

CATO HANDBOOK FOR CONGRESS

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 108TH CONGRESS

CATO
INSTITUTE

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4. Clearing the Decks for War

The U.S. government should

- promptly eliminate the foreign aid budget devoted to developmental aid,
- withdraw all U.S. military personnel from Bosnia and Kosovo within one year,
- withdraw all U.S. troops stationed in Western Europe by 2005,
- withdraw all U.S. troops stationed in South Korea by 2005,
- withdraw all U.S. troops stationed in Japan by 2007,
- transfer some of the funding and personnel involved in the above withdrawals to units and tasks relevant to the war on terrorism, and
- demobilize all surplus forces.

President Bush has emphasized that the war against terrorism will be lengthy and difficult, despite the gratifying initial successes in Afghanistan. He is right. Even if the war is confined (as it should be) to campaigns against those organizations responsible for the September 11, 2001, attacks or any future attacks instead of becoming an amorphous crusade against evil in the world, the conflict will not be over quickly. That's why it is imperative that the United States promptly clear the decks for war. America must jettison obsolete or unnecessary commitments and expenditures.

When a family suffers an unexpected hardship or tragedy, it does not continue with business as usual, leaving its priorities and spending patterns unaltered. Likewise, a nation must alter its priorities when facing difficulties. For America, the war against the terrorists who committed the September 11 outrages will be the top priority for the foreseeable future. Yet, instead of reducing or eliminating less essential commitments, Washington seems inclined to pile the new commitments on top of the old.

Barely a year into the war on terrorism, the failure to trim other commitments is already creating strains on the military. Gen. Tommy Franks, the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, and other military leaders have complained that the deployment is creating overburdened and stressed-out personnel. That is a most troubling development. The United States has fewer than 10,000 troops in Afghanistan and only a few thousand more deployed in Pakistan and some of the Central Asian republics near Afghanistan. As military deployments go, the campaign against al-Qaeda and the Taliban to this point has not been an especially large one. Yet even this modest effort is creating significant strains. One has to wonder how severe the strain will become if a substantially larger deployment in the war on terrorism is ever required.

There are numerous commitments that should be candidates for elimination, including a plethora of wasteful and unnecessary domestic spending programs. The United States should also make significant cuts in the realm of international affairs, starting with the elimination of the \$10.9 billion of developmental aid in the foreign aid budget. Numerous scholars have documented the dismal record of developmental aid over the past half century (see Chapter 66). U.S. developmental aid programs have subsidized counterproductive economic policies in recipient countries and helped entrench corrupt political elites. Such aid was a foolish expenditure the United States could ill afford even before September 11. In a post-September 11 environment, it should be one of the first programs on the chopping block.

But developmental aid is not the only arena in which the U.S. government needs to reorder its priorities in international affairs. There are also a number of obsolete or unnecessary security commitments that should be terminated. Four such candidates for elimination stand out.

Terminate the Nation-Building Missions in the Balkans

The nation-building missions in Bosnia and Kosovo were foolish and unnecessary from the outset. Despite the exertions of America and its NATO allies, Bosnia is no closer to being a viable country today than it was when the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed more than seven years ago. The NATO intervention in Kosovo is even worse. It merely strengthened the hand of Albanian nationalists who want to create a Greater Albania and who have recently stirred up trouble across the border in Macedonia.

The missions in Bosnia and Kosovo cost the United States nearly \$6 billion a year. More than 3,000 U.S. troops are tied down in Bosnia in glorified police work. More than 6,000 troops are stationed in Kosovo performing similar tedious tasks. U.S. leaders should immediately inform the European members of NATO that we will be withdrawing all of our forces over the next year.

The European allies would then have to decide whether to continue the Balkan peacekeeping missions without U.S. participation or withdraw their own forces as well. U.S. leaders should not especially care which option the Europeans select. The Balkans have never been an arena in which vital American interests were at stake. The region is more important to the nations of the European Union, and they should decide whether a peacekeeping venture is worth the expense and bother. It is absurd to argue that the prosperous nations of the European Union cannot police the Balkans if they wish to do so. American money, as well as the U.S. military personnel tied down in useless peacekeeping tasks, could be used far more effectively to prosecute the war against terrorism.

Withdraw the 100,000 U.S. Troops Stationed in Western Europe

The U.S. troop presence in Western Europe is an utterly obsolete commitment inherited from the Cold War. As noted in Chapter 51, the original concept of NATO did not include the permanent stationing of U.S. troops in Europe. Since the Cold War has been over for more than a decade, the time is long overdue for the withdrawal of all such personnel still deployed on the Continent.

Even the most creative defenders of the deployment would have difficulty explaining just why the troops are still there. The U.S. forces are apparently on duty to prevent an invasion of Western Europe by a Warsaw Pact that no longer exists led by a Soviet Union that no longer exists. How tank divisions stationed in Germany benefit the security of the United States in the 21st century is truly a mystery.

