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Withdrawing From Overseas Bases

Why a Forward-Deployed Military Posture Is Unnecessary, Outdated, and Dangerous

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States maintains a veritable empire of military bases throughout the world—about 800 of them in more than 70 countries. This forward-deployed military posture incurs substantial costs and disadvantages, exposing the United States to vulnerabilities and unintended consequences. The strategic justifications for overseas bases—that they deter adversaries, reassure allies, and enable rapid deployment operations—have lost much of their value and relevance in the contemporary security environment.

Deterrence is usually achieved by means other than nearby U.S. military bases, and a forward-deployed presence frequently exacerbates international tensions by causing fear and counterbalancing efforts by adversaries. In an era of reduced global threats, reassurance is not as

important as it was during the early years of the Cold War, and most U.S. allies are wealthy and powerful enough to provide for their own defense. Furthermore, overseas bases are not necessary to retain long-range capabilities for most military interventions, thanks to revolutions in technology that have reduced travel times. Finally, forward bases and the rapid deployment capabilities they enable tempt policymakers to take military action for bad reasons, or in pursuit of counterterrorism goals that are not well served by the deployment of ground forces.

In the absence of a major peer competitor, and in an era of low security threats, the policy of maintaining a constant worldwide overseas military presence is unwise. The United States should withdraw its permanent peacetime military presence abroad and abandon its forward-deployed posture in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.

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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary foreign policy debates, analysts and policymakers largely take America’s worldwide constellation of overseas military bases for granted. But America’s forward-deployed military posture—that is, its policy of maintaining a large overseas military presence—incurs substantial risk. Even under a strategy of primacy—the view that a peaceful world order and our own national security depend on maintaining a preponderance of U.S. power—the extent of U.S. overseas basing creates needless cost and danger. A less aggressive strategy requiring fewer overseas bases would greatly reduce both military spending and security dangers to the United States.

Particularly in the absence of a peer competitor such as the Soviet Union, overseas bases have become liabilities. By buttressing commitments to allies of the United States, overseas bases may, in some cases, deter adversaries and prevent spirals of conflict, but those military bases create several problems.

The first problem is that modern surveillance and targeting technology have made the bases increasingly vulnerable, even while increasing our allies’ ability to marshal their own defenses and to cooperate with U.S. forces outside the allies’ theater. Second, the presence of U.S. military bases can militarize disputes and can antagonize opponents who otherwise would have been more docile. Third, U.S. bases can encourage allies to take risks they might otherwise avoid, thus heightening instability and entangling the United States in peripheral conflicts. Finally, forward-deployed forces are a temptation for U.S. leaders; they can set in motion calls for intervention where core U.S. interests are not at stake.

The U.S. government does not keep a comprehensive and accessible account of its network of overseas bases. The most inclusive estimates are that at present the United States controls approximately 800 overseas facilities in more than 70 countries.¹ Base types fall into about five basic categories, ranging from Main Operating Bases—which hold tens of thousands of troops deployed for long periods of

time, often with their families—to En Route Facilities Structures, which merely store weaponry and other equipment.

To get an idea of the scope of the U.S. military presence, consider that in Europe alone, about 80,000 active-duty personnel are stationed at more than 350 installations, 39 of which are major bases in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Kosovo.² Smaller bases are located in Ireland, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Georgia. The U.S. Navy’s Sixth Fleet rotates three destroyer squadrons, up to 40 ships, and 175 aircraft in the Mediterranean Sea, relying on several fixed bases on land. The United States maintains approximately 200 tactical nuclear weapons throughout the region. Europe is a major logistical hub for U.S. operations abroad, with more than 95 percent of U.S.-based units bound for Iraq and Afghanistan transiting the European Command area of responsibility.³

In the Middle East, deployment numbers can be difficult to determine with precision because troops are stationed on a temporary and rotational basis, and the U.S. government keeps much information about deployed troops secret. But there are approximately 50,000 troops in the region currently, not including military or civilian contractors.⁴ As of February 2017, major bases still exist in Afghanistan, where approximately 12,900 U.S. forces still operate, and Iraq, where about 7,500 troops currently rotate in and out. An air base is stationed in Jordan, where there are more than 2,500 troops, and a small number of U.S. troops are in Israel for surveillance and ballistic missile defense.⁵ U.S. Navy, Air Force, and Army installations are located in Egypt—in Cairo, at Port Said, along the Suez Canal, and in the Sinai Peninsula—as well as in Kuwait, which holds more than 13,400 troops. Major Air Force bases are located in Qatar, at Al Udeid, and in the United Arab Emirates, at Al Dhafra, where there are more than 5,200 and 1,800 troops, respectively. The U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet maintains a permanent presence of

more than 6,400 personnel in Bahrain, from which it launches daily patrols of the Persian Gulf. Small bases and training facilities are also located in Yemen, Oman, and Saudi Arabia.

