

National Unity on National Security

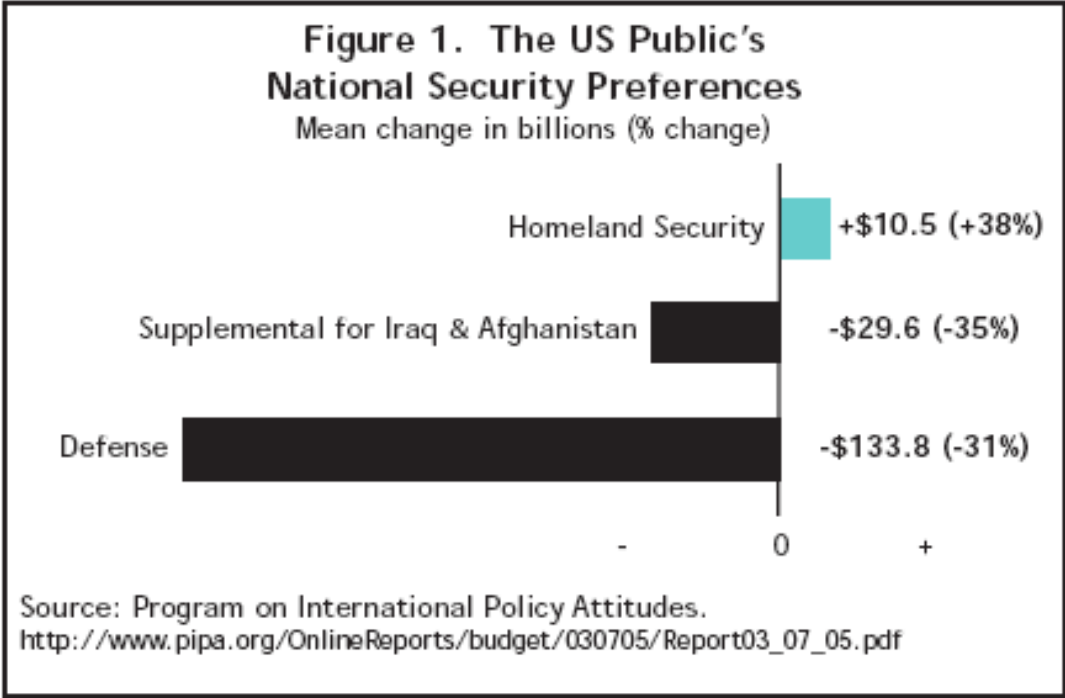
Kate Cell

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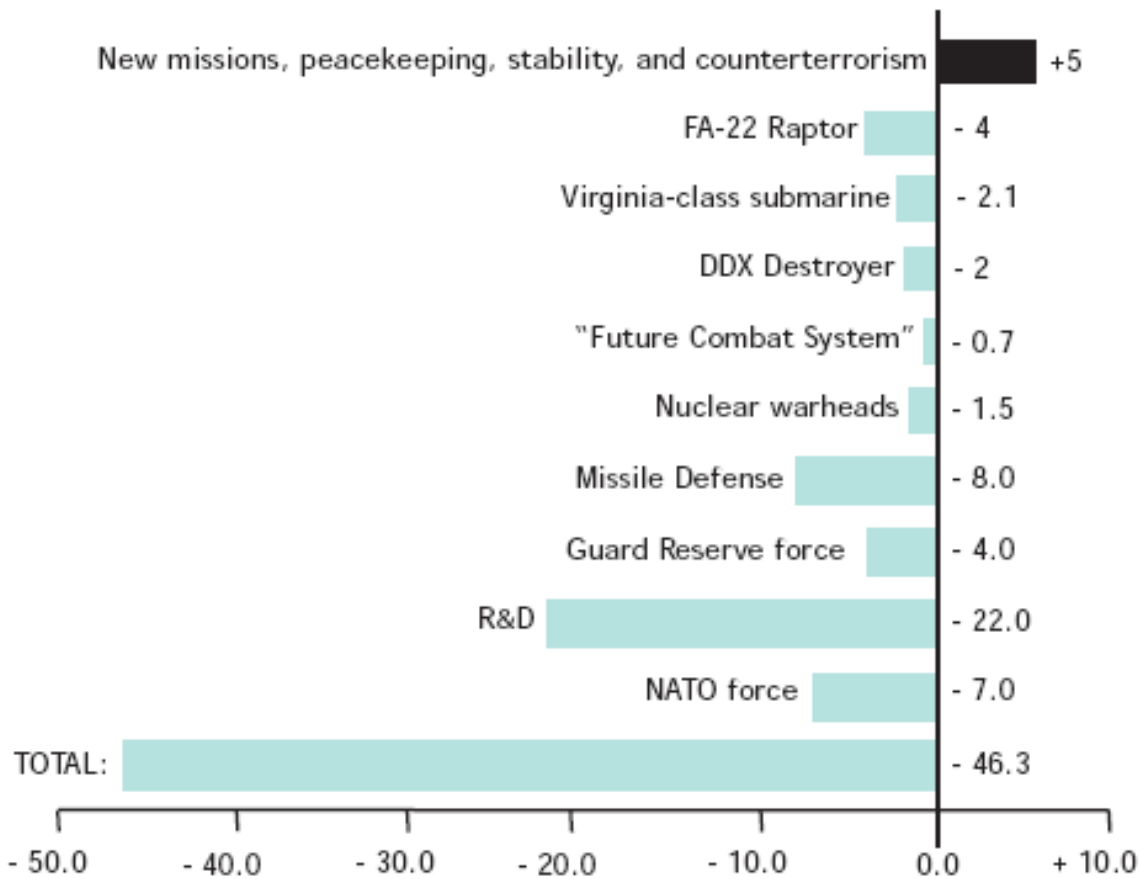
The November election result suggests that US citizens trust Bush administration rhetoric on security issues. But when asked in detail about their security priorities and budget preferences, the public's choices differ dramatically from those proposed in this year's Defense Budget Request and Emergency Supplemental for the Global War on Terror. When the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) undertook a recent opinion polling exercise on the US military budget, the public chose prevention and international aid over expensive weapons systems and new nuclear weapons, the Department of State over the Department of Defense. Based on PIPA's results, the American people should be congratulated for their common sense on security issues and commiserated with over how poorly US policy reflects their values and choices.

Progressive experts and citizens agree

The public's preferences are in line with the suggestions of progressive international security experts. Compare the findings of the PIPA poll (figure 1) with recommendations from the Unified Security Budget (USB), a policy prescription for rebalancing the overall security budget, shifting excess funds from the Department of Defense to other security program areas such as international affairs and homeland security. The USB authors, from the Center for Defense Information, Foreign Policy in Focus, and other progressive think tanks, proposed cutting \$46.3 billion in military expenditure; the citizens polled by PIPA would cut it by \$133.8 billion, or 31%.



**Figure 2. Unified Security Budget:
Proposed Changes in Military Expenditure and Programs**



Source: *A Unified Security Budget for the United States*, from the Center for Defense Information (CDI) and Foreign Policy In Focus. www.cdi.org/news/mrp/Unified-Budget.pdf

The amounts differ, but the priorities match: experts and ordinary citizens alike would slash large-scale weapons systems. The PIPA poll shows that Americans clearly perceive a need to align capabilities to real-world threats; the US no longer needs to prepare for a large-scale land war in Europe or to counter the Soviet nuclear arsenal. While they may agree with the Bush administration that Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations are the top security risk, they differ in their approach to managing that risk.

The authors of the USB chose to rebalance rather than reduce spending on real defense, perhaps in part because Washington wisdom opines that the public will not tolerate cuts in the DoD budget during a shooting war. However, two years into Iraq and three and a half after the attacks of September 11, the public seems to make a clear distinction between military spending and security spending, approving increases in homeland security, advanced communications, intelligence, special operations, and peacekeeping. In fact, except for the public's preference for increases in military salaries (base pay has already increased 25% since 2001) and missile defense, the public and the Unified Security Budget are, indeed, unified.

