

America's Military Is Too Big for America's Good

Adapted from *The New York Times*, August 30, 2021

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For much of its history, the United States was a big country with a small peacetime military. World War II changed that permanently: American leaders decided that a country with new global obligations needed a very large peacetime military, including a nuclear arsenal and a worldwide network of bases. They hoped overwhelming military capacity would avert another world war, deter adversaries and encourage foreign countries to follow our wishes.

Yet this military dominance has hardly yielded the promised benefits. The collapse of the American-supported government in Afghanistan (...) is just the latest setback in a long narrative of failure.

The war in Afghanistan is much more than a failed intervention. It is stark evidence of how counterproductive global military dominance is to American interests. This military hegemony has brought more defeats than victories and undermined democratic values at home and abroad. (...)

History is clear: We would be better off with more modest, restrained military and strategic goals (...). Our country needs to re-examine the value of military dominance.

The reliance on military force has repeatedly entangled the United States in distant, costly, long conflicts with self-defeating consequences — in Vietnam, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and other places. American leaders have consistently assumed that military superiority will compensate for diplomatic and political limitations. Time and again, despite battlefield successes, **our military has come up short in achieving stated goals.**

If anything, the record shows that a large military presence distorts political development, directing it toward combat and policing, not social development. (...)

American leaders have depended on our armed forces so much because they are so vast and easy to deploy. **This is the peril of creating such a large force:** The annual budget for the U.S. military has grown to more than a gargantuan \$700 billion, and we are more likely to use it, and less likely to build better substitutes. (...)

We must be honest about what the military cannot do. We should allocate our resources to other organizations and agencies that will actually make our country more resilient, prosperous and secure. We will benefit by returning to our history as a big country with a small peacetime military.

(357 words)

I) Compréhension écrite (6 points)

Using your own words, answer the following questions about the text (direct and concise answers are expected).

1. What is Jeremi Suri trying to demonstrate? (1 pt)
2. What were the goals of the expansion of the army after the Second World War? (1 pt)
3. In what ways is American military intervention more harmful than beneficial? (2 pts)
4. Explain the following phrase: “our military has come up short in achieving stated goals” (line 19). (1 pt)
5. Explain the following phrase: “This is the peril of creating such a large force ...” (line 23). (1 pt)

II. Expression écrite (14 points)

Write an essay on the following topic (+/- 300 words):

Is foreign military intervention ever justified?

You do not need to focus solely on examples drawn from the article, feel free to include other examples you are familiar with.