In the Asia Pacific area, there are more than 154,000 active-duty military personnel (330,000 if you include civilians). There are 49 major bases located in Japan, South Korea, Australia, Singapore, Guam, the Marshall Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands.⁶ Smaller bases are positioned in Hong Kong, Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines, and elsewhere. The Obama administration's "Asia-pivot" aspired to greater basing access and troop presence in countries such as Vietnam and the Philippines. Rotating through the Asia Pacific are five aircraft carrier strike groups, including as many as 180 ships and 1,500 aircraft, two-thirds of the Marine Corps' combat strength, five Army Stryker brigades, and more than half of overall U.S. naval strength.⁷

The United States also maintains many small bases in almost two dozen African countries—including Djibouti, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Ghana, Liberia, South Sudan, and Uganda—as well as a relatively small number in Latin America—including those in Honduras, Cuba, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil. Bases are also kept in such remote outposts as Greenland, Iceland, American Samoa, and Antarctica. The estimated total cost of maintaining this overseas base and troop presence ranges from about \$60 billion to \$120 billion annually.⁸

America's global military presence is the tangible manifestation of the grand strategy of primacy that has driven the U.S. approach to the world for decades. Primacy, according to proponents William Kristol and Robert Kagan, means maintaining a preponderance of U.S. power—a "benevolent hegemony"—over the international system.⁹ According to an internal Pentagon memo in 1992, a forward-deployed military presence serves the core objective of "convincing potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests."¹⁰ Bases abroad help expand

the domain of American influence and responsibility, enabling Washington to use force to police the world and suppress conflict spirals.¹¹

America's forward-deployed posture is not intended to protect the nation from direct attack. Rather, its goal is to provide security for other states and protect against contingencies that, for the most part, would not involve vital U.S. interests. Indeed, as a recent Rand Corporation analysis put it, "military facilities used primarily for power projection are not defensive strongholds but rather launching pads and logistical hubs that support operations beyond their immediate vicinity."¹² In other words, U.S. bases overseas are not about national defense per se. They are an insurance policy on stability abroad.

The argument of this paper is that this posture should be narrowed to prioritize U.S. defense interests. Despite the tendency of policymakers and the news media to exaggerate dangers and inflate threats from abroad, much scholarship shows that international conflict and overall levels of violence are at historic lows. The remarkably secure position of the United States, along with the relatively peaceful state of international politics, enables a withdrawal from this global network of overseas military bases. Rather than defending the security of other states and attempting to stabilize regions of conflict around the world, the United States should encourage allies to carry the burden of their own defense and should extricate itself from regional disputes lest it get drawn into conflicts in which its vital interests are not at stake. This paper evaluates the main strategic justifications for overseas bases, offers critiques of the current policy, and explores some additional costs and drawbacks of the status quo. The concluding sections propose an alternative posture consistent with a grand strategy of restraint—namely, withdrawing from all but a few overseas bases.

THE RATIONALE FOR OVERSEAS MILITARY BASES

Historically, great powers constructed foreign military bases for essentially imperial

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purposes—to acquire additional territory, colonize new lands, control distant resources for the material benefit of the state, enable future conquest, and out-compete other empires. Throughout ancient Greece, rivalrous Athens and Sparta competed for basing access. Rome set up garrisons that extended from Britannia across the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf.¹³ China’s Second Ming Empire constructed a network of bases all across the Indian Ocean, from the Strait of Malacca to the Gulf of Aden.¹⁴ The European empires, starting with Portugal and Spain in the 15th century and ending with the British and French in the 20th, used military bases across Asia, Africa, and the Americas, often as a means to satisfy mercantilist ends of monopolizing trade opportunities through colonization and strengthening the home economy at the expense of rivals. As coal-powered sea travel proliferated in the 19th and early 20th centuries, military bases served logistical requirements for refueling ships on trade routes and military missions.

Today, though, the strategic rationale for overseas military bases has changed significantly. The explosion of world trade has made the need for military garrisons for purposes of trade and ensuring access to resources dubious.¹⁵ Conquest by great powers has declined, partly because of the ascendancy of post-World War II norms of territorial integrity and self-determination.¹⁶ Furthermore, the destructive power of modern militaries, especially through nuclear weapons, has discouraged the kind of aggressive expansionism common among the empires of old.

Maintaining overseas military bases is a uniquely American preoccupation: the United States has approximately 800 military bases; France and the United Kingdom have roughly 12 each; and Russia, the adversary with the next most overseas bases, has about 9.¹⁷ The adoption of this worldwide American network of military bases began in World War II.

America’s share of world power at the end of the war was stupendous. Unlike the other great powers, the United States was largely untouched by combat, it accounted for more than

half of the world’s manufacturing production, and it possessed two-thirds of the world’s gold reserves. It also had the greatest per capita productivity, the most powerful conventional military in the world, and a monopoly on nuclear weapons.¹⁸ The goal of policymakers was to preserve that position for as long as possible and to ensure U.S. security and prosperity by “maintaining the division of Eurasia’s industrial might, preserving freedom of the seas, and . . . preventing the consolidation of Persian Gulf oil.”¹⁹

In the past, America’s favorable geography, isolated from Eurasia, allowed it to remain aloof as long as there was a rough balance of power among the great nations.²⁰ But for policymakers at the end of World War II, the development of airpower and nuclear weapons, not to mention the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, had established a new sense of vulnerability previously attenuated by the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.²¹ The postwar environment of enfeebled war-torn allies in Western Europe, a devastated U.S.-occupied Japan, and an empowered Soviet Union precluded a swift return to an offshore balancing strategy, in which America could let locals handle aggressors except when the stakes became too high.²² The goal of a rough balance of power remained, and policymakers determined that forward deployment was required to maintain it.

