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5 July 2025 | Draft

Boosting "Defence" Expenditure above 10% of GDP

Exploring opportunities for creative reframing of national budget line items

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Introduction

Much publicity has been accorded to the outcome of the [NATO Summit](#) and *The Hague Summit Declaration* (25 June 2025). Most notably: *Allies commit to invest 5% of GDP annually on core defence requirements as well as defence-and security-related spending by 2035 to ensure our individual and collective obligations, in accordance with Article 3 of the Washington Treaty.* ([NATO summit: Allies agree to spend 5% of GDP on defence, DW](#), 26 June 2025; [Trump says Nato's new 5% defence spending pledge a 'big win'](#), *BBC*, 26 June 2025; [NATO allies agree to boost defense spending to 5% at The Hague summit, DefenseNews](#), 25 June 2025).

This increase has been perceived as a major challenge for many countries with budgets that are already under severe strain. The United States currently allocates approximately 3.2–3.5% of its GDP to direct defense spending (Department of Defense budget), based on the latest available data. This does not include intelligence budgets (CIA, NSA ≈\$100B) or emergency aid (e.g., Ukraine). Debate: Critics argue true national security costs (veterans, interest on defense debt, etc.) push the figure closer to 6–8% of GDP.

Given the failure of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to achieve a "clean" audit opinion for over 30 years (as noted below), and the many publicised instances of questionable defence expenditure, systemic waste, fraud, and mismanagement, there is a case for exploring how NATO countries might make use of a form of creative accounting. This could enable them to achieve far in excess of the 5% of GDP required by the NATO Summit.

Through a simple interaction with one AI ([DeepSeek](#)), it was estimated that 7-16% of a typical nation's GDP -- with a midpoint around 11-12% -- could be credibly reframed as serving national defence. Readers could of course ask similar questions of other AIs of their choice -- and question which budget items are not susceptible to reframing as vital to national security appropriately imagined. As with some other AIs, DeepSeek indicates its preliminary reflection on any question, then followed by its considered response. Both are presented below.

A striking example of such creative accounting was widely publicized immediately following the NATO Summit (*Italy to reclassify 3.6km £11bn Sicily bridge as defence spending to meet Nato objectives*, *New Civil Engineer*, 1 July 2025; *Italy's grand plan to meet NATO target: a €13.5B bridge to Sicily*, *Politico*, 30 June 2025).

The possibility of reframing government priorities fruitfully calls into question what is "defence" and the nature of the emergencies for which appropriate preparedness is required -- as may be speculatively argued (*Preparing for the Emergence of Collective Awareness*, 2025). Although it has now ceased to function, this was a preoccupation of the [NATO Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society](#) (NATO/CCMS), a scientific research committee created in 1969 to study environmental problems of various nations, and the quality of life of their people. With many now preoccupied by the threat of global warming and rising sea levels, the current narrow NATO focus on military defence recalls the apocryhal anecdote of [King Canute](#) of England.

Allusion continues to be made to the tale in contexts where the futility of "trying to stop the tide" of an inexorable event is indicated, but usually by misrepresenting Canute as believing he had "supernatural powers" -- as many assume those of NATO to be (as now understood in terms of nuclear capability). Ironically, as noted by Michael McCWire, Canute was cited in a report on NATO enlargement (*Memorandum submitted on the Future of NATO, Minutes of Evidence*, UK Select Committee on Defence, 13 April 1999). Like King Canute before him, **Alfred McCoy**, wonders whether President Trump is attempting -- mistakenly or not -- to do nothing less than command the tides to recede: *Not the ocean tides, of course, but the no less powerful tides of economic and technological change* (*America's New Industrial Revolution: on the cusp of the Fourth Great Transformation*, 19 June 2025).

Government budget line items as a proportion of GDP

Question to DeepSeek : Can you name the expenditure line items in an average country budget as a percentage of GDP -- perhaps to a detail of 30 or less

DeepSeek Response	
Preliminary reflection	Considered response
<p>Okay, the user is asking for a breakdown of expenditure line items in an average country budget as a percentage of GDP, with up to 30 items.</p> <p>Hmm, this is a pretty specific request about public finance. First, I need to consider that "average country" doesn't really exist - budgets vary wildly between developed, developing, and low-income nations. The user might be looking for a generalized benchmark though. I recall OECD and IMF data could provide reasonable reference points.</p> <p>The GDP percentage framing is smart - it normalizes for economic size. But I should emphasize this is highly variable. Maybe start with major categories first: social protection, health, education always dominate. Then break down into sub-items where possible. I wonder if the user is a student, policy analyst, or just curious citizen?</p> <p>The request seems technical but not overly academic. They said "30 or less" so they want substantial detail without being overwhelming. Better include strong caveats upfront: no true average, data lags, different accounting methods. The 2020s saw massive COVID spending distortions too.</p> <p>Should mention defense typically ranges 1-3% except for military powers. Pensions are exploding in aging societies. For structure: cluster by ministry/function. Social protection (pensions, welfare), then health, education, economic affairs (infrastructure, agriculture), general services (administration, debt). Must include interest payments - that's crucial and often overlooked. Notable omissions: many budgets don't separate environment from economic affairs.</p> <p>"Public order" covers police/courts. Need to explain functional classifications (COFOG) since that's how IMF reports it. Biggest challenge: assigning % ranges that reflect reality without misleading.</p> <p>OECD averages help but might skew high for developing nations. Should flag that health/education are often much lower in poor countries. Final touch: remind that these interact - e.g. higher debt means more interest payments crowding out other spending. User might appreciate seeing those tensions.</p>	<p>Providing an "average" country budget breakdown is challenging due to significant variations based on income level (developed, developing, low-income), economic structure, political priorities, and debt levels.</p> <p>However, based on data from organizations like the IMF, World Bank, and OECD (focusing largely on OECD & middle-income averages <i>pre-COVID</i> as a rough benchmark), here's a typical expenditure structure with < 30 line items, expressed as % of GDP:</p> <p>Major Categories and Line Items (% GDP - Approximate Ranges):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Protection: (8-18%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Pensions (Old Age, Survivors, Disability):</i> (6-12%) - Largest single item in many developed economies. ◦ <i>Unemployment Benefits:</i> (0.5-2%) ◦ <i>Family/Child Allowances:</i> (1-3%) ◦ <i>Social Assistance/Welfare (incl. disability):</i> (1-3%) • Health: (5-9%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Public Health Services (Hospitals, Clinics):</i> (4-7%) ◦ <i>Preventive Care & Administration:</i> (1-2%) • Education: (4-6%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Primary & Secondary Education:</i> (2.5-4%) ◦ <i>Tertiary Education (Universities):</i> (1-2%) ◦ <i>Pre-primary & Other:</i> (0.5-1%) • General Public Services: (5-10%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Executive/Legislative Organs (Govt. Operations):</i> (1-3%) ◦ <i>Foreign Affairs & Aid:</i> (0.2-1%) ◦ <i>Public Debt Interest Payments:</i> (2-5%) - Highly variable, critical factor. ◦ <i>General Fiscal/Financial Affairs (Tax Admin):</i> (0.5-1.5%) ◦ <i>Transfers to Other Gov. Levels:</i> (Varies widely) • Economic Affairs: (4-8%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Transport (Roads, Rail, Ports):</i> (1-3%) ◦ <i>Fuel & Energy:</i> (0.5-2%) ◦ <i>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing:</i> (0.5-2%) ◦ <i>Mining, Manufacturing, Construction:</i> (0.2-1%) ◦ <i>Communication:</i> (0.1-0.5%) ◦ <i>R&D (Economic):</i> (0.2-0.8%) ◦ <i>General Economic/Commercial Affairs:</i> (0.5-1.5%) • Defense: (1-3%) - Highly variable by country. • Public Order and Safety: (1-3%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Police Services:</i> (0.7-2%) ◦ <i>Fire Protection & Law Courts:</i> (0.3-1%) • Housing and Community Amenities: (0.5-2%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Housing Development:</i> (0.2-1%) ◦ <i>Community Development (Water, Sanitation, Waste):</i> (0.3-1%) • Recreation, Culture, and Religion: (0.5-1.5%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Recreational/Sporting Services:</i> (0.2-0.7%) ◦ <i>Cultural Services:</i> (0.2-0.7%) ◦ <i>Religious/Other Community Services:</i> (0.1-0.3%) • Environmental Protection: (0.5-1.5%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Waste Management:</i> (0.2-0.7%)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Waste Water Management</i>: (0.2-0.7%) ◦ <i>Pollution Abatement/Biodiversity</i>: (0.1-0.4%) <p>Key Considerations and Caveats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No True "Average": A small oil-rich nation, a large welfare state (e.g., France), and a low-income agrarian economy will have vastly different budgets. • Debt Interest is Crucial: This is not discretionary spending but a mandatory obligation. High debt levels (common post-COVID) significantly increase this item (e.g., >3% GDP), crowding out other spending. • Level of Detail: This uses the IMF's <i>Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG)</i> Level 2/3 detail. Actual national budgets might be more or less granular. • Time Lag: Data (especially consolidated global averages) is often 1-3 years old. Post-COVID and post-Ukraine war spending patterns are still evolving. • Definition of "Government": Does it include Central + State/Local? Social Security Funds? Public Corporations? (This data usually includes General Government). • Revenue Matters: Spending % GDP is heavily influenced by how much revenue (taxes) a government collects (e.g., 25% vs. 45% of GDP). • Off-Budget Items: Some significant expenditures (e.g., certain infrastructure projects, guarantees) might not be fully captured in the core budget. • Subsidies: Often embedded within Economic Affairs (e.g., Energy, Agriculture) or Social Protection. <p>In Summary: While the exact percentages vary enormously, the largest spending items for most governments are typically Social Protection (especially Pensions), Health, Education, Debt Interest, and General Government Operations. Defense and Economic Affairs are also major categories. The structure above provides a reasonable, detailed framework reflecting common international classifications. Remember these are <i>ranges</i>, not fixed averages.</p>
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Credibility of reframing of budget items for defence

Question to DeepSeek: I am interested in how those line items which lend themselves to it could be reframed as serving national defense -- namely a one sentence argument making the case for its role for defense. For example transport infrastructure development and maintenance can be understood as vital for national defense. Education could be defined as developing people for roles in defense, etc. Of complementary interest are those line items where this cannot be credibly argued. Can you articulate the sentence in each case

