

PROVIDE FOR A STRONG NATIONAL DEFENSE WITH PRUDENT FOREIGN POLICY

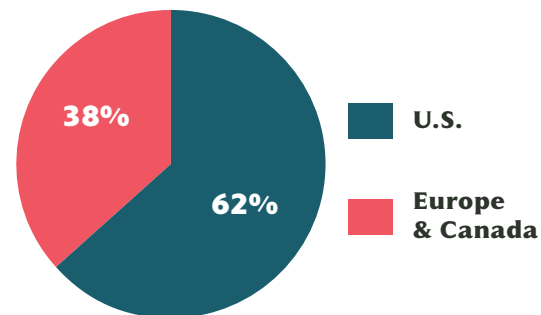
# Advance Burden-Shifting In Europe

A Europe that is not militarily self-sufficient and is constantly dependent on American military resources hurts U.S. vital national interests. Washington should encourage NATO-Europe to take on primary responsibility for the continent's defense while reducing its regional military footprint in Europe.

## THE ISSUE

Europe's NATO members are wealthy and capable enough to provide for their own defense, yet the United States still maintains more than [80,000 troops](#) on the continent.<sup>1</sup> European defense expenditures have increased over the past four years, and must continue to do so, but true burden-shifting means Europe rebuilding core capabilities hollowed out by decades of defense underinvestment, not just meeting a higher topline.

NATO Defense Spending 2025



Source: NATO

## POLICY SOLUTIONS

### RIGHT-SIZE THE U.S. MILITARY FOOTPRINT IN EUROPE

Europe, not the United States, should be taking primary responsibility for its own front-line defense, but large-scale, permanent U.S. troop deployments in Europe reduce our allies' incentives to build the military capabilities they need. The United States should build on its 2025 withdrawal of rotational units from Romania by redeploying the 20,000 additional U.S. troops sent to Europe since 2022. Over time, U.S. troop levels should reduce further as America's role in NATO transitions from front-line defense to providing an appropriate share of logistical support.<sup>2</sup>

### PURSUE A NEGOTIATED END TO THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

The longer the war in Ukraine lasts, the greater the danger to U.S. interests from America's inability to concentrate on higher priority regions such as the Indo-Pacific. The United States should continue to seek a durable peace, allowing Ukraine an opportunity for long-term independence through well-armed neutrality.<sup>3</sup>

### REJECT ADDITIONAL NATO EXPANSION

Offering additional security guarantees in Europe will increase allied dependency on the United States rather than advancing American interests. The United States should close the door to NATO membership to Ukraine or other countries bordering Russia, such as Georgia. Article 5 guarantees to Kyiv risk pulling the United States into a future war with a nuclear-armed power over a peripheral interest.

### PRESERVE THE PRESIDENT'S REDEPLOYMENT AUTHORITY

Congressional attempts to restrict the commander-in-chief's power to redeploy troops directly undermine the U.S. interests in NATO burden-shifting by discouraging allied defense investment. Legislators should reject such proposals and maintain the president's flexibility to adjust troop levels as America's interests require.

## CONTACT

Tyler Koteskey  
[Tkoteskey@cv4a.org](mailto:Tkoteskey@cv4a.org)  
Policy Director

Matthew MacKenzie  
[Mmackenzie@afphq.org](mailto:Mmackenzie@afphq.org)  
Foreign Policy Analyst

Michael Nudo  
[Mnudo@cv4a.org](mailto:Mnudo@cv4a.org)  
Federal Legislative Liaison

Last Updated: January 2026

---

<sup>1</sup> Molly Carlough, et. al., “Where Are U.S. Forces Deployed in Europe?” Council on Foreign Relations, February 27, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Sumantra Maitra, “Pivoting the US Away from Europe to a Dormant NATO,” Center for Renewing America, February 16, 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Friedman, “Neutrality Not NATO: Assessing Security Options for Ukraine,” Defense Priorities, July 12, 2023.