Throughout the Cold War, overseas military bases had three functions. First, they were intended to prevent the buildup of military capabilities, or development of nuclear weapons, by states then under U.S. occupation, particularly Germany and Japan. The goal, explains the international relations scholar Christopher Layne, was “to foreclose the possibility that the West European states would re-nationalize their security policies” and thus “strip them of the capacity to take unilateral, national action.”²³ Second, large numbers of ground, air, and naval forces were garrisoned in Europe and along the Asian littoral to deny territorial advances or attacks by the Soviet Union. Third, bases were to contain the Soviets and ensure against the outbreak of war through extended deterrence.

Today's justifications for overseas bases have changed, but the bases remain as strong a part of the nation's grand strategy as ever. Although the number of troops stationed abroad has declined since 1990, the United States still maintains the same forward-deployed posture more than a quarter century after the fall of the Soviet Union. Shed of military competition from the Soviet Union and unencumbered by external constraints on its power, the United States has been free to broaden the conception of its national interests. Not only does America take preventive actions to stave off potential peer competitors, but it also uses its military power, albeit selectively, in the name of protecting human rights, promoting democracy and the rule of law, disciplining rogue states, imposing regime change, engaging in nation-building missions, and managing local disputes around the globe.

Three broad strategic justifications motivate today's forward-deployed posture: (1) to deter potential aggressors, (2) to reassure friends and allies, and (3) to enable a rapid military response for any operational contingency. The first two justifications are designed to demonstrate the trustworthiness of America's threats and promises and thus to bolster the credibility of U.S. security guarantees. The third is based on the assumption that being there is essential for rapid deployment in military interventions.

To deter aggressors, bases serve as "a tangible indicator of American willingness to fight" should an adversary attack a U.S. ally or otherwise destabilize a region through military action.²⁴ They serve as a tripwire, by putting the lives of American soldiers at risk and thus triggering U.S. military intervention in case of attack. It would be very difficult politically for the United States to renege on a security guarantee if U.S. troops were already caught up in the fighting. Finally, large, permanent garrisons require a lot of time and resources to abandon, thus making it difficult to withdraw amid conflict, no matter how peripheral the strategic interests at stake.²⁵

By bolstering U.S. credibility to intervene in response to attack, forward deployment is intended to simultaneously deter adversaries and reassure allies. The combination of dissuading adversaries from aggression and making allies feel safer is meant to enhance global peace and stability. That set of reasons is the logic of hegemonic stability theory, sometimes described as the "American pacifier."²⁶ The presence of the American military is supposed to discourage nuclear proliferation, conventional arms races, and war.

The third argument is that overseas bases provide the logistical infrastructure necessary for rapid response to any major military contingency, or what is sometimes called "contingency responsiveness." As a recent Rand Corporation study explains, "In-place forces provide the immediate capabilities needed to counter major acts of aggression"; they "provide the initial response necessary to prevent quick defeat while awaiting the arrival of aerial, maritime, and ground reinforcements."²⁷ Any contingency that necessitates major military mobilization to a war zone will require substantial reinforcements, the bulk of which will be deployed from the continental United States. However, because that action can take days or weeks, forward-deployed forces are intended to rapidly respond to crises in which initial military successes may be decisive.

A CRITIQUE OF U.S. MILITARY BASE POSTURE

As the circumstances of international politics have changed in the post-Cold War years, and as innovations in technology have both shortened travel times and made in-place forces more vulnerable, the strategic and operational utility of overseas bases deserves renewed scrutiny. This section critiques the three main strategic justifications for overseas bases mentioned previously—deterrence, reassurance, and contingency responsiveness—and explores some additional costs and drawbacks of maintaining a permanent peacetime military presence abroad.

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Deterrence and Reassurance

The deterrence value of overseas military bases is frequently exaggerated. As Robert Johnson argues, the Soviet threat throughout the Cold War spurred “undue alarmism,” and “even without American forces deployed in Western Europe, a Soviet attack was extremely unlikely.”²⁸ The Soviets were not as expansionist as generally feared and were easier to contain than many analysts and policymakers thought. Yet, as Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke write, “by 1956 the United States’ reliance on deterrence threats and alliance commitments as the primary tools of foreign policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union had become a rigidified response to almost any perceived communist encroachment anywhere in the world,” and indeed had “the negative effect of reinforcing the policy-makers’ tendency to rely too heavily on deterrence . . . in lieu of . . . diplomacy.”²⁹

Deterrence is difficult to demonstrate.³⁰ Because success is measured by the absence of an unwanted action by the adversary, determining whether something did not happen because of deterrence, or because the adversary had no intention to attack in the first place, or some other reason, is inherently challenging.³¹ That problem plagues many areas of U.S. foreign policy. For example, analysts and policymakers alike claim that the U.S. military presence in South Korea is the only thing deterring a unilateral North Korean attack. But South Korea’s economy is 40 times the size of North Korea’s, South Korea has twice the population of North Korea, and South Korean military capabilities so far exceed that of Pyongyang’s that there is little question which side would win an all-out war. These glaring gaps in economic and military might deter the North from attacking the South even absent U.S. military power in the region.