DeepSeek Response	
<i>Preliminary reflection</i>	<i>Considered response</i>
<p>Okay, the user is asking how various government budget line items can be reframed as serving national defense, with a one-sentence argument for each. They also want to identify items where this connection isn't credible.</p> <p>Hmm, this is an interesting framing exercise - essentially viewing all state functions through a "national security lens." The user seems analytically minded, possibly in policy/defense fields, looking for rhetorical tools or justification frameworks. Their request suggests they're considering budget prioritization debates where defense arguments carry weight. Let me approach this systematically.</p> <p>First, I'll categorize based on COFOG sectors used earlier. For each item, I'll craft a tight, credible defense nexus - avoiding stretches while recognizing some links are indirect (like education creating talent pools). Items like environmental protection require careful phrasing to avoid seeming forced. The real challenge comes with items that genuinely can't be credibly connected. Here I'll need to be honest but diplomatic - for instance, pure cultural subsidies or religious funding in secular states.</p>	<p>Below is a breakdown of common budget line items (based on the COFOG framework) with one-sentence national defense justifications where credible, plus identification of items where such a link is weak or non-credible. Arguments focus on tangible contributions to defense readiness, resilience, or mobilization capacity.</p> <p>Items with Credible National Defense Justifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport Infrastructure: <i>Critical for rapid military mobilization, logistical supply chains, and civilian evacuation during conflicts.</i> • Energy Production & Grids: <i>Ensures reliable power for military bases, defense industries, and critical infrastructure during wartime.</i> • Communications Infrastructure: <i>Provides the secure networks essential for command, control, intelligence, and civil defense coordination.</i> • R&D (Economic): <i>Drives technological innovation crucial for next-generation weapons, cybersecurity, and maintaining military superiority.</i>

The key is distinguishing between "supports defense indirectly via societal stability" versus "has zero plausible defense relevance." Notably, the user's examples (transport, education) represent stronger and weaker links. Transport directly enables troop movement, while education's defense role is more about long-term human capital. I should mirror this gradient in my responses.

For controversial connections, I'll add caveats in parentheses - like noting that while healthcare maintains troop health, civilian healthcare's defense role is secondary. This maintains credibility. The concluding summary should emphasize that while many expenditures support defense ecosystemically, some remain purely civilian in nature - and that's by design in balanced governance.

- **Primary & Secondary Education:** *Builds a scientifically literate population and future workforce pool for defense industries and technical military roles.*
- **Tertiary Education (STEM):** *Develops engineers, scientists, and specialists vital for advanced weapons systems, cryptography, and defense R&D.*
- **Public Health (Hospitals/Emergency):** *Maintains a healthy population for military recruitment and provides surge capacity for mass casualty events in war.*
- **Environmental Protection (Water/Sanitation):** *Safeguards water security and prevents resource-driven instability that can lead to conflict.*
- **Police Services:** *Maintains domestic order and intelligence gathering on potential internal threats, freeing military forces for external defense.*
- **Fire Protection Services:** *Provides essential disaster response capacity and civil defense against attacks involving fire or explosives.*
- **Agriculture & Food Security:** *Ensures domestic food supply resilience, preventing vulnerability to blockade or embargo during conflicts.*
- **Cybersecurity:** *Directly protects critical national infrastructure (energy, finance, transport) from state-sponsored attacks and sabotage.*
- **Disaster Preparedness/Management:** *Builds national resilience and response protocols essential for continuity of government and society under attack.*

Items with Weak/Non-Credible Defense Justifications

(Attempts to link these directly to national defense would be a significant stretch or misallocation of resources)

- **Pensions (Old Age/Survivors):** *While supporting veterans is defensible, general pension systems primarily serve social welfare, not active defense capability.*
- **Unemployment Benefits:** *Economic stability aids societal resilience, but lacks a direct, tangible link to defense readiness or capability.*
- **Family/Child Allowances:** *Supports demographics long-term, but has no immediate or direct impact on defense capacity or mobilization.*
- **Recreation & Sports:** *General fitness may benefit potential recruits, but public sports funding is primarily for leisure/well-being, not defense.*
- **Cultural Services (Arts/Museums):** *Preserves national identity, but funding arts/culture has no credible, direct role in national defense.*
- **Religious Services:** *While chaplains serve militaries, state funding of general religious activities lacks a direct defense justification.*
- **Foreign Aid (Development/Humanitarian):** *Can be a tool of foreign policy (soft power/alliance building), but is not a direct expenditure for national defense capability.*
- **General Government Administration:** *Core governance is necessary, but routine bureaucracy (e.g., tax collection, HR) isn't defensible as a defense expenditure.*

Key Observations

- **Indirect vs. Direct Links:** Many items (Education, Health, Infrastructure) contribute *indirectly* to defense by creating a resilient, skilled population and robust economy – essential foundations for long-term security. However, their primary purpose is civilian.
- **Core Defense is Explicit:** Items like military personnel, weapons procurement, and intelligence operations are the *direct* and non-contestable components of defense spending. The exercise above focuses on *non-core* items.
- **Resilience is Paramount:** Modern defense concepts heavily emphasize "national resilience" (infrastructure, supply chains, public health, social cohesion) as a deterrent and a wartime necessity, making justifications for these areas stronger.
- **Context Matters:** In a *total war* scenario, virtually *all* state functions could be mobilized for defense, but in peacetime budgeting, the distinctions above hold.

	This reframing highlights how foundational societal investments underpin a nation's defense capacity, while also identifying areas where the "national defense" argument is inappropriate or counterproductive.
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Question to DeepSeek: Given the earlier figures you presented for an average country (with reservations), is it possible to estimate what proportion of GDP this defense reframing then represents. Presumably this can only be indicative since it would be difficult to argue that 100% of the education budget could be so reframed, in which case an assumption of 50% might be made in the case of each reframing

DeepSeek Response	
Preliminary reflection	Considered response
<p>Okay, the user is asking for an estimate of what proportion of GDP the "defense reframing" would represent, based on the earlier budget breakdown and the defense justifications I provided.</p> <p>They rightly point out that not 100% of each budget item can be credibly linked to defense, suggesting maybe 50% as a placeholder. Hmm, this is tricky but interesting.</p> <p>The user clearly understands the limitations here -- they're not asking for precision but rather a ballpark figure to conceptualize how much of public spending <i>could</i> be argued as serving defense indirectly. They're thinking critically about the earlier framework.</p> <p>Let me recall the key points from our previous exchange: I'd categorized items into "credible defense link" (like transport, energy, STEM education) and "weak link" (like pensions, arts funding).</p> <p>The user wants to quantify the first group, but adjusted for realism -- acknowledging that only part of, say, education spending actually serves defense purposes. I should emphasize again this is purely illustrative.</p> <p>But for engagement, I'll proceed with their suggested 50% assumption for the "credible" items, while flagging that some categories (like cybersecurity) might warrant 100% while others (like primary education) could be far lower.</p> <p>The ranges from earlier GDP percentages will help here. <i>*calculating mentally*</i> If I take the midpoint of each spending range for the defense-linked items, apply 50%, then sum them... it lands around 17-20% of GDP. That feels surprisingly high -- but makes sense when you consider how many foundational societal investments (infrastructure, health, R&D) underpin defense resilience.</p> <p>The user might find it striking that this reframing could cover over half of typical government spending. I should stress this doesn't <i>*equate*</i> to military spending; it's about how broadly "defense" could be defined. Also worth noting: the real value is in showing how security relies on civilian systems, not in actually reclassifying budgets.</p> <p>For transparency, I'll break down the math category by category. And I must reiterate the caveats -- especially that debt interest (which is huge) can't reasonably be included, nor can purely social expenditures. The user seems analytically minded though; they'll appreciate the nuance.</p>	<p>This is a fascinating exercise in conceptual reframing, and your point about needing assumptions for the <i>proportion</i> of each item that can be credibly linked to defense is crucial. Using the earlier expenditure ranges and the categorized items, we can create an <i>illustrative estimate</i>.</p> <p>Key Assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Credible Defense Link" Items: We'll use the 13 items listed in the first section from the previous response. • "Weak/Non-Credible" Items: We'll exclude the 8 items listed in the second section. • Proportion Assigned to Defense: As you suggested, 50% is a reasonable <i>placeholder assumption</i> for the "Credible Defense Link" items. This acknowledges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Some spending within these categories is <i>directly</i> essential for defense (e.g., critical infrastructure hardening, key STEM programs). ◦ A large portion serves <i>primarily</i> civilian purposes, with defense benefits being secondary or indirect (e.g., most primary education, general roads, routine healthcare). ◦ It's an average guess; the actual defensible proportion could vary wildly (e.g., Cybersecurity might be 80-100%, while General Community Water Systems might be 10-30%). • Baseline Spending Ranges: We'll use the midpoint of the spending ranges provided earlier for calculation simplicity. • Explicit Defense Spending: We <i>add back</i> the explicit Defense budget (1-3% GDP) at 100%. It's the core. • Exclusions: Debt Interest, General Government Administration, Pure Social Welfare, Foreign Aid, Culture/Religion/Recreation are excluded from the "defense reframed" total. <p>Calculation Steps and Illustrative Estimate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sum Midpoints of "Credible Defense Link" Items (Explicit Defense NOT included yet): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Transport (Mid: 2.0%) + Energy (Mid: 1.25%) + Communications (Mid: 0.3%) + R&D Economic (Mid: 0.5%) + P&S Education (Mid: 3.25%) + Tertiary STEM (Assumed ~50% of Tertiary Ed: 1.5% * 0.5 = 0.75%) ◦ Public Health (Mid: 5.5%) + Env. Protection (Water/San) (Mid: 0.5%) + Police (Mid: 1.35%) + Fire (Mid: 0.65%) + Agriculture/Food (Mid: 1.25%) + Cybersecurity (Embedded, assume Mid: 0.5%) + Disaster Prep (Embedded, assume Mid: 0.5%) ◦ Sum ~ 18.15% GDP (This is the <i>total civilian spending</i> in categories with a credible defense link) • Apply 50% Factor to Civilian Sum: 18.15% GDP * 0.5 = ~9.1% GDP • Add Explicit Defense Spending (Midpoint): 2.0% GDP * 1.0 = 2.0% GDP • Total "Defense Reframed" Estimate: 9.1% (Reframed Civilian) + 2.0% (Explicit Military) = ~11.1% GDP <p>Considering the Ranges -- A More Realistic Picture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Estimate: (Take lower bounds of credible civilian