The Europeans clearly can provide for their own security without relying on U.S. troops. There is no serious security threat in Europe, nor is one likely to emerge in the foreseeable future. The security problems that do exist are small-scale, with the disorders in the Balkans being the primary examples. The nations of the European Union should certainly be able to manage their own defense and deal with such minor security contingencies. Collectively, the European Union has a population larger than that of the

United States as well as a larger gross domestic product. That is true even without taking into account the new nations that will be added to the EU within the next two years.

True, the European nations (especially the major states in the EU) might have to raise their military budgets slightly to offset the withdrawal of U.S. forces, but that action would hardly result in an onerous burden. Besides, it is appropriate that the Europeans pay the full cost of their own defense. Giving the prosperous European allies a de facto defense subsidy made no sense even before September 11. It is a luxury the United States simply cannot afford in a post-September 11 setting.

The U.S. military units stationed in Europe should be withdrawn by the beginning of 2005 and demobilized. Some of the personnel should then be reassigned to lighter, more mobile units that would be relevant in the fight against terrorism. The military commitment to NATO costs the United States nearly \$40 billion a year. Even a partial demobilization would save American taxpayers several billion dollars.

Withdraw the 37,000 U.S. Troops Stationed in South Korea

The U.S. troop presence in South Korea is another obsolete, Cold War-era obligation. U.S. troops stayed in that country after the end of the Korean War in 1953. At that time, a plausible argument could be made for the commitment. U.S. leaders worried that a new war on the peninsula would be merely one phase of an overall communist offensive to dominate all of East Asia—a development that would have threatened important American interests. Moreover, South Korea was a poor, war-torn country incapable of defending itself. Not only did it face a hostile, well-armed communist North Korea, but it faced a North Korea backed by both Moscow and Beijing.

That is clearly no longer the case. Today, South Korea faces only one adversary: a desperately poor and increasingly isolated North Korea. The last thing either Moscow or Beijing desires is another war on the Korean peninsula. Indeed, in recent years both Russia and China have distanced their policies from those of their ostensible North Korean ally and forged close political and economic ties with South Korea. Moreover, South Korea now has enormous advantages in the contest with North Korea. The South has twice the population and an economy nearly 40 times larger than that of its adversary. A nation with those characteristics should certainly be able to defend itself.

Unfortunately, U.S. officials seem to have adopted an American version of the Brezhnev Doctrine when it comes to the military tie to South Korea. That doctrine, articulated by Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, asserted that once a nation became a member of the communist camp it must always remain in the communist camp. The U.S. version seems to be “Once a security dependent of the United States, always a security dependent of the United States.”

Instead of taking responsibility for its own security, South Korea chooses to underinvest in defense and remain dependent on the United States for major portions of its military needs. Despite being next door to one of the more bizarre and unpredictable regimes in the world, Seoul actually spends a *lower* percentage of its gross domestic product on defense than does the United States. Moreover, one of South Korea’s first responses to the East Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s was to cut its already anemic defense budget.

U.S. leaders should inform their South Korean counterparts that the days of free riding on the U.S. security guarantee are over. America has its own war to wage, and it can no longer afford to subsidize prosperous security clients. The security commitment to South Korea costs the United States approximately \$15 billion a year. Even if some of the forces withdrawn were subsequently redeployed to wage the war on terrorism, American taxpayers would realize substantial savings.

Withdraw the Nearly 50,000 Troops Stationed in Japan

The U.S. military presence in Japan is yet another obsolete commitment. In the decades following World War II, U.S. officials wanted to keep Japanese rearmament to a minimum. Indeed, Article 9 of Japan’s constitution, placed in the document in response to intense pressure from the United States, renounced war and seemed to preclude the existence of any armed forces. Because Washington soon wanted some Japanese assistance in the struggle against the Soviet Union, however, U.S. leaders endorsed a more flexible interpretation of Article 9, and Japan developed modest ground, air, and naval “self-defense forces.”

Nevertheless, the United States has never fully trusted Japan and has shown no support for Japan’s playing a vigorous security role—much less an independent security role—in East Asia. Even the much-touted changes in the defense guidelines for the U.S.-Japanese alliance, adopted in 1997, authorize Japan merely to provide nonlethal logistical support for U.S. military operations in East Asia unless Japan itself is attacked.

U.S. officials seem content to keep Japan as a barely trusted junior security helper. The tradeoff for that limitation is that Tokyo expects the United States to keep military forces in Japan and take primary responsibility for Japan's security.

That policy needs to change. Some of the U.S. forces stationed in Japan sit as uselessly as the troops stationed in Western Europe. The more than 18,000 Marines stationed on Okinawa fall into that category. The air and naval units deployed in Japan arguably contribute to the overall stability of East Asia, but they also provide a de facto defense subsidy to Japan.

It is time for Japan to step forward and assume its rightful role as the principal stabilizing power in East Asia. Japan has the world's second largest economy, and its military forces—although relatively small—are modern and capable. A modest increase in defense spending would enable Japan to offset the withdrawal of U.S. forces in a few years. Although the security environment in East Asia is not as benign as the environment in Europe, there is no need for a large U.S. military presence. It should be humiliating for Japan, with all its capabilities, to still be dependent on the United States for its security.