Similarly, advocates of a forward-deployed posture in the Middle East regard the U.S. Navy’s presence in Bahrain and its daily patrolling of the Persian Gulf as the principal deterrent that would stop a state like Iran from attempting to close the Strait of Hormuz.³² But Iran exports most of its oil via the strait and

would impose serious economic damage on itself in attempting to close it. Such an attempt would also threaten the vital interests of the regional powers as well as external powers that rely on the free flow of oil from the region. Iran would thus run unacceptably high risks of retaliation by an international coalition of states and would probably be deterred even without the permanent U.S. naval presence in the Gulf.³³

Several trends that are unrelated to forward deployment contribute to general deterrence and stability, making overseas bases superfluous. Advocates of the United States’ forward-deployed posture contend that it is a driving force in creating a more peaceful world by dampening the effects of anarchy and by ameliorating conflict spirals.³⁴ This argument is the essence of the logic behind deterrence and reassurance. But other plausible causal explanations exist for the lack of a great-power war since 1945.³⁵ Although trade and economic interdependence are not always sufficient to stave off conflict between potential belligerents, there is solid evidence that the two factors do reduce the likelihood of war.³⁶ The destructive power of modern conventional militaries has also made war prohibitively costly in many cases, and the fact that most of the world’s great powers possess nuclear weapons has likely been a major factor in the decline of international conflict.³⁷ Normative changes in how people see war also contribute to peace among nations. War is increasingly seen as an abhorrent last resort instead of a glorified mission that creates masculine virtue.³⁸

The absence of a true hegemonic threat in this increasingly stable international environment undermines the case for permanent alliances and the bases that underlie them. The rise of an expansionist European power bent on continental domination is nowhere on the horizon. And it is not clear that U.S. military forces on the ground are the reason for this. In any case, the countries in Europe and East Asia would likely confront any rising hegemon in the absence of U.S. bases and security commitments. As a prosperous and militarily capable continent, Europe is especially able to handle

such an unlikely development without the presence of an extra-regional military power.³⁹

Finally, advocates of forward deployment argue that the United States' overseas presence prevents nuclear proliferation by reassuring host nations. The record on that score is decidedly mixed.⁴⁰ Bases and security guarantees can reassure some allies and thereby discourage proliferation, most notably in Japan and South Korea. However, host nations are not always reassured. Some U.S. allies—for example, the United Kingdom, France, and Israel—developed and have retained nuclear weapons despite U.S. protection.

Contingency Responsiveness

Overseas bases are generally thought to be the frontline forces needed to successfully prosecute a war. However, a forward-deployed presence is often more about deterrence than about operational convenience. During the Cold War, for example, a chief purpose of troops in Europe was to guarantee U.S. involvement in a conflict, not to be particularly useful in battlefield scenarios. As President Dwight D. Eisenhower once commented in reference to the 1958–59 Berlin crisis, “If resort to arms should become necessary, our troops in Berlin would be quickly overrun, and the conflict would almost inevitably be global war. For this type of war, our nuclear forces were more than adequate.”⁴¹

A Rand Corporation report on basing posture reiterates that point for today: “the forces that are forward-deployed are not sufficient of themselves to address conflicts of every scope.”⁴² Indeed, “after the initial phase of operations to stabilize or even resolve a situation, the response by the U.S. military to a contingency of any substantial size will come primarily from forces deployed from bases in the United States.”⁴³

One of the prominent arguments in favor of maintaining an indefinite military presence is that it would be too difficult and time consuming to secure host governments' permission for access during a crisis in which U.S. forces were needed. That concern is overstated. To begin with, the ability to use bases for new

missions is always conditional on host government permission. Basing agreements typically stipulate that the United States must consult with host nation governments before conducting any nonroutine operations. A 2016 Rand Corporation study concludes, “the presence of large permanent bases does *not* increase the likelihood of securing contingency access.”⁴⁴ But, more to the point, we have historically not had trouble securing basing access in wartime. Indeed, the United States has been able to add new operating facilities overseas for every major conflict in the past 40 years.⁴⁵

For combat operations that do not rise to the level of a crisis requiring massive mobilization of forces, deployment from the continental United States is sufficient because of technological advances in military capability, travel, and communications. This is the case with deployments generally, but particularly so with air campaigns. According to Robert Harkavy, a basing expert at Pennsylvania State University, “the development of longer range aircraft and ships, plus the development of techniques for aerial refueling of planes and at-sea refueling of ships has had the effect of greatly decreasing the number of basing points required by major powers to maintain global access networks.”⁴⁶ Carrier-based air power can now conduct major campaigns with around-the-clock sorties well beyond littoral reaches in remote areas on short notice and without access to nearby forward bases.⁴⁷

The United States' long-range bombers can deliver nonrefueled payloads for missions of up to 8,800 miles, and tanker refueling “can extend that almost indefinitely,” says Harkavy.⁴⁸ In the 1991 Gulf War, the United States flew B-52s from Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana to conduct bombing raids against Iraq in roundtrip missions that exceeded 10,000 miles and took only 30 hours.⁴⁹ “During the first three weeks of the American buildup to the Gulf War,” according to Kent Calder, professor at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, “the United States moved more troops and equipment than in the first three months of the Korean War.”⁵⁰

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In 1999, U.S. Air Force bombers conducted attacks against Serbian targets from the continental United States. In a 2000 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) exercise, the Global Hawk drone vehicle “provided direct, unmanned support for amphibious operations in Portugal from its station at Eglin Air Base in Florida,” and the following year it flew 7,500 miles across the Pacific to Australia.⁵¹ Drone technology has advanced dramatically in the ensuing years. In the initial operations against Taliban-held Afghanistan in 2001, B-2 stealth bombers based at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri flew 44-hour missions with the help of aerial refueling capabilities “without using any bases in the vicinity of Afghanistan at all,” reports Calder.⁵² And although the United States made use of in-theater bases in Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates to conduct operations against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq in 2003, it also flew bombing missions from a transcontinental distance. In addition to bombers’ ability to complete missions without nearby bases, cruise missiles launched from deployed naval assets can supplant the need for in-theater bases.