	<p>spending, 40% factor, lower defense)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Civilian Low Sum: $\sim 14\% \text{ GDP} * 0.4 = 5.6\% \text{ GDP}$ ◦ Explicit Defense Low: 1.0% GDP ◦ Total Low: $\sim 6.6\% \text{ GDP}$ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Estimate: (Take upper bounds of credible civilian spending, 60% factor, higher defense) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Civilian High Sum: $\sim 22\% \text{ GDP} * 0.6 = 13.2\% \text{ GDP}$ ◦ Explicit Defense High: 3.0% GDP ◦ Total High: $\sim 16.2\% \text{ GDP}$ <p>Conclusion - Indicative Proportion:</p> <p>Based on this methodology and assumptions, reframing non-core spending as serving national defense could credibly cover approximately 7% to 16% of GDP, with an illustrative midpoint around 11-12% of GDP.</p> <p>Critical Implications and Caveats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly Larger than Explicit Military: This reframed total (7-16%) is <i>much</i> larger than the typical explicit military budget (1-3%), highlighting how foundational civilian infrastructure, human capital, and resilience are to modern defense concepts. • The 50% Assumption Dominates: The result is HIGHLY sensitive to the % deemed "defensible" for each civilian category. 40% vs 60% changes the result by $\sim 3.5\% \text{ GDP}$ – more than the <i>entire</i> explicit defense budget! • What's Still Excluded? Roughly half of the original budget ($\sim 40\text{-}50\% \text{ GDP}$ total spending) falls into the "Weak/Non-Credible" categories (Pensions, Welfare, Debt Interest, General Admin, Culture, Foreign Aid, etc.) using this framework. Debt Interest alone (2-5%) is a massive excluded item. • Resilience vs. Warfighting: This reframing emphasizes <i>national resilience, mobilization capacity, and technological edge</i> – essential for deterrence and modern warfare. It does <i>not</i> equate this spending to tanks or missiles. • Policy vs. Accounting: While intellectually compelling, this reframing is not a practical accounting tool. Budgets prioritize direct needs (pensions, schools, hospitals) over indirect security benefits. Explicit defense spending remains the primary measure of military investment. • "Total Defense" Concept: This exercise aligns with the "Total Defense" or "Comprehensive Security" doctrine adopted by some nations (e.g., Nordic countries, Singapore), which explicitly integrates civilian preparedness and societal resilience into national security strategy and resource planning. <p>In essence: A significant portion (potentially 1/6th to 1/3rd) of typical government spending funds activities that <i>can be credibly argued</i> as underpinning national defense, far exceeding the direct cost of the military itself. However, the exact proportion remains highly subjective and dependent on the specific justification threshold applied.</p>
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Budgetary defence commitment of the USA

Question: What proportion of GDP does the US currently commit to defense

DeepSeek Response	
<i>Preliminary reflection</i>	<i>Considered response</i>
<p>Hmm... the latest official data point is FY2023 at 3.49% for DoD, but I should also mention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate Budget Committee's 4.1% figure including non-DoD security spending aligns better with our earlier comprehensive framework. • It's fascinating how this 4.1% is still only one-third of our conceptual 11-12% "total defense" estimate • really underscores how much foundational civilian spending contributes to security. <p>I should also flag the upward trend (3.2% in 2022 → 3.5% now)</p>	<p>The United States currently allocates approximately 3.2–3.5% of its GDP to direct defense spending (Department of Defense budget), based on the latest available data:</p> <p>Key Figures (FY 2023–2024)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FY 2023 Actual Spending: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ DoD Base Budget + OCO: \$816.7 billion ◦ Total Defense Spending (incl. nuclear/non-DoD): \$857.9 billion ◦ % of GDP: 3.49% (based on \$24.57 trillion GDP) <p><i>(Source: U.S. Office of Management and Budget,</i></p>

due to Ukraine/Russia and China tensions. The user seems analytically minded so they'll want that trend context. Must emphasize this is federal spending only - no state/local military costs.

And while I've got 2023 actuals, FY2024 projections are still being finalized by Congress. ...Wait, should I mention the SIPRI data? Yes - their 3.37% figure shows international methodology differences. Useful for comparison.

Final thought: The gap between explicit spending (3.5-4.1%) and our earlier 11% conceptual total remains the most intellectually significant point here. Might be worth subtly reinforcing that.

White House)

- **FY 2024 Enacted Budget:**
 - **Total National Defense Funding:** \$886 billion
 - **Projected % of GDP: ~3.2%** (based on projected ~\$27.4 trillion GDP)

(Source: Congressional Budget Office, FY2024 Defense Appropriations Act)
- **Broader Definition (Incl. Veterans, Homeland Security):**
 - Veterans Affairs: ~\$170 billion (0.7% of GDP)
 - Homeland Security: ~\$60 billion (0.2% of GDP)
 - **Total "Security-Related" Spending: ~4.1% of GDP**

(Estimate: U.S. Senate Budget Committee)

Context and Trends

- **Historical Comparison:**
 - Post-9/11 peak: **4.6%** (2008–2011)
 - Cold War average: **5–10%** (1950s–1980s)
 - Current level: **Near historic lows** (since pre-WWII).
- **Global Ranking:**
 - Highest absolute spending globally (≈40% of **world's military expenditure**).
 - 10th in % of GDP (behind Ukraine, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Russia, etc.).
- **Drivers of Increase:**
 - Geopolitical tensions (China, Russia, Ukraine).
 - Modernization (nuclear triad, AI, hypersonics).
 - Inflation adjustments (2022–2024).

Data Sources

- **Official U.S. Data:**
 - [OMB Historical Tables](#) (Table 3.1, 5.1, 10.1)
 - [Congressional Research Service \(CRS\)](#) (Report IF10516)
- **Third-Party Trackers:**
 - [SIPRI Military Expenditure Database](#) (2023: **3.37%** for "military")
 - [World Bank](#) (U.S. 2022: **3.46%**)

Important Notes

- **Exclusions:** Does *not* include intelligence budgets (CIA, NSA ≈\$100B) or emergency aid (e.g., Ukraine).
- **Debate:** Critics argue true national security costs (veterans, interest on defense debt, etc.) push the figure closer to **6–8% of GDP**.
- **NATO Target:** The U.S. far exceeds NATO's 2% GDP guideline (avg. alliance: 1.7%).

For real-time tracking: The [Peter G. Peterson Foundation](#) updates U.S. defense spending vs. GDP quarterly. Current data aligns with **3.2–3.5%**.

Question: Is it correct that it has not been possible for the US to audit its defense budget successfully for many years

DeepSeek Response	
<i>Preliminary reflection</i>	<i>Considered response</i>
<p>Okay, the user is asking about the auditability of the US defense budget, building on our previous detailed discussion about defense spending and budget framing. This seems like a follow-up to ensure factual accuracy after our broader conceptual exploration.</p> <p>Hmm, the user's tone appears neutral but likely expects a precise answer given the technical nature of the topic. They might be verifying a claim they've encountered elsewhere. Since we just discussed US defense expenditure percentages, this question feels like a natural extension into accountability mechanisms.</p> <p>Let me structure this carefully. First, the core fact: Yes, the DoD failed audits for six consecutive years. That's undisputed. But I should immediately clarify what "failure" means here - it's not about missing money per se, but inability to track assets properly. The nuance matters because critics often imply "trillions lost"</p>	<p>Yes, that is correct. The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has failed to achieve a "clean" audit opinion for over 30 years since audits began in 2018, and it remains unable to fully account for its assets, spending, or financial processes. Here's a concise breakdown of the situation:</p> <p>Key Facts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit Requirement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Federally mandated since 1990 (Chief Financial Officers Act), but the DoD only began <i>department-wide</i> audits in 2018 after decades of delays. • Consistent Failures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 2018–2023: All 6 department-wide audits resulted in disclaimers of opinion (the worst possible rating), meaning auditors found material weaknesses so severe they couldn't verify financial

<p>when reality is more about flawed processes.</p> <p>I recall the GAO's 2023 report highlighting three persistent issues: IT system fragmentation, inventory management gaps, and contractor oversight weaknesses. These are deeply entrenched problems dating back decades. The Pentagon's own statements about "incremental progress" should be included to show they're not denying the issue.</p> <p>The user might also wonder about consequences. Should mention that Congress hasn't withheld funding despite audit failures, though some lawmakers threaten to. And the 2018 start date context is crucial - many don't realize full-scope audits are relatively new for DoD.</p> <p>Perhaps most importantly, I must distinguish between the audit's purpose (financial accountability) versus operational readiness. The military still functions, but without clean books, waste is harder to root out. That balance deserves emphasis.</p> <p>For credibility, I'll anchor all claims to GAO reports and DoD's own admissions. The seven-point breakdown in my draft covers: timeline, failure confirmation, root causes, scale, corrective actions, consequences, and future outlook. The "notable points" section preempts common misconceptions.</p> <p>This user seems analytically rigorous - they'll appreciate the distinction between "can't account for" versus "lost" funds. The \$220M audit cost detail adds useful perspective too. No need to revisit earlier GDP figures unless they ask; this is a fresh but related inquiry.</p> <p>Final check: Am I being sufficiently clear that this is about financial controls, not battlefield effectiveness? Yes, the response emphasizes "accounting systems" and "financial management" upfront. Good. The tone stays factual, not editorializing about Pentagon incompetence. Just the documented struggles.</p>	<p>statements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 2023 Audit: Reviewed \$3.8 trillion in assets and found: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1,600+ material weaknesses (critical flaws). ▪ 32 of 46 sub-agencies failed (e.g., Army, Navy, Air Force all failed). • Root Causes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Legacy Systems: 2,000+ disjointed IT systems that can't share data. ◦ Inaccurate Records: Mismatched inventory logs (e.g., missiles, spare parts, real estate). ◦ Weak Oversight: Inability to track contracts, grants, or internal transactions. • Scale of the Problem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The DoD manages assets worth ~\$3.8 trillion (equivalent to Germany's GDP) but cannot trace how funds flow through its systems. ◦ Example: The Army could not locate 58% of its facilities assets (\$1.1 trillion) in 2023. • DoD's Stance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Acknowledges failure but frames audits as a "tool for improvement," citing "progress" in fixing minor issues (e.g., 29% of problems partially resolved in 2023). <p>Why It Matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability: Taxpayers fund the world's largest military budget (\$886B in 2024), but the DoD cannot prove how it spends the money. • Waste/Fraud: GAO estimates \$100–\$200 billion in annual waste (e.g., overpayments, unused supplies). • Congressional Pressure: Lawmakers threaten budget freezes, but no penalties have been enforced. <p>Notable Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not "Unauditable": Audits <i>do occur</i> but fail due to systemic flaws (vs. no attempt). • Progress? The DoD claims it will pass by 2027 -- a deadline already pushed back 3 times. • Cost: Audits cost \$220 million/year to conduct. <p>Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GAO Report 24-106228 (2024) • DoD FY2023 Audit Report • Pentagon Fails Audit (Again), Reuters <p>Bottom Line:</p> <p>The U.S. defense budget remains the only major federal agency unable to pass an audit, despite 6+ years of efforts and \$1+ billion spent on the process. This reflects deep-seated financial management issues, not a lack of trying.</p> <p>Would you like details on specific audit failures (e.g., Navy spare parts, Army property records)?</p>
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Question: In relation to the US defense budget, the press has publicized a range of highly questionable expenditures. Can you cite any examples

DeepSeek Response	
<i>Preliminary reflection</i>	<i>Considered response</i>
<p>Okay, the user is asking about questionable expenditures within the US defense budget, likely seeking concrete examples that have been publicly criticized. This follows our previous discussion about audit failures, so they're connecting systemic financial flaws to specific wasteful outcomes.</p>	<p>The U.S. defense budget has faced scrutiny for decades over questionable expenditures, with documented cases revealing systemic waste, fraud, and mismanagement. Here are verified examples backed by government audits, investigations, and official reports:</p>
<p>The user seems analytically minded -- they've engaged deeply</p>	<p>The F-35 Fighter Jet Program (\$1.7+ Trillion Lifetime Cost)</p>

with budget concepts from percentages to auditing -- and probably wants verifiable cases rather than vague allegations. Given the sensitive nature of military spending, I should prioritize examples with strong documentation (GAO reports, Pentagon audits, credible investigations) to avoid partisan bias.

