
Trump's Budget Blueprint: Pulling Up the Diplomatic Drawbridge

The White House budget plan embodies the administration's "America First" nationalism, hiking spending on defense and border security while slashing everything else.

President Donald Trump's first budget proposal crystallizes the administration's ideological priorities, calling for bolstering spending on the military and border security while gutting funding for diplomacy and foreign aid, scientific research, and most of the federal government.

The budget blueprint unveiled Thursday is short on details, and faces long odds in Congress, where Trump's fellow Republicans expressed serious reservations about numerous funding cuts.

But as a political document, it reflects the White House's preference for a narrow definition of U.S. interests not seen since before World War II. Titled "America First," the Trump budget also reflects a deep skepticism of government programs meant to defuse conflicts, fight poverty abroad, or battle transnational challenges like climate change.

Mick Mulvaney, director of the Office of Management and Budget, described the blueprint for fiscal year 2018 as a "hard power budget."

"The president wants to spend more money on defense, more money securing the border, more money enforcing the laws, without adding to the deficit," Mulvaney told reporters.

The president's plan would sharply boost defense spending by \$54 billion, plus add another \$2.8 billion for homeland security and \$1.4 billion for maintaining the nuclear stockpile. To make the deficit math work, the White House wants offsetting cuts of more than 30 percent at the Environmental Protection Agency and about 28 percent at the State Department, as well as major cuts in the other departments. But all those agencies have budgets just a fraction the size of the Pentagon.

Foreign diplomats expressed dismay, and Democratic lawmakers promptly condemned the proposed cuts to the State Department and USAID (the US Agency for International Development) as short-sighted and reckless.

"If enacted, this budget would only make the world more dangerous for America and Americans, and make it harder to safeguard our interests, promote our values and further expand our prosperity," said Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.), the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Republican leaders, many of whom said they supported the overall thrust of the budget, criticized specific cuts, including those aimed at the State Department. "I'm absolutely shocked at the Administration's puny request," said Hal Rogers (R-Ky.), chairman of the the House Appropriations' Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs. "The U.S. has a vital role to play in advancing democracy, protecting the innocent, helping the displaced

and vulnerable, and offering diplomatic solutions to overseas unrest and other challenges abroad.”

Rep. Ted Yoho (R-Fla.) also came out against massive cuts to foreign aid: “At a time when American leadership is needed more than ever, we must continue to invest in the International Affairs Budget.”

If adopted, the proposed combination of cuts to the State Department and USAID would mark the lowest level of funding for these programs in over a decade. When additional cuts to the international affairs budget are taken into account in a separate Overseas Contingency Operations budget, which supports operations in warzones in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, including supplemental counter-terrorism funds, the plan would represent a nearly \$20 billion reduction, from \$58.8 billion to \$37.6.

“Effectively, this would be a 36 percent cut to the State Department’s overall budget,” a former State Department official said.

In presenting its spending plans for the State Department, the Office of Management and Budget said the blueprint “seeks to reduce or end direct funding for international organizations whose missions do not substantially advance U.S. foreign policy interests, are duplicative, or are not well managed.”

If it were to pass Congress, the budget could put the administration on a collision course with the United Nations. The budget plan doesn’t spell out most of the U.N. cuts under consideration but it commits to reducing “funding to the U.N. and affiliated agencies,” including peacekeeping, and wants the funding burden more fairly shared.

The United States is legally obliged to pay 22 percent of the U.N.’s regular budget and about 28 percent of U.N. peacekeeping costs. Washington would need to negotiate an agreement with the U.N.’s 192 other members to cover a larger share of the budget. It remains unclear whether they can achieve such a deal. If the U.S. decided to withhold funding — as it did during the 1990s — it could run the risk of losing its voting rights before the U.N. General Assembly.

The budget would preserve a range of programs that fight malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, and fulfill a commitment to contribute \$1 billion to fund vaccines. But it would severely cut funding to combatting climate change, and makes clear that it will not move forward on a pledge from former president Barack Obama to contribute an additional \$2 billion to the Green Climate Fund.

U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres said the “abrupt funding cuts” might backfire on the Trump administration, undermining its efforts to pursue cost-cutting reforms at the United Nations, according to his spokesman Stephane Dujarric. Guterres said fighting terrorism “requires more than military spending. There is also a need to address the underlying drivers of terrorism.”

Although lawmakers could reject the cuts in the end, the administration’s dim view of international assistance and diplomacy sparked concern among America’s allies.

“America’s retreat and unilateralism, or even the perception of it by other players, would create the risk of coming back to the old “spheres of influence” policies [*i.e., with many regional powers, as opposed to the USA being the main world leader and global power*]. And history teaches us that that approach has only led to more instability,” Delattre said.

The budget plan also signals a retreat from another U.S. creation, proposing less funding for multilateral development banks, including the World Bank. It would cut about \$650 million over three years “compared to commitments made by the previous administration,” the OMB said.

Reducing U.S. funding for the World Bank and other development banks could undermine Washington’s influence at those institutions, put at risk some anti-poverty programs, and possibly benefit China’s efforts to expand its role as a global player in trade, finance, and foreign aid, experts said.

Organizations like the World Bank help promote free-market norms and trade links. If Washington chooses to take a less active role at the bank, Beijing could fill the vacuum through its own development bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), said Neil Ruiz, executive director of the Center for Law, Economics, and Finance at George Washington University. That would give more heft to Beijing’s vision of development finance — which can shape the politics and economies of big chunks of the world — at the expense of Washington’s.

“It could make the World Bank less competitive and the China’s AIIB a more powerful institution,” Ruiz said. “That could be an unintended consequence.”

<http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/16/trumps-budget-blueprint-pulling-up-the-diplomatic-drawbridge/>

Remembering what you learned in the last current event, read this article from *Foreign Policy* magazine. As you read, take notes in the chart below. Don't get too wrapped up in what's a goal and what's a tool, but in general a goal is what we want to achieve (the end result), while a tool is what we do to reach a goal (methods, actions, tasks, strategies).

Goals of US Foreign Policy	Tools of Foreign Policy	
	Prioritized	Not Prioritized
Potential Benefits of the New Approach		
Potential Drawbacks of the New Approach		

The OMB director describes this budget as a “hard power budget.” What do you think “hard power” means? What might “soft power” mean?