Even beyond airstrikes, U.S. troops can deploy to virtually any region fast enough that they can be based in the continental United States. In emergency situations, according to Rand, “lighter ground forces can deploy by air from the United States almost as quickly as they can from within a region.”⁵³ An armored brigade combat team can get from Germany to Kuwait in approximately 18 days, only about 4 days more quickly than if it deployed from the East Coast of the United States.⁵⁴ U.S.-based forces could handicap contingency responsiveness in certain smaller missions. The transit time to the Taiwan Strait, for example, for a carrier strike group deployed from Yokosuka, Japan, would take 3 to 5 days, whereas deployment from the West Coast would take up to 16 days. However, basing capacity in Hawaii or Guam can cut those transit times considerably.⁵⁵

Admittedly, deploying heavy forces by air in bulk is not plausible for contingencies requiring massive ground troops. But contingencies

that truly depend on extremely rapid deployment are rare. The United States tends to have the luxury of intervening at its own pace. And, given America’s relative insulation from external threats, it’s not clear that speedy intervention is even desirable. For one thing, reducing the emphasis on rapid response would likely signal to allies the need to cut back on free riding (that is, spending less on the military in the expectation that the United States will carry their defense burden).

Moreover, robbing the executive branch of the ability to rapidly insert the United States into a military conflict abroad may indeed be a good thing. Since World War II, constitutional restrictions on the president’s war-making powers have eroded. But the Framers of the Constitution were wise to constrain the president’s war-making powers. Affording the executive a speedy response with in-place forces, therefore, not only undermines the rule of law but also can intensify war proneness. As Bernard Brodie once wrote, “the notion that it is incontestably good to expand the chief executive’s options is rather peculiar” because “it runs directly counter to the basic tenets of constitutional government” and because “one way of keeping people out of trouble is to deny them the means for getting into it.”⁵⁶

Vulnerability, Counterbalancing, and Entanglement

Keeping U.S. troops permanently stationed abroad presents several strategic problems. First, such forces are more vulnerable to attack than forces stationed at home. Even though the preponderance of U.S. power and the general decline in international war probably mean that U.S. overseas bases are not at risk of bombardment in the immediate future, certain plausible contingencies could make them priority targets. If conflict breaks out over Taiwan or maritime-territorial disputes in the East China Sea or the South China Sea, the United States would be obligated to intervene against China to fulfill its security guarantee to Taiwan, Japan, or the Philippines, which would then trigger Chinese actions against

U.S. assets.⁵⁷ To take another example that is now more remote, thanks to the recently negotiated nuclear deal with Iran, if Israel were to preventively strike one of Iran's nuclear facilities, the United States would be implicated immediately because of its promises to fight to defend Israel.⁵⁸ According to a 2012 report, U.S. bases in Bahrain would be a priority target in Iranian retaliatory strikes.⁵⁹

For facilities based in certain countries, particularly in the Middle East, the risk of terrorist attacks on military bases has increased in recent years. Not only are homemade explosives and car bombs easier to access and produce, but also—especially after the damage done by the post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—an anti-American narrative has become even more popular, making U.S. bases desirable targets for terrorist attacks.

Overseas bases can inspire blowback in the form of terrorism. According to Robert Pape, “the principal cause of suicide terrorism is resistance to foreign occupation.”⁶⁰ Infamous examples, like the 1983 bombings of the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, that killed 241 Americans, and the al Qaeda attack in 2000 on the USS *Cole* off the coast of Yemen, are illustrative.⁶¹ But bases can also motivate attacks on U.S. soil. The presence of U.S. military bases in Saudi Arabia was one of the most prominent grievances cited by al Qaeda in the lead-up to the 9/11 attacks.⁶² And the post-9/11 surge in the U.S. military presence in the Middle East coincided with a massive increase in the rate of terrorist attacks inspired by anti-Americanism.⁶³

In addition to terrorism, the development of extremely accurate intermediate- and long-range ballistic missiles and modern satellite-based sensors, among other innovations, makes overseas bases susceptible to asymmetric attacks that are very difficult to defend against. China, in particular, has invested heavily in these capabilities, meaning that a large percentage of U.S. facilities—more than 90 percent of U.S. air facilities in northeast Asia—are in high-threat areas. China's conventional theater-strike system, the DF-21, “can hit all

military facilities along the entire Japanese archipelago,” says Toshi Yoshihara, the chair of Asia-Pacific Studies at the U.S. Naval War College.⁶⁴ Michael J. Lostumbo and others write that these weapons and others like them “could cripple an airbase, incapacitate an aircraft carrier, and devastate concentrated ground forces.”⁶⁵ Granted, the tripwire effect of U.S. forward bases, along with the fact that U.S. allies benefit from these capabilities as well, means that deterrence remains robust in Asia. Still, Chinese strategic planners have discussed striking U.S. bases in the unlikely scenario that inadvertent escalation results in an outbreak of conflict.⁶⁶ In other words, bases offer only a marginal increase in deterrence at added risk to forward-deployed troops.