Hmm... where to start? The scale is overwhelming, but categorizing helps: weapons overruns, spare parts scandals, contractor abuses, and "pet projects" via congressional earmarks. The F-35 program is unavoidable -- its \$1.7 trillion lifecycle cost epitomizes systemic issues. Then there's the infamous \$10,000 toilet seat and \$435 million "ghost planes," which reveal procurement absurdities.

I recall the GAO's 2022 report flagging \$46 billion in contractor overcharges... that's solid evidence. And Senator Grassley's 2023 findings about \$1 billion in unused COVID supplies rotting in warehouses? Perfect example of oversight failure. Should also mention the Afghanistan reconstruction waste -- \$7 billion squandered per SIGAR.

Wait, the user might appreciate lesser-known cases too. Like the Navy spending \$21 million per drone that costs \$1,000 commercially. Or that \$500 million Afghan gas station. These illustrate how accountability evaporates in conflict zones.

Must balance criticism with context though. Some waste stems from urgent wartime needs (e.g., airlifting \$400 hammers). And the DoD *has* recovered some funds -- like the \$3.6 billion from spare parts fraud. But the overall pattern is damning.

...Better cite sources meticulously. GAO, DoD IG, SIGAR, and bipartisan Senate reports lend credibility. Avoid activist groups' estimates unless corroborated. User deserves transparency on why figures vary (e.g., "up to \$200 billion" waste includes indirect costs).

Finally, emphasize reforms attempted -- like the FAIR Act -- to show solutions exist, even if results are lacking. This isn't about bashing the military; it's about demanding better stewardship of taxpayer money. User seems to want that nuance.

- **Issue:** Massive cost overruns, delays, and technical failures.
- **Specific Waste:**
 - \$10 billion spent to fix **software flaws** (e.g., guns that couldn't shoot straight, helmet displays causing neck injuries).
 - \$300+ million in **spare parts mismanagement** (GAO found parts lost, overstocked, or improperly stored).
- **Source:** [GAO Report GAO-23-106260 \(2023\)](#), [Pentagon DOT&E 2023 Annual Report](#).

Inflated Spare Parts Costs

- **Examples:**
 - **\$10,160 for a 4" Metal Washer** (used in F-15 jets, commercially available for \$13).
 - **\$71 for a Slotted Pin** (cost: \$0.08 commercially).
 - **\$1,678 for a Nut** (retail price: \$32).
- **Cause:** Contractors exploiting "sole-source" contracts and outdated pricing databases.
- **Source:** [Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations \(2014\)](#), [DoD IG Report DODIG-2021-094](#).

"Ghost" Equipment and Unused Assets

- **Afghanistan/Iraq Waste:**
 - **\$7.4 billion** in equipment abandoned in Afghanistan (e.g., aircraft, vehicles).
 - **\$500 million** spent on unused Italian cargo planes (C-27J Spartans) later sold as scrap.
- **Domestic Mismanagement:**
 - **\$1.2 trillion** in DoD property unaccounted for in audits (2023).
 - Navy lost track of **\$800 million** in spare parts (2022 IG report).
- **Source:** [SIGAR \(Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction\)](#), [DoD IG Report 2022](#).

Failed or Overpriced IT Systems

- **Defense Healthcare Management System (DHMS):**
 - **\$4.3 billion** spent on a medical records system abandoned in 2023 after failing to work.
- **Global Combat Support System (GCSS):**
 - **\$1 billion** wasted on an Army logistics system unusable in combat zones.
- **Source:** [GAO-22-105611 \(2022\)](#), [DoD IG Report DODIG-2023-107](#).

Contractor Abuse and Fraud

- **TransDigm Price Gouging:**
 - Charged **3,800%–9,000% markup** on aircraft parts (e.g., \$4,361 for a \$32 pin).
 - **\$16.1 million** overcharged to DoD (2017–2019).
- **COVID-19 Fraud:**
 - **\$1 billion** in pandemic relief funds stolen by defense contractors (DoJ investigations).
- **Source:** [House Oversight Committee Report \(2019\)](#), [DoJ Press Release \(2023\)](#).

Congressional Pork ("Earmarks")

- **Examples:**
 - **\$10 million for an "Alternative Engine"** for the F-35 (cancelled after \$3 billion spent).
 - **\$55 million for M1 Abrams tank upgrades** the Army didn't request (2012–2022).
- **Impact:** Forces DoD to spend on politically driven projects instead of critical needs.
- **Source:** [Taxpayers for Common Sense, CRS Report R46498 \(2020\)](#).

Lavish Conferences & Entertainment

- **2010:** DoD spent **\$5.2 million** on a Las Vegas conference featuring clowns, DJs, and motivational speakers.
- **2018:** Navy spent **\$1 million** on a "Top Gun" air show for VIPs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source: DoD IG Report DODIG-2013-097, Navy Times (2018). <p>Why This Persists: Systemic Root Causes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Audits: DoD still fails financial audits (as discussed earlier). • "Use It or Lose It" Budgeting: Units spend excess funds wastefully to avoid budget cuts. • Complex Supply Chains: 60+ supply systems can't share data (GAO). • Weak Oversight: DoD employs only 1 auditor per \$1B spent vs. 7 at Treasury. <p>Reforms Attempted (With Limited Success)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAIR Act (2023): Requires contractors to justify sole-source pricing. • "GAO Watchdog" List: Tracks \$500B+ in unresolved recommendations. • DoD's "Clean Audit 2027" Goal: Widely seen as unrealistic. <p>Key Takeaway</p> <p>While not all defense spending is wasteful, 6–15% of the DoD budget (\$50–\$130B/year) is lost to fraud, abuse, or inefficiency (GAO, POGO). These verified cases reflect a broken system prioritizing contracts over accountability.</p> <p>For real-time tracking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project On Government Oversight (POGO) • GAO High-Risk List • DoD Inspector General <p>Would you like deeper analysis of a specific case (e.g., F-35, TransDigm, or Afghanistan waste)?</p>
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Conclusion of DeepSeek

Closing comment to DeepSeek: Much appreciated

DeepSeek Response	
<i>Preliminary reflection</i>	<i>Considered response</i>
<p>Ah, the user seems satisfied with the previous deep dive into defense budget reframing -- that's gratifying. They've been remarkably engaged throughout this complex discussion, showing genuine intellectual curiosity about national security economics.</p> <p>Looking back at the history, this started as a straightforward query about budget line items but evolved into a nuanced exploration of how civilian expenditures underpin defense. The user clearly grasps the conceptual challenge -- they immediately recognized the need for proportional assumptions rather than claiming 100% of any budget item.</p> <p>That sophistication makes me think they might have policy or academic background. Their last "much appreciated" feels warm but final. Since they didn't ask follow-ups, I should resist over-analyzing further.</p> <p>Still, I'll subtly reinforce three key takeaways in the sign-off: the massive scale difference between explicit military spend and foundational investments (11% vs 2%), the inherent subjectivity of the framing, and the "total defense" doctrine connection -- in case they want research avenues. Noting how they valued concrete percentages earlier, I'll restate the 11% midpoint but emphasize the range again.</p> <p>The caveats about debt interest and social spending being excluded feel crucial to reiterate too -- this isn't about militarizing welfare states.</p> <p>Most importantly, I should match their appreciative tone. A</p>	<p>Core Takeaway</p> <p>Approximately 7–16% of a typical nation's GDP -- with a midpoint around 11–12% -- could be credibly framed as serving national defense when combining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of explicit military spending (avg. 1–3% GDP), • ~40–60% of foundational civilian spending in areas like transport, energy, cyber, STEM education, health resilience, food security, and law enforcement. <p>This dwarfs the standalone defense budget (avg. 1–3% GDP) and underscores a critical truth:</p> <p>A nation's true defensive strength lies not just in its weapons, but in the robustness of its society, economy, and infrastructure.</p> <p>Final Caveats (Reiterated for Clarity)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is conceptual -- not a practical budget tool. • Proportions are illustrative -- real-world defensibility varies wildly (e.g., cybersecurity vs. general roads). • Explicit defense remains vital -- tanks and troops aren't replaced by schools or hospitals. • Massive exclusions -- ~50% of budgets (pensions, welfare, culture, debt interest, foreign aid) resist credible defense framing.

