulation or outright takeover of the defense sector is not only reasonable but necessary.

The current crisis prompted by the coronavirus pandemic has laid bare—more than ever before—the costs of under-investment in non-defense sectors like health and welfare programs within the United States. The swiftness of calls for nationalizing parts of the American economy during the coronavirus crisis has been breathtaking. Nevertheless, American neoliberalism dies hard. Worker assistance is temporary, means-tested and tightly regulated, corporate bailouts are programmatic, broad and opaque. Advocacy for a nationalized defense sector has to tackle some of this conventional wisdom at the same time that it advances a realistic form of public sequestration. In other words, sequestration advocacy must acknowledge and build upon the past technical successes of defense industries and their public funders at the same time it advances a radical reorganization of that relationship. Nationalization done in this way can be less blunt and more contoured.

#### Fiat is good---lack of scholarly engagement with military details and cost-benefit calculations cements poor strategy that increases botched interventions---deferral of policy choices is ignorance that primes the system for war.

Bolton ’17 [John, not Trump’s; February 27; Army aviator, graduate of the Command and General Staff College’s Art of War Scholars Program and holds degrees from West Point and American Military University; Foreign Policy, “America’s military doesn’t need more money — what it needs is an engaged public to demand a genuine strategy,” <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/02/27/americas-military-doesnt-need-more-money-what-it-needs-is-an-engaged-public-to-demand-a-genuine-strategy/>]

America’s military doesn’t need more money — what it needs is an engaged public to demand a genuine strategy

Money will not fix what ails our military. We don't have a supply problem, we have a demand problem created by poor strategy.

[Image and author omitted].

Many are hopeful Congress and the new administration will drastically increase the military’s budget. Talk of a 300-plus ship Navy, more Army brigades, and more jets have taken over concerns about sequestration cuts.

As a soldier, I welcome additional funds for training, personnel, and equipment.

But as a citizen I have concerns. Money will not fix what ails our military. We don’t have a supply problem, we have a demand problem created by poor strategy. We have a military doing missions often beyond its purview, acting as the lead government agency in areas it is not qualified to do so, bearing impossible expectations in the process. As military professionals, we fail if we don’t achieve national goals (end states); the corollary to this is simple, we must demand clear and achievable goals. Our lack of both skews defense decisions.

I don’t doubt the honesty of military leaders who say maintenance is limiting flights or our forces are stretched, but these conditions, to me, are a function of a force doing too much, not a function of limited budgets. A glance at Department of Defense budgets over the last ten years begs the question: Where exactly are the budget cuts? Where is the huge gutting of the military? Stories of America’s military decline overstate their case at best. Army, Air Force, and Navy aircraft fleets outnumber most other countries, the Coast Guard is one of the biggest navies, and DoD spends more than the next 5-7 powers combined.

In fact, money is not the solution — it may actually be contributing to our problems. Enormous budgets and unclear strategy allow us to ignore hard choices. Since the advent of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF), America has skipped the “guns vs. butter” argument entirely. Instead of hard choices, America used debt to outsource its wars to a small cadre of competent, capable, but increasingly distant professionals. Former Defense Secretary Bob Gates once remarked that we spend more on military bands than diplomacy. Too much money has allowed the military to dominate what should be whole-of-government decision making.

The trouble is, it hasn’t worked. Since the Cold War ended, in all but a few cases the employment of American force has not succeed as planned. In fact, there is substantial evidence our policies are actually exacerbating problems of regional instability and terrorism. Our methods have become fundamentally attritional, trading lives and spending massive sums. Our present strategy presumes inexhaustible money and willpower. But both our finite and the money pot is running out.

Fifteen years after launching a worldwide effort to defeat and destroy terrorist organizations, the United States finds itself locked in a pathologically recursive loop; we fight to prevent attacks and defend our values, only to incite further violence against ourselves and allies while destabilizing already chaotic regions. Our forces are competent, professional, and effective. But, no matter how good our forces are, it is irrelevant for the reasons laid out by historian Williamson Murray: “No matter how effective the military institutions might be at the tactical and operational levels, if the strategy and political framework [was] flawed, the result was defeat.”