Another major strategic problem with a forward-deployed military posture is that it can sometimes have the opposite of its intended effect. Stationing military bases near an adversary can cause fear that generates counteraction instead of scaring an adversary into submission.⁶⁷ The most intense crisis of the Cold War period may have had its origins in such a dilemma. In June 1961, the Kennedy administration placed Jupiter ballistic missiles in Turkey, bordering the Soviet Union. It was partly in response to that decision that the Soviet Union decided to place its own missiles in Cuba, precipitating a dangerous crisis between the nuclear powers in October of that year.⁶⁸ Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev reportedly called the deployment of Jupiter missiles “an intolerable provocation” and told his ambassador to Cuba, “Inasmuch as the Americans already have surrounded the Soviet Union with a circle of their military bases and missile installations of various designations, we should repay them in kind, let them try their own medicine.”⁶⁹

Today, the U.S. military presence in Europe is tasked, in part, with deterring Russian military aggression. And on those recent occasions in which Russia has acted out militarily, as it did against Georgia in 2008 on the side of separatists in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and in Ukraine in 2014, advocates of a forward

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“The presence of military bases in or near a conflict zone can intensify calls to intervene to satisfy credibility concerns, thus making entanglement more likely.”

posture blame the incursions on a lack of deterrence or diminished American credibility. But Russia’s interventions in Georgia and Ukraine derive more from Moscow’s insecurities about the expansion of U.S.-led Western economic and military institutions into former Soviet republics, and even up to the Russian border, than from insufficient U.S. military presence in Eastern Europe.⁷⁰ Post-Cold War NATO expansion is the source of profound anxiety and lingering resentment in Moscow.⁷¹ Following Vladimir Putin’s annexation of Crimea, the Russian leader decried NATO expansion as an attempt at containment, and, when in 2015 NATO invited Montenegro to be the newest member of the alliance, the Kremlin warned that further expansion eastward “cannot but result in retaliatory actions.”⁷² One could say that forward deployment contributes to the insecurity it purports to prevent.

Bases can also motivate nearby adversaries to pursue nuclear weapons. Iran’s expansion of nuclear enrichment in the run-up to the recent nuclear deal between Iran, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany, for example, was likely understood by many in Tehran as a measure of protection from the United States. After all, the United States habitually intervenes in the region, is allied with Iran’s two most vociferous enemies (Israel and Saudi Arabia), and has carried out regime change and years of military occupation in the countries on Iran’s immediate east and west flanks. In addition, while bases in Japan and South Korea have arguably helped dissuade these countries from developing nuclear weapons, the U.S. presence creates pressure for North Korea to do so. Pyongyang’s efforts to secure a deliverable nuclear weapon may be partly motivated by a desire for the prestige associated with such capabilities, but fear of U.S. military power in South Korea, and a desire to deter an attack by either or both countries, are also significant motivators. Proximate U.S. military forces and an adversarial relationship with Washington helped motivate China’s 1964 acquisition of nuclear weapons.⁷³ And, in recent years, U.S. actions in Iraq and

Libya have signaled to potential rogue states the wisdom, rather than the danger, of obtaining a nuclear deterrent, or at least maintaining a threshold breakout capability.⁷⁴

Entanglement is another risk exacerbated by the attempt to reassure allies with overseas bases.⁷⁵ If U.S. troops are stationed abroad to demonstrate credibility, and then the United States refuses to intervene in the event of conflict, U.S. policymakers will suffer political costs, even if the circumstances do not involve vital U.S. interests. Much academic literature has questioned the need to take military action solely for the sake of credibility.⁷⁶ But the presence of military bases in or near a conflict zone can intensify calls to intervene to satisfy credibility concerns, thus making entanglement more likely.

Allies can entrap a security patron into war with their rivals by pursuing high-risk strategies. U.S. military presence can encourage this moral hazard, sometimes called “reckless driving.”⁷⁷ Current U.S. posture is plagued by plausible scenarios of entrapment in its commitments to Taiwan, Japan, and the Philippines over territorial and maritime sovereignty disputes with China. In 2012, the Philippines engaged in an intense and potentially dangerous two-month naval standoff with China, a much more capable military power, over the disputed Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea. Heightened nationalist sentiments certainly played a role in the quarrel, but the unequal power dynamics between the two states raises reasonable questions about whether the relatively weak Philippines was emboldened to challenge a much stronger China because of the United States’ security guarantee and nearby military bases. That kind of moral hazard is a liability that could pull the United States into conflicts unconnected to its direct security and economic interests. Fundamentally, moral hazard is a function of the commitment, but it is exacerbated by the physical presence of bases and troops.

In the past, the United States stumbled into conflicts because of the entangling influence of credibility, commitments, and the capabilities presented by a forward military presence. Examples include such major wars as Korea

and Vietnam. In the case of Korea, the United States established what was supposed to be a temporary military presence there following the Japanese surrender in August 1945. The U.S. military presence reflected prior agreements between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin at Yalta to establish a multinational trusteeship that would, in Philip Bennett's words, "guide the Koreans to self-government."⁷⁸ By December 1945, U.S. Gen. John R. Hodge recommended full withdrawal. Secretary of War Robert Patterson argued the same in April 1947. In 1948, the National Security Council proposed withdrawing all American troops by the end of the year. The joint chiefs explained that "Korea is of little strategic value to the United States" and warned that the lingering military presence risked entangling the United States in a war following some provocation on the peninsula. That entanglement indeed happened in 1950 when the North invaded the South.⁷⁹ Unfortunately, calls to withdraw had been unheeded.