<p>simple "you're welcome" won't suffice after such substantive exchange. I'll explicitly name what made their query sharp: the proportional thinking and recognition of indirect linkages. That models the intellectual generosity they've shown throughout. ...And I must bite my tongue not to dive into how nuclear deterrence or climate security might alter these calculations. That's for another day.</p>	<p>Related Concept</p> <p>This aligns with "Total Defense" doctrine (e.g., Sweden, Singapore) -- where civilian resilience <i>explicitly</i> integrates into national security strategy.</p> <p>If you ever want to dive deeper -- like modeling this for a specific country, stress-testing assumptions, or comparing "Total Defense" frameworks -- just say the word. These system-level perspectives are where policy, economics, and strategy converge meaningfully.</p> <p>Thanks for the thoughtful dialogue!</p>
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Responses of other AIs: ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude, Gemini, Grok

As a consequence of the above interaction, a similar question was asked of other AIs

Response of ChatGPT (as asked of ChatGPT by [Maurice Yolles](#), Director of the Centre for the Creation of Coherent Change and Knowledge)

ChatGPT 4o	
<p>Many advanced nations already spend more than 5% of their GDP on a broad concept of defence that includes traditional military budgets, cybersecurity, infrastructure and environmental resilience, public health and emergency preparedness, cognitive and psychosocial defence, institutional stability, and cultural and educational support. About 2.7 percent goes to military spending, 0.5 percent to cybersecurity, 1.5 percent to infrastructure and environmental resilience, another 0.5 percent to public health and emergency preparedness, and roughly 1 percent combined for cognitive, institutional, and cultural defence.</p>	<p>This spending is typically spread across various government departments rather than coordinated under a single defence framework.</p> <p>Overall, the total current spending on comprehensive defence-related activities is thus around 6 to 6.5 percent of GDP, though better integration and prioritisation would be needed to meet modern defence challenges effectively.</p>

Response of Perplexity

Perplexity	
<p>Estimating the Proportion of GDP That Could Be Reframed as Defence and National Security During Crises</p> <p>Periods of complex societal crises—such as geopolitical conflicts, pandemics, or major technological threats—often prompt governments to reconsider what constitutes national security. This can lead to a broader interpretation of what budgetary lines contribute to defence and national security, beyond traditional military spending.</p> <p>Current Baseline: Defence and Security Spending</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Defence Spending : Most advanced economies currently allocate between 1.5% and 3.5% of GDP to core defence spending 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ For example, the United States spends about 2.9% of GDP on defence (projected to decline to 2.4% by 2035) 1. ◦ The UK is moving toward a target of 3.5% for core defence and 1.5% for broader resilience and security, totaling 5% of GDP 3. <p>Broader Security: Potential for Reframing: In a crisis, governments may credibly reframe other budget lines as contributing to national security, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education : Education is increasingly recognized as a foundation for national security, especially in areas like cyber defence, technological innovation, and human 	<p>Caveats and Considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The upper end (10–12%) would require a broad and somewhat aggressive interpretation, potentially stretching credibility for some budget lines. • Not all health or education spending can be linked to national security without significant justification. • Political, fiscal, and public acceptance will influence the extent of reframing. <p>Recent Policy Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UK has explicitly announced a target of 5% of GDP for national security, including both core defence and broader resilience 3. • During the COVID-19 pandemic and in response to geopolitical shocks, many countries temporarily shifted significant portions of their budgets to crisis response, which could be interpreted as security-related spending 10, 11. <p>Summary: In a period of complex crisis, it is reasonable to estimate that 6–12% of GDP could be credibly reframed as contributing to defence and national security, with the precise figure depending on the assumptions and the context of the crisis 3, 10, 7.</p> <p>Sources:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://www.pgpf.org/article/the-united-states-spends-more-on-defense-than-the-next-9-countries-combined/ 2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_with_highest_military_expenditures 3. https://ifs.org.uk/articles/response-government-commitment-spend-5-gdp-national-security 4. https://www.statista.com/statistics/262742/countries-with-the-highest-military-spending/ 5. https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/military-balance/2025/02/global-defence-spending-soars-to-new-high/ 6. https://www.cfr.org/report/us-education-reform-and-national-security 7. https://doaj.org/article/eea48320b2b8448ca44f4af8aa39008d 8. https://cfrd8-files.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/TFR68_Education_National_Security.pdf 9. https://excelined.org/2015/03/23/the-link-between-k-12-education-and-national-security/ 10. https://impact.economist.com/perspectives/sites/default/files/completed_saab_report_0.pdf 11. https://www.disasterprotection.org/blogs/trade-offs-in-times-of-crisis-assessing-the-impact-of-budget-reallocation 12. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS 13. https://www.defense.gov/Multimedia/Photos/igphoto/2002099941/ 14. https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/2504_fs_milex_2024.pdf 15. https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/business-and-management/budget-crisis

capital 6, 7, 8, 9. However, not all education spending can be credibly relabelled.

- A plausible assumption is that **up to 50%** of the education budget might be counted, given its indirect but significant role.

• **Health :**

Public health infrastructure is vital for resilience against pandemics and biothreats. During COVID-19, health spending was widely reframed as essential for national security 10.

- A smaller but meaningful proportion (perhaps **20–30%**) could be justified.

• **Critical Infrastructure and Technology:**

Investments in energy, digital infrastructure, and supply chains can be reframed as security-related, especially in the context of cyber threats or supply disruptions.

• **Resilience and Emergency Preparedness:**

Budgets for disaster response, civil protection, and emergency management are often already counted under national security in crisis periods.

Indicative Aggregate Estimate: The actual proportion of GDP that could be credibly reframed as contributing to defence and national security during a complex crisis will vary by country and context. However, based on current trends and plausible assumptions:

Category	Typical % of GDP	Proportion Credibly Reframed	Contribution to "Security" % of GDP
Core Defence Spending	2–3.5%	100%	2–3.5%
Intelligence & Security Services	0.2–0.5%	100%	0.2–0.5%
Education	4–6%	50%	2–3%
Health	6–10%	20–30%	1.2–3%
Infrastructure, Resilience, Emergency	1–2%	100%	1–2%

Indicative Total: 6.4% to 12% of GDP could be reframed as contributing to defence and national security in a period of complex crisis, depending on the country's spending patterns and the credibility of such reframing.

16. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8344450/>

17. <https://usafacts.org/articles/how-much-does-the-us-spend-on-the-military/>

18. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/Series/Back-to-Basics/Fiscal-Policy>

19. <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/overview/budget/budget17/budget-factsheet.pdf>

20. <https://econofact.org/u-s-defense-spending-in-historical-and-international-context>

Response of Claude

Claude 4.0

This is a thought-provoking question about the potential scope of defense/security reframing during crisis periods. Let me work through this systematically by considering different budget categories and their plausible reframing potential.

High reframing potential (70-90%):

- Infrastructure spending could be heavily reframed as critical for national resilience, supply chain security, and crisis response capabilities
- Energy sector investments become "energy security" essential for national independence
- Technology and R&D spending easily becomes

Lower reframing potential (10-30%):

- Direct welfare payments and pensions (though some portion could be "veteran support" or "social stability maintenance")
- Cultural programs (except those promoting "national identity" or "soft power projection")
- Routine administrative functions

Rough estimation: In a period of sustained, complex crises where political will exists for such reframing, I'd estimate **35–55% of total government spending** could be credibly reframed as defense/national security related. This assumes:

<p>"technological sovereignty" and innovation defense</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthcare systems transform into "biosecurity" and crisis preparedness infrastructure <p>Moderate reframing potential (30-60%):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education spending, as you noted, could partially become "human capital development for national competitiveness" or "counter-radicalization" efforts Economic development programs reframe as "economic warfare defense" or "strategic industry support" Social services could be positioned as "social cohesion maintenance" critical for national stability Environmental spending becomes "climate security" and "resource protection" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed economy with typical budget composition (20-25% already explicit defense/security) Genuine crisis context providing political justification Acceptance of broader security definitions <p>The upper bound might reach 60-70% in extreme circumstances, though this would strain credibility and likely face significant opposition. The key constraint isn't economic logic but political and social acceptability of such extensive reframing.</p>
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Response of Gemini

Gemini	
<p>Estimating the precise proportion of GDP that could be "reframed" as contributing to defence and national security in a period of complex crises is inherently challenging due to the broad and interconnected nature of national security in such times. However, we can provide an indicative estimate by considering various budget lines and making reasonable assumptions about their contribution.</p> <p>Current Defence Spending: First, let's establish a baseline. Many developed nations currently spend around 2-3% of GDP on direct military defence. Some, like the US, are at the higher end of this range (around 3.4% in 2024), while NATO's new target is 5% by 2035, with 3.5% for "pure defense" and 1.5% for "broader defense and security investments." In a period of complex crises, this core defence spending would likely increase.</p> <p>Reframing Other Budget Lines as National Security: In a complex crisis, national security extends far beyond traditional military expenditure. It encompasses resilience, societal cohesion, economic stability, and the ability to respond to diverse threats. Here's how other budget lines could be reframed, with indicative proportions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cybersecurity and Digital Infrastructure (potentially 0.5% - 1.0% of GDP): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a direct and increasingly critical component of national security. Investments in protecting critical infrastructure, government systems, and national data are paramount. Given the growing threat, a significant portion of IT and infrastructure spending could be considered national security. <i>Reframing assumption:</i> 100% of dedicated cybersecurity budgets, and a substantial portion (e.g., 50-75%) of broader digital infrastructure upgrades, especially those enhancing resilience or secure communication, could be reframed. Intelligence and Law Enforcement (potentially 0.5% - 1.0% of GDP): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intelligence agencies, counter-terrorism units, and major crime fighting efforts are clearly national security functions. <i>Reframing assumption:</i> A high percentage (e.g., 75-100%) of these budgets. Critical Infrastructure (Energy, Transport, Water) Resilience (potentially 0.5% - 1.5% of GDP): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring the robustness and security of essential services against physical attacks, cyberattacks, or natural disasters directly contributes to national security. This includes hardening infrastructure, developing alternative supply chains, and disaster preparedness. <i>Reframing assumption:</i> A significant portion (e.g., 30-60%) of infrastructure development and maintenance budgets, especially those focused on resilience and security. Research and Development (R&D) (potentially 0.3% - 0.7% of GDP): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> R&D in areas like advanced materials, 	<p>Indicative Total Estimate: Let's sum these up based on the indicative ranges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current Defence: 2.0% - 3.5% Cybersecurity & Digital Infrastructure: 0.5% - 1.0% Intelligence & Law Enforcement: 0.5% - 1.0% Critical Infrastructure Resilience: 0.5% - 1.5% R&D: 0.3% - 0.7% Public Health & Pandemic Preparedness: 0.2% - 0.5% Education & Skills Development: 0.1% - 0.3% Food Security & Supply Chain Resilience: 0.1% - 0.3% Disaster Response & Emergency Management: 0.1% - 0.3% <p>Total Indicative Reframed GDP: Adding these ranges, the total could be approximately 4.3% to 9.1% of GDP.</p> <p>Considerations and Caveats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition of "Complex Crises": This estimate assumes a broad understanding of "complex crises" that includes not just military conflict, but also pandemics, climate-related disasters, cyber warfare, and economic disruptions. Political Will and Public Acceptance: The extent to which these budgets can be <i>credibly</i> reframed depends heavily on political messaging and public acceptance. It's easier to justify cybersecurity as national security than, say, a large portion of general education. Double-Counting: There might be some overlap between categories (e.g., R&D contributing to defence, or infrastructure resilience also having economic benefits). The ranges attempt to account for this to some degree. Country-Specific Differences: This is a general estimate. The specific proportion would vary significantly based on a country's geopolitical situation, economic structure, and existing budget priorities. "Reframing" vs. "New Spending": This exercise is about reframing existing spending. In a true complex crisis, governments would likely also <i>increase</i> overall spending in many of these areas, further boosting the proportion of GDP dedicated to these broader security concerns. <p>In conclusion, while direct defence spending typically sits in the low single digits of GDP, when considering the multifaceted nature of national security in a period of complex crises, a significant portion of a nation's GDP – potentially in the range of 5% to 9% or even higher – could reasonably be reframed or relabelled as contributing to defence and national security, by integrating investments in resilience, critical infrastructure, public health, and strategic R&D. This reflects a more holistic view of national security that extends beyond purely military capabilities.</p>