The solution to our strategic malaise is not funding, equipment or technology. We need a strategy that is sustainable and realistic— one that evaluates threats and defense needs (engagements, support to allies, etc.) against a harsh assessment of resources available. It is likely that American politics and political turnover prevent formulation of a long-standing grand strategy. Nevertheless, this does not alleviate leadership from laying out a vision of American power that incorporates the interagency better; rather than putting the military in the lead on so many issues.

As it stands, we rarely discuss long-term policy or strategy. For example, at Defense Secretary James Mattis’s confirmation hearings there was little questioning of our strategy against terror. Rather, like the recent raid in Yemen, conversations devolve into discussions of tactics.

Lately, even these discussions have been politicized, with some asserting that questioning tactics is tantamount to admitting defeat. This is nonsense. As Peter Lucier recently wrote in this blog, “Failing to question whether they died for a good reason doesn’t do a disservice to those who died. Failure to examine their deaths is what truly does disservice to the lives of heroes.”

War is always difficult for democracies but the national consensus building seen in previously eras is largely ignored because the public bears little of the direct cost. Even the massive debt accumulated by fighting is only abstract.

In this sense the AVF short-circuited America’s social contract. It freed national leadership from the grounding reality of public involvement. Today almost all Americans will say they “support the troops” and most will support increased defense budgets. But few senior officials or national leaders — certainly not the public at large — will even ask what, exactly, are we doing in Yemen? Moreover, is our policy of targeted killing working? Since we don’t ask even the basic questions, we doom ourselves to continue policies that may not work.

We need clear understanding that using force is a means, not an end; it is certainly not a strategy. Our military has taken the lead in foreign policy, resulting in militarized solutions to complex political problems. Only with a proper, realistic strategy can we align national means with strategic ends in order to cease using our military as the national Band-Aid to problems better addressed throughout the interagency. Anything less is a disservice to the public and its military.

#### Imagining the hypothetical consequences of foreign policy proposals teaches ideological reflexivity, accurate policy prediction, and argumentative agency.

**Esberg and Sagan ’12** [Jane and Scott; 2012; Special assistant to the Director at New York University’s Center on International Cooperation; Professor of Political Science and Director of Stanford's Center for International Security and Cooperation; The Nonproliferation Review, “Negotiating Nonproliferation: Scholarship, Pedagogy, and Nuclear Weapons Policy,” p. 95-96]

These government or quasi-government think tank simulations often provide very similar lessons for high-level players as are learned by students in educational simulations. Government participants learn about the importance of understanding foreign perspectives, the need to practice internal coordination, and the necessity to compromise and coordinate with other governments in negotiations and crises. During the Cold War, political scientist Robert Mandel noted how crisis exercises and war games forced government officials to overcome ‘‘bureaucratic myopia,’’ moving beyond their normal organizational roles and thinking more creatively about how others might react in a crisis or conflict. The skills of imagination and the subsequent ability to predict foreign interests and reactions remain critical for real-world foreign policy makers. For example, simulations of the Iranian nuclear crisis\*held in 2009 and 2010 at the Brookings Institution’s Saban Center and at Harvard University’s Belfer Center, and involving former US senior officials and regional experts\*highlighted the dangers of misunderstanding foreign governments’ preferences and misinterpreting their subsequent behavior. In both simulations, the primary criticism of the US negotiating team lay in a failure to predict accurately how other states, both allies and adversaries, would behave in response to US policy initiatives.

By university age, students often have a pre-defined view of international affairs, and the literature on simulations in education has long emphasized how such exercises force students to challenge their assumptions about how other governments behave and how their own government works. Since simulations became more common as a teaching tool in the late 1950s, educational literature has expounded on their benefits, from encouraging engagement by breaking from the typical lecture format, to improving communication skills, to promoting teamwork. More broadly, simulations can deepen understanding by asking students to link fact and theory, providing a context for facts while bringing theory into the realm of practice. These exercises are particularly valuable in teaching international affairs for many of the same reasons they are useful for policy makers: they force participants to ‘‘grapple with the issues arising from a world in flux. Simulations have been used successfully to teach students about such disparate topics as European politics, the Kashmir crisis, and US response to the mass killings in Darfur. Role-playing exercises certainly encourage students to learn political and technical facts\* but they learn them in a more active style. Rather than sitting in a classroom and merely receiving knowledge, students actively research ‘‘their’’ government’s positions and actively argue, brief, and negotiate with others. Acts can change quickly; simulations teach students how to contextualize and act on information.