The Marines on Okinawa should be withdrawn over the next two years, and the air and naval units should depart gradually thereafter. Some of the latter units probably would be redeployed to assist in the war on terrorism, but even so, much of the nearly \$20 billion a year cost of the U.S. military commitment to Japan could be saved.

It is uncertain whether the United States would need to redirect all of the money saved from terminating the foreign aid budget and ending obsolete or unnecessary overseas military commitments to the war on terrorism. Clearly, some additional resources ought to be devoted to beefing up our special forces units and intelligence gathering and evaluation capabilities. They have both been shortchanged for years, and yet they are the front-line forces in the fight against terrorism.

But there may well be some money left over. That is not a bad thing. At the very least, such savings might head off the looming prospect of a return to large federal budget deficits. The savings might even be enough to give the beleaguered American taxpayer a modest break. But however the money is used, it would be better than the current wasteful situation.

Recommended Readings

Bandow, Doug. "Korean Detente: A Threat to Washington's Anachronistic Military Presence?" Cato Institute Foreign Policy Briefing no. 59, August 17, 2000.

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- Carpenter, Ted Galen. “Fixing U.S. Foreign Policy.” *Reason*, October 2002.
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- Dempsey, Gary, ed. *Exiting the Balkan Thicket*. Washington: Cato Institute, 2002.
- Eland, Ivan. *Putting “Defense” Back into U.S. Defense Policy*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001.
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- Layne, Christopher. “Death Knell for NATO? The Bush Administration Confronts the European Security and Defense Policy.” Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 394, April 4, 2001.
- Olsen, Edward A. “A Northeast Asian Peace Dividend.” *Strategic Review* (Summer 1998).
- . *U.S. National Defense for the Twenty-First Century: The Grand Exit Strategy*. London: Frank Cass, 2002.

—Prepared by Ted Galen Carpenter

5. Waging an Effective War

Congress should

- stress to the administration that the joint resolution approved by the Senate and House of Representatives authorized the president “to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001,” not to wage an amorphous war on “evil”;
- urge the administration to focus the war on terrorism only on the al-Qaeda terrorist network and not expand it to other terrorist groups or countries that have not attacked the United States;
- urge the administration to reduce military operations in Afghanistan and expand military operations into the Peshawar border region in Pakistan to root out al-Qaeda and Taliban forces; and
- recognize that much of the war against terrorism will not involve military action but will emphasize diplomatic, intelligence, and law enforcement cooperation with other countries.

The war on terrorism is unlike any other war the United States has waged. The enemy is not a traditional nation-state with armed forces. Instead, it is a dispersed terrorist network operating in more than 60 countries around the world. As demonstrated on September 11, terrorists are unlikely to attack using conventional military means—and they are willing to sacrifice themselves in suicide operations. Also unlike traditional wars, the war on terrorism does not have a geographical front where battle lines are clearly drawn. The terrorists will choose where they will attack (either in the United States or U.S. targets abroad), but the United States may not know where to direct retaliatory action. This war is likely to be long (if the English experience with the Irish Republican Army and

the Israeli experience with Palestinian terrorist groups are any indication). The mere absence of terrorist violence against the United States or U.S. targets overseas will not be a reliable standard for determining if the war is being won. There could be long lulls between terrorist attacks. And there is not likely to be a clearly and easily defined victory—the terrorists will probably not surrender. Realistically, the United States may not be able to win the war in the traditional sense of “winning” and “losing.” Recognizing and accepting that the strategic outcome may be ambiguous can help effective engagement with the enemy.

Focus on al-Qaeda

To begin, the United States must clearly define the terrorist enemy, and in this instance the enemy is the al-Qaeda terrorist network, which is the group responsible for the September 11 attacks against the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. Indeed, the joint resolution of Congress after the attacks authorized the president “to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorists attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001.” Therefore, the focus of the war and our efforts must be on al-Qaeda, not a more expansive and nebulous war against terrorism in general. That means avoiding distractions (which use up scarce resources and could potentially lead to getting bogged down) that are tenuous and tangential to al-Qaeda, such as the Abu Sayef in the Philippines and Muslim Chechen rebels in the Republic of Georgia. Both of those are internal problems best left to their respective governments. Similarly, the United States needs to avoid making false linkages between the war on terrorism and the war on drugs by including the Colombian FARC as a target. And the United States must avoid needlessly stirring the hornets’ nest by trying to connect al-Qaeda to other terrorist groups, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, which do not focus their attacks against the United States, without clear proof that such groups are collaborating against the United States. It also means understanding that—unless hard evidence proves otherwise—except for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda is not linked to, does not receive support from, and has not been given safe haven by other countries. In other words, the war on terrorism should not be expanded to include military operations against any of the countries of the “axis of evil.”

It is also important to understand that military operations—such as Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan—are likely to be the excep-