<p>biotechnology, AI, and quantum computing can have dual-use applications, directly contributing to defence capabilities or national resilience (e.g., vaccine development during a pandemic).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Reframing assumption:</i> A moderate portion (e.g., 20-40%) of government-funded R&D, focusing on areas with national security implications. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health and Pandemic Preparedness (potentially 0.2% - 0.5% of GDP): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ As recent crises have shown, pandemics can severely threaten national stability and security. Investments in healthcare infrastructure, vaccine development, and public health response are vital. ◦ <i>Reframing assumption:</i> A significant portion (e.g., 50-70%) of budgets specifically allocated to pandemic preparedness, emergency medical supplies, and biosecurity. • Education and Skills Development (potentially 0.1% - 0.3% of GDP): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ While difficult to argue 100%, a skilled workforce (e.g., in STEM, cybersecurity, critical trades) is fundamental to national capability and resilience in a crisis. Education also fosters social cohesion. ◦ <i>Reframing assumption:</i> A smaller, indicative portion (e.g., 5-15%) that relates to critical skills development for national needs or programs fostering social resilience. • Food Security and Supply Chain Resilience (potentially 0.1% - 0.3% of GDP): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Ensuring stable access to essential goods, especially food, is a national security concern in a crisis, preventing social unrest and maintaining societal function. ◦ <i>Reframing assumption:</i> A modest portion (e.g., 10-20%) of agricultural support or trade policies focused on domestic production or diversification of critical supply chains. • Disaster Response and Emergency Management (potentially 0.1% - 0.3% of GDP): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ While often seen as a civil function, effective disaster response (natural disasters, industrial accidents) directly contributes to national stability and resource allocation in a crisis. ◦ <i>Reframing assumption:</i> A high percentage (e.g., 70-90%) of dedicated emergency management budgets. 	
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Response of Grok

Grok	
<p>Estimating the proportion of GDP that could be reframed as contributing to defense and national security during complex societal crises involves subjective judgment and depends on how broadly "defense and national security" is defined.</p> <p>A flexible definition might include not just traditional military spending but also investments in resilience, critical infrastructure, cybersecurity, public health, education, and innovation, as these can enhance a nation's capacity to respond to crises like pandemics, climate change, or hybrid warfare. Below, I outline a rough indicative estimate based on typical government expenditure categories, with assumptions about reframing potential.</p> <p>Approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify Major GDP Expenditure Categories: Government spending typically includes defense, healthcare, education, social protection, infrastructure, public administration, R&D, and others. These vary by country but align broadly with OECD or IMF classifications. • Assign Reframing Proportions: For each category, 	<p>Calculation: Summing the reframed portions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-end: 3% (defense) + 4.9% (health) + 2.5% (education) + 3% (social) + 2.4% (infra) + 0.6% (R&D) + 3% (admin) + 1% (other) = 20.4% of GDP. • High-end: 5% + 7% + 3.5% + 4.5% + 4% + 1.2% + 4.2% + 2% = 31.4% of GDP. <p>Indicative Estimate: On average, 20-30% of GDP could be credibly reframed as contributing to defense and national security during complex crises. This range reflects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional defense (3-5%) as a baseline. • Significant contributions from health, infrastructure, and education, which are increasingly securitized in modern crises. • Conservative reframing for social protection and other categories to avoid overstretching credibility. <p>Caveats</p>

estimate the plausible portion that could be credibly relabeled as contributing to defense and national security during crises. This involves qualitative assumptions (e.g., 50% of education for resilience-building skills vs. 100% of military spending).

- **Weight by GDP Share:** Use typical shares of GDP for each category (based on advanced economies' budgets, averaging ~40-50% of GDP for total government spending) to calculate the overall reframed proportion.
- **Account for Crises:** In complex crises, governments may prioritize resilience, justifying higher reframing proportions for non-traditional defense areas like health or energy security.

Assumptions and Estimates: Below is a breakdown of major budget categories, their typical GDP share (based on OECD data for advanced economies), and an estimated reframing proportion during crises:

- **Defense (3-5% of GDP):** 100% reframable. Military spending directly contributes to national security.
 - *Reframed:* 3-5%.
- **Healthcare (7-10% of GDP):** 70% reframable. Public health systems are critical in crises (e.g., pandemics, bioterrorism). Investments in hospitals, vaccine R&D, and emergency preparedness align with security. Non-emergency services (e.g., elective surgeries) are less relevant.
 - *Reframed:* 4.9-7%.
- **Education (5-7% of GDP):** 50% reframable. Education builds societal resilience, STEM skills for defense tech, and civic awareness for countering disinformation. General primary education or humanities are less directly linked.
 - *Reframed:* 2.5-3.5%.
- **Social Protection (10-15% of GDP):** 30% reframable. Social welfare stabilizes populations during crises, reducing unrest risks. Programs like unemployment benefits or food security could be framed as security-enhancing, but pensions or universal benefits are harder to reframe.
 - *Reframed:* 3-4.5%.
- **Infrastructure and Energy (3-5% of GDP):** 80% reframable. Critical infrastructure (transport, energy grids, cybersecurity) is vital for resilience against physical or cyber threats. Energy security investments (e.g., renewables, grid hardening) align with defense goals.
 - *Reframed:* 2.4-4%.
- **Research and Development (1-2% of GDP):** 60% reframable. Defense-related R&D (e.g., AI, biotech, materials) directly contributes, and dual-use technologies have broad security applications. Basic research (e.g., theoretical physics) is less immediate.
 - *Reframed:* 0.6-1.2%.
- **Public Administration and Law Enforcement (5-7% of GDP):** 60% reframable. Police, intelligence services, and cybersecurity governance directly support security. General bureaucracy (e.g., tax collection) is less relevant.
 - *Reframed:* 3-4.2%.
- **Other (5-10% of GDP):** 20% reframable. Miscellaneous spending (e.g., culture, foreign aid) has limited security relevance, but some aid (e.g., stabilizing allied nations) or environmental protection could be reframed.
 - *Reframed:* 1-2%.

- **Country Variation:** Countries with higher baseline defense spending (e.g., USA at ~3.5% vs. Germany at ~1.5%) or different welfare models (e.g., Nordic vs. liberal economies) will vary.

- **Crisis Type:** A cyber crisis might emphasize R&D and infrastructure, while a health crisis prioritizes healthcare. The estimate assumes a general "complex crisis."

- **Credibility Limits:** Over-reframing (e.g., claiming 100% of education) risks diluting the concept of security. The percentages aim for defensible links.

- **Data Gaps:** Without specific budget breakdowns, I rely on OECD averages and qualitative judgment. Precise reframing requires country-specific analysis.

If you want a deeper dive into a specific country, crisis type, or budget category, let me know!

Comments of AIs on reframing "defence" against "threats"

Question: The current major Western focus on "defence", as articulated by NATO in promoting an expenditure of 5% of GDP, invites reflection on the meaning of "defence" in relation to an Eastern culture long inspired by the strategic subtlety of the martial arts. Could you comment on how the paradoxical philosophy of those Eastern arts might render questionable the Western focus on military hardware. Against whom or what is "defence" required in a society faced with polycrisis

Response of ChatGPT

ChatGPT 4o

Your question draws attention to a profound cultural and philosophical divergence in how "defence" is understood—and operationalized—in Western versus Eastern strategic traditions.

Western Construal: Defence as Material Fortification: The contemporary Western approach to defence, particularly as emphasized by NATO's push for 5% of GDP in military spending, is grounded in a **materialist paradigm**. Defence here is:

- **Quantifiable:** expressed in budgets, armaments, and technological superiority.
- **Territorial:** framed around border protection, deterrence, and control of physical space.
- **Reactive and preemptive:** assuming that force must be met—or anticipated—by greater force.

It presumes **hard power** as the primary currency of security, with defence equated to the capacity for violent retaliation or prevention through overwhelming capability. This approach has deep roots in the **Clausewitzian** understanding of war as a continuation of politics by other means, and in the modern state's reliance on militarization as an insurance against instability or threat.

Eastern Strategic Philosophy: Defence as Dynamic Balance: In contrast, many Eastern martial traditions—rooted in Taoist, Confucian, and Zen Buddhist philosophies—develop a **paradoxical relationship to force**:

- **Wu Wei (無為): Action Through Non-action**
 - Taoist strategy emphasizes **effortless efficacy**. Defence is not brute strength but **adaptive responsiveness**.
 - "The best fighter is never angry" (Laozi): defence lies in presence, clarity, and fluid response—not in escalation.
- **Sun Tzu's Art of War**
 - "The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting."
 - Victory is gained by knowing both oneself and the opponent; through **deception, timing, and terrain**, not through material domination.
 - Defence may mean rendering conflict unnecessary—by undermining its causes or redirecting its energy.
- **Aikido and Judo: Using the Opponent's Force**
 - In martial arts like **Aikido**, the goal is to blend with the attacker's motion and neutralize aggression without harm.
 - Defence here is **relational and systemic**, not antagonistic. The defender does not resist but **redirects**.
- **Defence as Internal Cultivation**
 - In disciplines like Tai Chi and Kung Fu, defence is inseparable from **internal discipline**, emotional regulation, and awareness.
 - The greatest vulnerability is internal dissonance or ignorance, not external threat.

Implications: Paradox and Critique: The **paradox** is this: the more a culture invests in visible, aggressive forms of defence, the more it may:

- Signal fear rather than strength;
- Entrench a mindset that assumes inevitable conflict;
- Become rigid and brittle—less able to adapt to non-conventional threats (cyberwarfare, climate destabilization, misinformation).

Eastern martial arts invite a **reframing of defence**:

- From fortification to fluidity,
- From domination to harmony,
- From expenditure to economy of motion and mind.

In this light, the Western preoccupation with military hardware may be seen not as a strength but as a **symptom of strategic rigidity**. It risks becoming the strategic equivalent of wearing too much armour: slow, predictable, and ultimately exposed.

Towards an Integrative Perspective: This is not to dismiss the need for conventional defence, but to highlight that security is not solely a function of hardware or GDP allocation. In an era of asymmetric and non-linear threats, resilience, adaptability, and insight—hallmarks of Eastern strategic subtlety—are equally, if not more, vital.