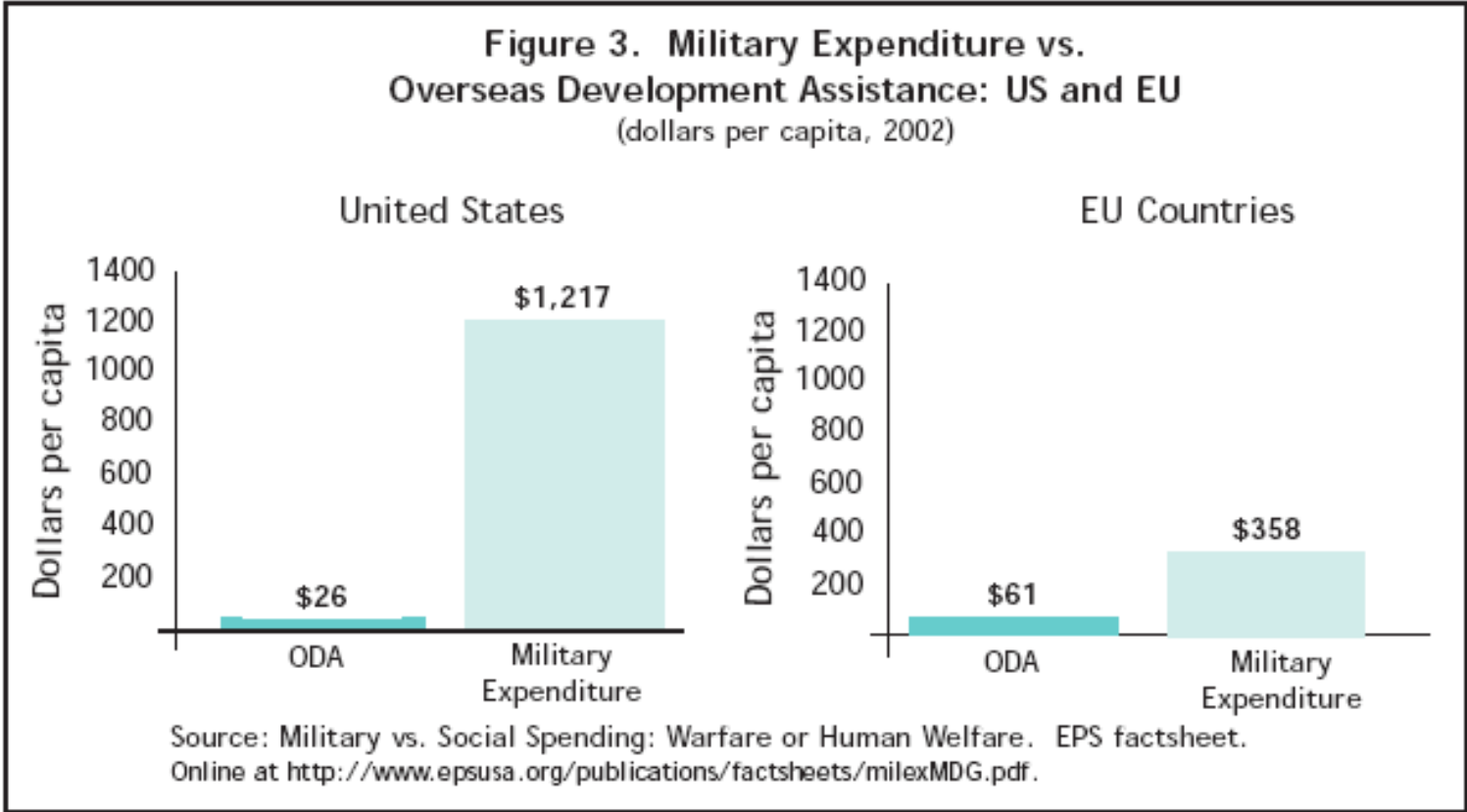
Rob Rumsfeld to pay Rice

The PIPA budget exercise makes it clear that Americans continue to overestimate drastically the amount the US actually spends on international aid and development. When the pollsters attempted to constrain citizen

preferences for increased international spending (to within the same order of magnitude as current expenditure), many respondents simply refused to believe that US international spending could constitute less than 1% of the federal budget. Those polled favored an astonishing 207% increase in UN and UN peacekeeping support and a 53% increase in the State Department’s annual budget. They added 23%, or an additional \$3.2 billion per year, in humanitarian and economic aid.

An additional \$3.2 billion in international development aid would represent genuine US leadership in the global process of meeting the three UN Millennium Development Goals: universal access to clean water and primary education and a two-third reduction in infant mortality rates worldwide. The World Bank estimates the total costs of fulfilling MDG as \$760 billion.