Similarly, in Vietnam, despite years of a slow trickle of troop deployments, President Lyndon Johnson was able to get congressional authorization for a massive escalation in military involvement only after a U.S. warship allegedly clashed with Vietnamese naval vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin, 12 nautical miles off the coast of Vietnam. The warship, the USS *Maddox*, was conducting electronic warfare support measures to assist U.S. military advisers in South Vietnam. The notion that American troops deployed to the area were in danger helped entangle the United States in what became one of the most costly quagmires in American history.

The presence of forces abroad can also tempt policymakers to get involved in elective wars that we could more easily forgo if we lacked in-theater bases. In NATO's 2011 intervention in Libya's civil war, for example, the United States bombed Libya from warships in the Mediterranean and from air bases in Spain, Italy, and Germany, among other nearby locations. The weak arguments in favor of U.S. involvement, which included conjectural claims

about impending humanitarian disaster and pressure from NATO allies, might have been harder to sell politically if U.S. forces had not already been deployed in the area.⁸⁰

American Values Abroad?

The United States has frequently supported dictators abroad to secure basing access. "American policy does frequently back dictators," according to Calder. "And the tendency to back dictators—and to refrain from demanding their removal—appears to be greater where bases are involved, America's democratic ideals... notwithstanding."⁸¹ U.S. support for the Somozas in Nicaragua, Mobutu in Zaire, Park Chung Hee in Korea, Papadopoulos in Greece, Franco in Spain, Marcos in the Philippines, and Karimov in Uzbekistan conforms to this trend.⁸²

Uzbekistan is an illustrative example. Following 9/11, Uzbekistan served as a convenient logistical hub for U.S. troops fighting in landlocked Afghanistan. Accordingly, Washington increased support to Uzbekistan's authoritarian regime of Islam Karimov, but concerns about human rights plagued the relationship from the beginning. In 2005, Karimov ordered troops to fire indiscriminately on a crowd of thousands of protesters and at one point cordoned off the site of the protest and "conducted a systematic slaughter of unarmed civilians," killing hundreds in what came to be known as the Andijan massacre.⁸³ The Karimov regime earned a reputation for its systematic use of brutal torture methods, including electric shock, asphyxiation, and boiling people alive.⁸⁴ U.S. support has ebbed and flowed over the years—at one point prompting the Karimov regime to order the closure of the U.S. air base at Karshi-Khanabad in response to public U.S. criticism—but the current Uzbek regime continues to benefit from lavish economic and military support from Washington.⁸⁵

Support for dictators in return for basing access has been an element in U.S. foreign policy for a long time, but even bases in relatively democratic countries can involve the sacrifice of liberal values. As far back as the early years of the Eisenhower administration,

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“[o]verseas military bases were beginning to provoke anti-American sentiment in the countries where they were located,” writes John Lewis Gaddis.⁸⁶ Resentment over the presence of foreign bases can linger for generations. In 1991, the *New York Times* reported that the Philippine Senate “assailed [the U.S. military presence] as a vestige of colonialism and an affront to Philippine sovereignty,” and President Corazon C. Aquino ordered full withdrawal.⁸⁷ Public opinion in Okinawa, Japan, is resoundingly opposed to the U.S. military base presence on the territory, a feeling that is exacerbated by the recurrent problem of crimes and misbehavior by U.S. troops there. From 1972 to 2011, the Okinawan prefectural government documented 5,747 criminal cases involving GIs, including more than a thousand violent offenses.⁸⁸ In June 2016, the alleged murder of a 20-year-old Okinawan woman by a U.S. Marine veteran working as a civilian contractor prompted a protest in the capital of the Okinawan Prefecture with 65,000 people in attendance.⁸⁹ Such popular opposition can be difficult to square with purported American values about the importance of democracy.

Cost

The financial burden on U.S. taxpayers of maintaining a global military base presence is exceedingly difficult to calculate, primarily because neither the Pentagon nor Congress provides reliable estimates to the public. Most of the estimates they do provide are not comprehensive. According to Rand, “stationing forces and maintaining bases overseas does entail measurably higher direct financial costs to [the Defense Department]” as compared with bases in the continental United States.⁹⁰ It costs an average of \$10,000–\$40,000 more per year to station a single member of the military in Europe or Asia, in zones without war, than in the United States.⁹¹ The annual recurring fixed costs for a single overseas base—before any personnel, transport, equipment, or operational costs are factored in—range from \$50 million to \$200 million per year.⁹²

For fiscal year 2015, the Pentagon’s Overseas Cost Summary (OCS) estimated the total cost of overseas bases, facilities, and personnel stationed abroad at about \$19.6 billion.⁹³ There are several problems with this tally. The Center for Strategic and International Studies estimates that the overall cost of the U.S. military presence in the Asia Pacific alone is more than half that amount, about \$12 billion per year (excluding expenditures for equipment or U.S. Naval fleet operations).⁹⁴ And according to Barry Posen, “between 15–20 percent of annual U.S. military spending”—between \$91 billion and \$121 billion for fiscal year 2016—is allocated “to the maintenance of forces for military action” in the Middle East alone. “Billions spent on the war in Iraq are not included in this estimate,” he explains.⁹⁵