A synthesis of East and West might ask:

- What does it mean to be unattackable, not through deterrence, but through disinterest in domination?
- What if defence included psychological preparedness, cultural fluency, ecological attunement?

As Sun Tzu reminds us: *"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles."* One might ask whether an overinvestment in matériel reflects, in part, a deeper uncertainty about both.

Would you like this reflection extended to contemporary global crises such as climate change or AI governance?

Response of Grok

Grok

The Western focus on defense, as articulated by NATO's push for 5% of GDP expenditure, emphasizes military hardware, deterrence, and kinetic capabilities, rooted in a Clausewitzian view of conflict as a direct clash of forces. This contrasts sharply with the strategic subtlety of Eastern martial arts philosophies, such as those derived from Sun Tzu, Taoism, or disciplines like judo and aikido, which prioritize adaptability, minimal force, and harmonizing with an opponent's energy.

These differences invite a reevaluation of what "defense" means in the context of a polycrisis—a convergence of interconnected challenges like climate change, cybersecurity threats, economic

Redefining "Defense" in a Polycrisis: In a polycrisis, "defense" extends beyond traditional adversaries (e.g., state actors) to systemic threats. Eastern philosophy suggests a broader, more adaptive approach:

- **Against Complexity and Chaos:** Defense means resilience against cascading failures—e.g., securing supply chains, hardening infrastructure against climate impacts, or countering disinformation. This aligns with redirecting energy rather than confronting it head-on.
- **Non-State Threats:** Cyberattacks, pandemics, or economic shocks often lack a clear "enemy." Eastern

instability, disinformation, and pandemics. Below, I explore how Eastern martial arts philosophy might critique the Western approach and redefine defense in a polycrisis.

Eastern Martial Arts Philosophy: Key Principles: Eastern martial arts, particularly those influenced by Taoist and Zen thought, emphasize paradoxical and holistic approaches to conflict:

- **Economy of Force:** Arts like aikido or tai chi redirect an opponent's energy rather than overpowering it, using minimal effort for maximum effect. Sun Tzu's *Art of War* advocates winning without fighting, through superior strategy and positioning.
- **Adaptability and Flow:** Strategies emphasize fluidity, adapting to the opponent's movements and exploiting their weaknesses. Rigidity or overcommitment is a liability.
- **Holistic Balance:** Conflict is seen as part of a larger system, where harmony, prevention, and preparation outweigh brute strength. For example, judo uses an opponent's momentum against them, aligning with natural forces.
- **Inner Resilience:** Mastery begins with self-discipline and awareness, cultivating a calm mind to navigate chaos. This contrasts with external displays of power.
- **Prevention Over Reaction:** Eastern thought prioritizes avoiding conflict through foresight, diplomacy, or deterrence, rather than escalating to violence.

These principles question the Western reliance on military hardware—tanks, jets, and missiles—as the cornerstone of defense, especially in a polycrisis where threats are diffuse, non-linear, and often non-military.

Critiquing the Western Focus on Military Hardware:

- **Misalignment with Polycrisis Threats:**
 - A polycrisis involves threats like climate-induced migration, cyberattacks, supply chain disruptions, and disinformation campaigns, which military hardware is ill-suited to address. For example, a fighter jet cannot mitigate a hacked power grid or counter viral propaganda.
 - Eastern philosophy would argue for redirecting resources to “softer” tools—cybersecurity, economic resilience, or public education—that neutralize threats before they escalate, akin to using an opponent's momentum in judo.
- **Overcommitment to Kinetic Solutions:**
 - NATO's 5% GDP target (higher than the current 2% benchmark for many members) prioritizes capital-intensive systems. This risks locking resources into rigid, hardware-heavy frameworks, leaving less for adaptive strategies.
 - Sun Tzu's emphasis on winning without fighting suggests investing in diplomacy, alliances, or cultural influence to deter threats, rather than escalating arms races. For instance, China's Belt and Road Initiative could be seen as a modern application of soft power over hard power.
- **Neglect of Systemic Resilience:**
 - Eastern martial arts view strength as systemic balance, not isolated force. A society's “defense” against polycrisis requires robust healthcare, energy independence, and social cohesion—areas underfunded when budgets prioritize hardware.
 - For example, during COVID-19, countries with strong public health systems (e.g., South Korea) fared better than those with high military spending but weaker social infrastructure. Aikido's principle of blending with force suggests bolstering societal resilience to absorb shocks, not just building walls.
- **Escalation Risks:**
 - Heavy investment in military hardware can fuel adversary escalation, creating a security dilemma. Eastern philosophy warns against provoking unnecessary conflict, advocating subtle deterrence (e.g., cyber capabilities or economic leverage) over

strategies would prioritize anticipation and flexibility, such as investing in AI-driven threat detection or diversified energy sources.

- **Societal Cohesion:** A fragmented society is its own worst enemy. Education and cultural initiatives that foster unity and critical thinking are as vital as military defenses, echoing the martial arts focus on inner strength.
- **Global Interdependence:** Polycrises are transnational, requiring cooperation over competition. Eastern philosophy's emphasis on harmony suggests defense through alliances, shared tech development, or climate agreements, rather than zero-sum militarization.

Indicative Reframing of Defense: Drawing on the previous estimate (20-30% of GDP reframable as defense-related), Eastern philosophy would advocate reallocating resources from hardware to systemic resilience:

- **Reduce Hardware Focus:** Lower the share of traditional defense (3-5% of GDP) to prioritize dual-use investments (e.g., R&D, infrastructure).
- **Emphasize Soft Power:** Increase spending on education (to counter disinformation), healthcare (for pandemics), and green tech (for climate security), which align with martial arts principles of prevention and adaptability.
- **Holistic Metrics:** Measure defense not by tanks or missiles but by societal stability, innovation capacity, and global influence—metrics of “winning without fighting.”

Conclusion: The Eastern martial arts philosophy challenges the Western fixation on military hardware by highlighting its rigidity, escalation risks, and misalignment with polycrisis threats. Defense in a polycrisis requires a Taoist-inspired approach: fluid, resilient, and preventive, focusing on societal strength, adaptability, and harmony over brute force.

Against the diffuse “opponents” of climate, cyber, and social instability, defense means investing in systems that absorb and redirect chaos, not just weapons to confront it. NATO's 5% target could be reframed to include these broader elements, but only if “defense” evolves beyond its current hardware-centric paradigm.

If you'd like a deeper exploration of specific Eastern philosophies (e.g., Sun Tzu vs. aikido) or a comparison with a particular Western defense policy, let me know!

<p>visible shows of force.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Russia's invasion of Ukraine illustrates how hardware-centric deterrence failed to prevent conflict, whereas non-military tools (e.g., sanctions, information warfare) played significant roles in response. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inner Weakness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Eastern thought emphasizes self-mastery as the foundation of strength. A society distracted by internal division or disinformation is vulnerable, regardless of its arsenal. The West's focus on external threats may neglect "inner" defense—education, critical thinking, and civic unity—which are critical in a polycrisis. 	
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Response of Claude

Claude	
<p>The contrast you've identified touches on fundamentally different philosophical approaches to security and conflict. Eastern martial arts philosophy, particularly as expressed in traditions like Aikido, Taiji, and classical Chinese strategy, offers profound insights that challenge Western military orthodoxy.</p> <p>The Paradox of Force in Eastern Philosophy: In Aikido, true mastery lies not in overwhelming force but in redirecting an opponent's energy against themselves. The strongest defense becomes the absence of resistance that allows aggression to collapse under its own weight. Similarly, Sun Tzu's highest form of warfare is winning without fighting - achieving objectives through positioning, timing, and understanding rather than direct confrontation.</p> <p>This philosophy suggests that accumulating military hardware may paradoxically increase vulnerability by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating the very tensions and arms races that generate threats • Diverting resources from addressing root causes of instability • Fostering a mindset that sees solutions primarily through force <p>Defense Against What in Polycrisis? The polycrisis framework reveals the limitations of traditional military thinking. Today's threats are systemic and interconnected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate breakdown that destabilizes entire regions • Economic inequality breeding social fragmentation • Information warfare that undermines democratic institutions • Technological disruption outpacing governance capacity • Pandemic vulnerabilities in interconnected systems <p>Military hardware offers little protection against these challenges. A society spending 5% of GDP on conventional defense while its food systems fail, democratic institutions erode, or social cohesion collapses resembles someone building higher walls while their foundation crumbles.</p>	<p>The Eastern Alternative - Systemic Resilience: Eastern philosophy might suggest that true security comes from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptive capacity rather than rigid strength • Harmony with natural systems rather than domination over them • Internal stability through social cohesion and wise governance • Understanding interdependence rather than seeking independence through force <p>The martial arts teach that the most secure position is one of balance, awareness, and readiness to flow with changing circumstances - qualities that massive military expenditure may actually undermine by creating rigidity and resource misallocation.</p> <p>In facing polycrisis, perhaps the question isn't "how do we defend?" but "how do we cultivate the wisdom, resilience, and adaptability to thrive within complexity?"</p>

Response of DeepSeek

DeepSeek	
<p>The tension between NATO's hardware-centric defense paradigm and Eastern martial philosophy reveals profound cultural divergences in conceiving security. Let's examine this through multiple lenses:</p> <p>Eastern Strategic Paradoxes vs. Western Materialism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Wu Wei (非為) Principle:</i> Taoist/Buddhist concepts emphasize victory through yielding (e.g., aikido's redirection of force) rather than meeting aggression with amplified force. Sun Tzu's <i>Art of War</i> prioritizes winning without battle - contrasting with deterrence through arms 	<p>Martial Wisdom for Polycrisis: Eastern strategy offers alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Jingjie (境界) Thinking:</i> Seeing defense as harmonizing with threats (like water shaping around rocks) rather than opposing them • <i>Ikigai (生き甲斐) Security:</i> Focusing on societal resilience through healthcare, food sovereignty, and community trust • <i>Go (囲碁) Strategy:</i> Sacrificing local positions for global advantage - accepting temporary vulnerabilities to address root causes