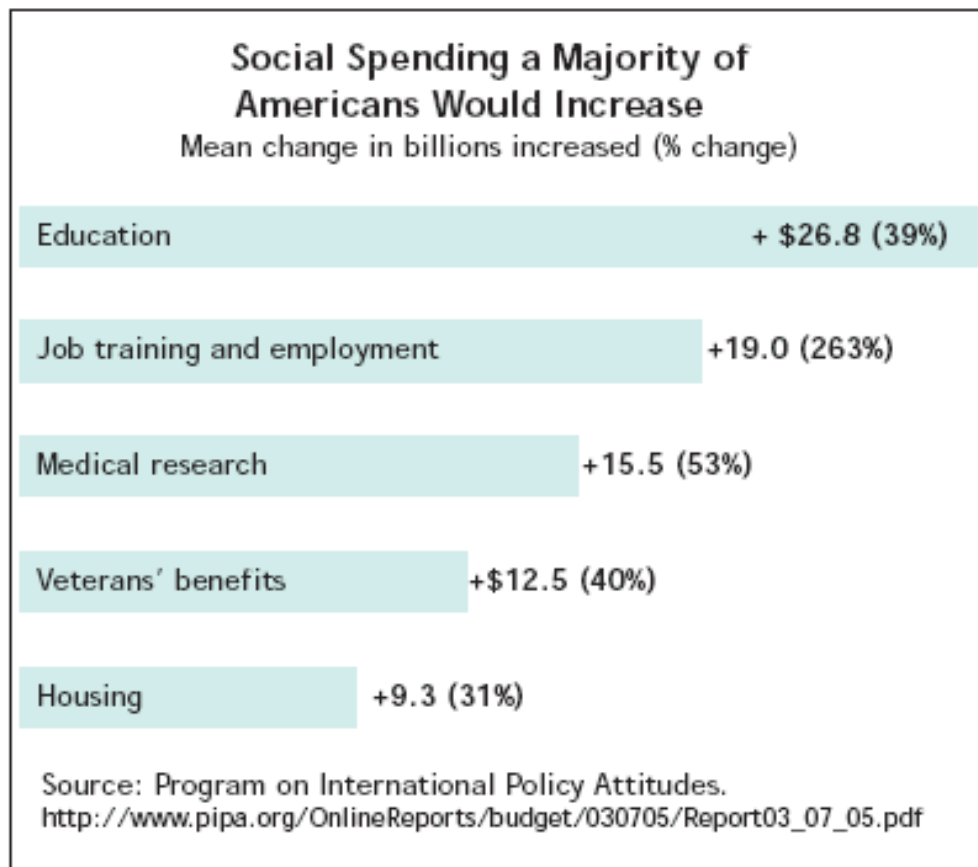
The PIPA participants believe US military expenditure could be cut by as much as 31%, as opposed to the 4.8% increase the Bush administration has requested for FY 2006. Further, they seem to think significant funds could be redirected towards collective, international approaches to security. A significant majority see the international budget as severely underfunded. Americans are generous people, and the PIPA poll gives yet more proof that US citizens assume their government reflects their generosity and even disbelieve facts that contradict their assumption. The results also show public willingness to close the chasm between US spending on the military and spending on international aid (see figure 3).



Economic Security

The poll respondents were asked: “Imagine that the President and Con-gress decided to cut defense spending by 15% and directed this money to education, health-care, housing, and cutting the deficit instead.” 65% said they

would support this decision; only 31% opposed. The public perceives the crowding-out effects of current levels of military expenditure and wants to increase funding to government services (see figure 4), with particular emphasis on long-term economic security through education and job training.



Guns vs. oil: renewables win by a mile

The poll's most surprising finding was on energy. Fully 70% of respondents want to conserve and develop renewable energy, and would back that preference with an annual funding increase of 1090%, or \$24 billion. US citizens seem poised for a significant national undertaking to substitute renewable for fossil fuels, decreasing our reliance on imported energy and protecting our environment.

Reforming energy and transportation infrastructure to meet this public preference is a colossal challenge, on par with a journey to the moon. The scale of the effort means requires it to led by an efficient government that provides planning and coordination, business incentives, and funds for education, research and development. The citizens PIPA polled understand the importance and are willing to pay the investment costs. What US president will match rhetoric with action on energy security? Whose legacy will that be?

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Economists for Peace and Security
<http://www.epsusa.org/newsletter/march2005/cell.htm>