



NYT: Time for Cuts in Security Spending?

A number of critics have bemoaned the cost of war and national security since the attacks of September 11. According to the *New York Times*, the number of people opposed to the “blank check” used for security efforts in the United States has increased and may cause lawmakers to [rethink](#) security spending.

The *New York Times* writes, “The looming [federal budget](#) crunch, a sense that major attacks on the United States are unlikely and new bipartisan criticism of the sprawling counterterrorism bureaucracy may mean that the open checkbook era is nearing an end.”



In July of 2011, Reuters reported that the total cost of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan will reach as high as \$3.7 trillion dollars, a figure they borrowed from the research project “Costs of War” by Brown University’s Watson Institute for International Studies.

Additionally, in 2013 alone, the cost of the Department of Homeland Security will run taxpayers \$35.5 billion for its national security activities, according to the White House website.

Using figures from various federal government agencies and budgets, TomDispatch.com reports that the total cost of national security for 2013 will be approximately \$930 billion. Putting that figure into perspective, the website notes, “If our national security budget were its own [economy](#), it would be the 19th largest in the world, roughly the size of Australia’s. Meanwhile, the country with the next largest military budget, China, spends a mere pittance by comparison. The most recent [estimate](#) puts China’s military funding at around \$136 billion.”

The National Priorities Project has determined that the total cost of spending in defense and homeland security since the attacks of September 11, 2001 is more than \$7.6 trillion.

While the candidates in the presidential race have addressed foreign policy, they have failed to touch upon domestic security. According to a September Gallup poll, less than one half of one percent of Americans currently view terrorism as the country’s most important problem.

That is most likely because of the cumbersome issue of the failing economy. However, some believe that the next administration will have to make significant decisions regarding American security efforts.

“After 9/11, we had to respond with everything we had, not knowing what would work best,” said Rick Nelson of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. “That’s a model we can no longer afford, financially or politically.”

Likewise, Michael Hayden, former leader of both the National Security Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency after 9/11, states that the time for the United States to begin to cut security spending is coming, though he believes the country is not quite there yet.



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on October 26, 2012

The *New York Times* explains the increasing sentiment toward cuts to security spending:

In the view of most specialists, the danger to United States territory from Al Qaeda and its allies is far less than it was in 2001. Al Qaeda's leaders have been relentlessly hunted, its ideology was rejected by most of the young Muslims who led the Arab revolts, and its recruits in the United States have been few. Of more than 160,000 homicides in the country since Sept. 11, 2001, just 14 were carried out by Al Qaeda sympathizers in the name of jihad.

The *Times* attributes the credit for the decreasing need for exorbitant security spending in America to years of spending a dramatic amount of money on security efforts, and the creation of a number of new agencies as part of national security efforts.

But according to former GOP presidential contender Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas), military and security spending actually creates more of a threat to national security than anything else.

Paul notes that even those lawmakers who tout themselves as fiscal conservatives have treated military spending differently from all other spending. Likewise, Paul, who emphasizes that there is a difference between military spending and security spending, contends that the so-called security spending has merely helped to build a powerful military-industrial complex in the United States, while doing little to actually ensure American security.

During one of the Republican presidential debates, Ron Paul [explained](#):

First thing I would like to do is make sure that you understand there's a difference between military spending and defense spending. I'm tired of all the militarism that we are involved in. And we're wasting this money in getting us involved. And I agree, we are still in danger, but most of the danger comes by our lack of wisdom on how we run our foreign policy.

So I would say there's a lot of room to cut on the military, but not on the defense. You can slash the military spending. We don't need to be building airplanes that were used in World War II — we're always fighting the last war. But we're under great threat, because we occupy so many countries. We're in 130 countries. We have 900 bases around the world. We're going broke.

In February of this year, Paul [wrote](#):

The [military-industrial complex](#) that [President Eisenhower](#) warned us about has become every bit the voracious monolith he feared. It wastes as much as any other arm of government, if not more, because it knows it can depend on unlimited blank checks from a terrified Congress...

Wasting money on overseas adventurism and nation building threatens our national security by massively contributing to our debt. Both welfare and warfare spending are tipping our economy into a serious currency and debt crisis. We can afford no sacred cows in our budget. One only has to look to the violence and civil unrest in Greece and ask — is that the sort of security we envision for our nation's future?

Paul and like-minded individuals have emphasized that [foreign policy](#) changes would play a significantly more dramatic role in improving the national security of America than would security spending. According to Paul, "We're endangered as a consequence of our foreign policy."

Paul and other constitutionalists understand that the best way to protect the American people is to abandon the notion that it is America's responsibility to meddle in the affairs of other nations, and to cut off all foreign aid.



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Additionally, civil libertarians have voiced concerns that as national security efforts have increased, American civil liberties have also increasingly been at risk.

And some believe that damage may never be undone.

Marc Rotenberg of the Electronic Privacy Information Center believes that as long as the “architecture of surveillance and security” that followed 9/11 remains in place, Americans will see little improvement in personal liberties. “We’re still left with this largely unaccountable infrastructure,” he said. “As long as we don’t begin to dismantle that, I’m not sure we will ever move past 9/11.”

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