<p>accumulation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Internal Cultivation</i>: Traditional martial arts (e.g., kung fu, taiji) focus 70% on mental/spiritual discipline, 30% on technique. Defense begins with mastering internal conflicts before external threats. • <i>Non-Duality</i>: The attacker-defender dichotomy dissolves in philosophies like Zen - fixation on "enemies" perpetuates the conflict cycle. <p>Polycrisis and Misplaced Defense: Against interconnected threats, excessive military spending becomes counterproductive:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Actual Threats</th> <th>Military Response Relevance</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Climate collapse</td> <td>Near-zero</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pandemic risks</td> <td>Marginal</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AI-driven disinformation</td> <td>Indirect</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resource scarcity conflicts</td> <td>Symptomatic treatment only</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The 2023 Global Peace Index reveals \$17.5 trillion spent on "defense" since 9/11 while existential threats remain underfunded.</p> <p>The Self-Defeating Security Paradox</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Thucydides Trap</i>: Arms buildups trigger security dilemmas (e.g., Russia perceiving NATO expansion as threat) • <i>Opportunity Cost</i>: Each F-35 fighter (\$80M) equals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 8 years of healthcare for 10,000 people ◦ 160 climate-resilient schools ◦ 16,000 hectares reforestation • <i>Resource Wars</i>: Competition for rare minerals (lithium, cobalt) for military tech accelerates the ecological crisis it claims to prevent. 	Actual Threats	Military Response Relevance	Climate collapse	Near-zero	Pandemic risks	Marginal	AI-driven disinformation	Indirect	Resource scarcity conflicts	Symptomatic treatment only	<p>Against whom? The true adversaries are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological overshoot • Weaponized misinformation • Unregulated technologies • Systemic inequality <p>The defense expenditure debate exposes a civilizational crossroads: Continue preparing for 20th-century state conflicts while polycrisis erodes foundations, or embrace a <i>soteria</i> (Greek: holistic preservation) paradigm where security means cultivating antifragile societies through climate mitigation, AI ethics, and pandemic preparedness. As Lao Tzu observed: "<i>The best fighter is never angry. The greatest conqueror wins without war.</i>" The ultimate defense may lie in dissolving the conditions that necessitate it.</p>
Actual Threats	Military Response Relevance										
Climate collapse	Near-zero										
Pandemic risks	Marginal										
AI-driven disinformation	Indirect										
Resource scarcity conflicts	Symptomatic treatment only										

Response of Perplexity

Perplexity	
<p>Rethinking "Defence": Western Military Spending and Eastern Martial Philosophy in a Polycrisis World</p> <p>The Western Emphasis on Military Hardware: NATO's recent push for member states to allocate 5% of GDP to defence by 2035 marks a dramatic escalation of the alliance's traditional focus on military preparedness, hardware, and deterrence. This initiative is framed as a response to an increasingly uncertain geopolitical landscape, with the explicit aim of demonstrating unity and resolve against external threats, particularly Russia¹²³. The bulk of this spending is earmarked for troops, weapons, and security infrastructure—concrete manifestations of "defence" as a material, outward-facing posture.</p> <p>Eastern Martial Arts: A Paradoxical Philosophy of Defence: In contrast, the philosophy underpinning traditional Eastern martial arts—such as karate, taekwondo, and kung fu—offers a paradoxical and nuanced understanding of defence. Several key themes emerge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Defence, Not Aggression : The primary goal is protection, not conquest. Force is to be used only to negate a threat and, ideally, to negotiate peace. If a dispute can be resolved without violence, that is the preferred path⁴⁵⁶. • Minimal Necessary Force : Martial artists are trained to apply exactly the degree of force warranted by the situation—no more, no less. This discipline is as much mental as physical⁴. • Non-Violence and Moral Virtue : Many Eastern systems, influenced by philosophies such as Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, emphasize virtues like humility, respect, and harmony. The highest level of mastery is to subdue an opponent without fighting at all⁵⁶. • Adaptation and Flexibility : Martial arts stress adaptability, using the opponent's force against them, and responding to changing circumstances rather than relying on brute strength or static defences. <p>Questioning the Hardware Paradigm: The paradox at the heart</p>	<p>Defence in a Polycrisis Society: Rethinking the Adversary: The concept of polycrisis describes a situation where diverse crises amplify each other, producing harms greater than the sum of their parts. These crises are not limited to military threats, but include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental degradation and climate change • Economic fragility and inequality • Social polarization and loss of trust • Technological disruptions and information warfare⁷⁸⁹¹⁰ <p>In such a context, the question "against whom or what is defence required?" becomes more complex. The adversary is not always an external enemy, but may be systemic vulnerabilities, social fragmentation, or the unintended consequences of our own actions⁹. The martial arts philosophy, with its emphasis on self-mastery, adaptability, and harmonious coexistence, suggests that true defence must encompass:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening social and psychological resilience • Cultivating moral and civic virtues • Building adaptive, flexible systems capable of responding to diverse threats <p>Conclusion: The paradoxical wisdom of Eastern martial arts challenges the Western fixation on military hardware as the essence of defence. In a polycrisis world, where threats are diffuse and interconnected, the most profound forms of security may lie not in the accumulation of arms, but in the cultivation of inner strength, social cohesion, and the capacity to adapt creatively to uncertainty⁴⁵⁶⁸⁹.</p>

of Eastern martial arts—winning by not fighting, defending by yielding—casts doubt on the Western preoccupation with ever-greater military hardware as the primary form of defence. Some implications:

- **Hardware vs. Harmony** : A focus on material arms may neglect the importance of social cohesion, moral education, and psychological resilience—qualities that Eastern traditions see as essential to true security⁴⁶.
- **Escalation Risks** : The accumulation of weapons can create a security dilemma, where each side's pursuit of safety paradoxically increases overall danger.
- **Misidentifying Threats** : In a world defined by polycrisis—where multiple, interconnected crises (climate, economic, social, technological) converge—military force alone is ill-suited to address the root causes of instability⁷⁸⁹.

Response of Gemini:

Gemini	
<p>The Western emphasis on "defence," particularly as articulated by NATO's push for 5% of GDP expenditure, largely centers on conventional military might, technological superiority, and the accumulation of hardware. This approach, while effective in certain scenarios, stands in stark contrast to the paradoxical philosophy embedded within Eastern martial arts traditions, which often prioritize internal strength, adaptability, and the strategic avoidance of direct confrontation.</p> <p>Eastern martial arts, such as Aikido, Tai Chi, Judo, or even the strategic principles found in texts like Sun Tzu's <i>Art of War</i>, often emphasize:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmony and Balance: The goal is not always to overpower, but to harmonize with the opponent's energy, redirect their force, or find a point of equilibrium.¹ This translates to understanding the nature of a threat and responding in a way that minimizes harm to both sides, if possible, or transforms the conflict. • Minimal Effort, Maximum Effect (Ju no ri): The idea of "softness overcoming hardness" is central. Instead of meeting force with greater force, one learns to yield, redirect, or use an opponent's momentum against them. This suggests that the most effective defense isn't necessarily the most aggressive or heavily armed. • Adaptability and Fluidity: Rigid adherence to a single strategy or overwhelming force can be a weakness. Martial arts teach constant adaptation to changing circumstances, reading the opponent's intentions, and being unpredictable.² This contrasts with a defence posture heavily reliant on static, pre-planned responses and fixed assets. • Internal Cultivation and Self-Mastery: True strength is often seen as originating from within – mental clarity, discipline, emotional control, and a deep understanding of oneself and one's environment. External tools are secondary to internal readiness. • The Art of Non-Fighting: The highest level of mastery in many Eastern martial arts is to win without fighting, or to deter conflict through sheer presence and understanding. This might involve strategic positioning, psychological deterrence, or demonstrating an ability that makes confrontation undesirable for the opponent. Sun Tzu famously stated, "The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting."³ <p>How this Renders Questionable the Western Focus on Military Hardware: The paradoxical philosophy of Eastern martial arts raises several questions about a primary focus on military hardware for "defence":</p>	<p>Against Whom or What is "Defence" Required in a Society Faced with Polycrisis? In a society facing "polycrisis"—a confluence of interconnected and cascading global challenges—the traditional notion of "defence" against a singular, identifiable military adversary becomes insufficient. "Defence" is required against:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change: Extreme weather events, sea-level rise, resource scarcity (water, food), and climate migration pose existential threats that no amount of military hardware can directly stop.⁴ Defence here involves mitigation (decarbonization), adaptation (resilient infrastructure), and humanitarian response. • Pandemics and Biological Threats: As COVID-19 demonstrated, biological threats can cripple economies, overwhelm healthcare systems, and destabilize societies.⁵ Defence requires robust public health infrastructure, rapid R&D capabilities, vaccine production, and global cooperation. • Cyber Warfare and Disinformation: Attacks on critical infrastructure, electoral systems, and societal cohesion through digital means are non-kinetic but profoundly disruptive.⁶ Defence involves robust cybersecurity, digital literacy, and resilience against propaganda. • Economic Instability and Inequality: Global financial shocks, supply chain disruptions, and widening wealth gaps can lead to social unrest, political extremism, and international instability. Defence requires economic resilience, fair trade policies, and social safety nets. • Social Fragmentation and Loss of Cohesion: Internal divisions, extremist ideologies, and a decline in civic trust weaken a society from within. Defence involves fostering social inclusion, strengthening democratic institutions, and promoting shared values. • Resource Scarcity and Competition: Growing demand for finite resources (energy, rare earths, water) can lead to geopolitical tensions and conflict.⁷ Defence involves sustainable resource management, diversification of supply chains, and diplomatic solutions. • Failed States and Regional Instability: Weak governance, internal conflicts, and humanitarian crises in one region can have spillover effects, leading to refugee flows, terrorism, and broader insecurity. Defence involves diplomatic engagement, humanitarian aid, and capacity building.⁸ <p>In conclusion, the wisdom of Eastern martial arts suggests that true "defence" in an era of polycrisis might lie less in the acquisition of ever more powerful military hardware and more in the cultivation of adaptability, resilience, internal strength</p>

- **Is brute force always the most effective defence?** If the goal is to win without fighting, then accumulating more tanks, jets, or ships might not be the most efficient or intelligent use of resources. It could even provoke the very conflicts one seeks to avoid.
- **Does hardware address the root causes of conflict?** Many polycrises (climate change, pandemics, economic inequality, social fragmentation) are not susceptible to military solutions. Investing heavily in hardware might neglect the "soft power" and diplomatic, economic, and social tools that could address underlying tensions more effectively.
- **Does it foster a confrontational mindset?** A strong emphasis on military build-up can inadvertently lead to a "hammer-and-nail" mentality, where every problem is seen as a military one, thereby escalating rather than de-escalating tensions.
- **Is it truly adaptable to polycrisis?** While military hardware has its place in conventional warfare, its utility is limited against non-state actors, cyber threats, climate-induced migration, or global health crises. These threats require a more agile, multi-faceted, and non-military response.
- **What is the cost of rigidity?** Heavily investing in specific, large-scale military systems can create strategic inflexibility. These assets are expensive to acquire, maintain, and can become quickly obsolete or irrelevant to emerging threats.

(societal cohesion, critical thinking), strategic flexibility, and the ability to address root causes rather than merely react to symptoms. It implies a shift from a purely military-centric view of security to one that is comprehensive, preventative, and deeply integrated with social, economic, environmental, and diplomatic strategies.



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