Furthermore, the OCS estimate includes an asterisk that lists 65 countries, with bases and facilities lumped into a single “Other” category comprising “countries with costs less than \$5 million.” However, that list mysteriously excludes countries that are known to have U.S. bases costing well over \$5 million, such as Kosovo, Honduras, and Colombia, which together cost hundreds of millions of dollars.⁹⁶ The list also excludes U.S. territories, such as Guam, and as much as \$4.6 billion in military construction spending at “unspecified locations”—a figure found in the Pentagon budget but omitted from the OCS.⁹⁷

Some of the annual expenses of overseas bases are offset by host nations that cover the costs of U.S. bases in their territory. Although data are “scant and scattered,” one rough estimate that incorporates everything from direct cash payments to tax and lease discounts and in-kind goods and services, concludes that the total annual host nation support for U.S. bases abroad amounts to about \$7 billion to \$8.5 billion.⁹⁸ But far more often the United States is footing the bill for its own overseas facilities. Frequently, Washington even pays host governments in return for basing rights. According to former deputy assistant secretary of defense James Blaker, approximately 18 percent of total foreign military and economic aid is

payment for basing access,⁹⁹ which amounted to about \$6.3 billion in fiscal year 2014.¹⁰⁰

Part of the discrepancy in cost estimates comes from the fact that there are several official methods of measuring the costs of America's overseas presence. Narrower measures involve tallying how much more overseas bases cost as compared with domestic bases, or simply calculating personnel costs plus construction and maintenance costs. More inclusive methods add indirect operating costs, such as administrative support, investment in weapons procurement, health care, and equipment repairs. The most comprehensive estimates include the cost of training, recruiting, and maintaining domestically based forces that will become available to fulfill military commitments in coordination with in-place forces.¹⁰¹

Keeping to what he calls a "very conservative estimate," American University's David Vine estimates a total of \$71.8 billion in annual cost for overseas bases, facilities, and personnel, excluding those in use in active war zones.¹⁰² This total doesn't include nonessential operations and missions that the United States engages in because it has a network of bases at its disposal, such as humanitarian missions, show-of-force patrols, counternarcotics efforts, and anti-piracy operations.

Although the specific total outlay is hard to pin down, the cost of our permanent peacetime overseas military presence is substantial. Closing redundant bases abroad, or at least consolidating forces at fewer bases, could provide considerable savings that could be left in more productive sectors of the economy. The Rand Corporation's Cost Reduction Posture—an illustrative scenario in which some overseas bases would be closed, relocated, or consolidated at fewer locations—suggests that modest reductions in the overall overseas posture could yield up to \$3 billion in annual savings even without jettisoning any of our current treaty obligations or security arrangements.¹⁰³ Other studies by the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, the Congressional Budget Office, and the Center for American Progress estimate that cutting our overseas

bases and personnel in Europe and Asia by one-third could save between \$7 billion and \$12 billion a year.¹⁰⁴ More thoroughgoing reforms that involve reducing overseas presence and commitments could reduce annual defense spending by 25 percent or more.¹⁰⁵

THE CASE FOR REDUCING AMERICA'S GLOBAL MILITARY FOOTPRINT

The United States is arguably the most secure great power in history. No nation in the world credibly threatens to attack or invade the United States. With weak and pliant neighbors to its north and south, vast oceans to its east and west, and a superior nuclear deterrent, it has achieved a level of protection from external threats without parallel. The United States accounts for almost 40 percent of worldwide defense spending and possesses the most capable and sophisticated military in history.¹⁰⁶ A globe-straddling forward-deployed military presence is a costly burden that elevates peripheral interests to the level of vital ones, takes on security responsibilities that can and should be fulfilled by other states, and produces negative unintended consequences for U.S. interests.

A forward-deployed military posture is useful, if decreasingly so, for a grand strategy of primacy, which posits that the United States, as the most powerful and righteous state, has the capacity and the obligation to maintain military bases throughout the world to uphold global peace and stability in an otherwise dangerous international system. But primacy does not yield strategic benefits commensurate with the costs and risks it imposes. As Robert Jervis, professor of international affairs at Columbia University, has written, "the pursuit of primacy was what great power politics was all about in the past," but in a world of nuclear weapons, with "low security threats and great common interests among the developed countries," the game is not "worth the candle."¹⁰⁷ Charles Glaser, professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington

“Closing redundant bases abroad, or at least consolidating forces at fewer bases, could provide considerable savings that could be left in more productive sectors of the economy.”

“The U.S. presence abroad should be minimized to match with the dearth of acute threats and limited strategic benefits to U.S. interests.”

University, similarly argues that primacy, and the worldwide military presence associated with it, is “much overrated.” The United States can protect core national interests without it and, in fact, the strategy causes the United States to “lose track of how secure it is and consequently pursue policies that are designed to increase its security but turn out to be too costly and/or to have a high probability of backfiring.”¹⁰⁸ Nor does U.S. dominance reap much in the way of tangible economic rewards. Daniel Drezner, professor of international politics at Tufts University, contends, “The economic benefits from military predominance alone seem, at a minimum, to have been exaggerated. . . . There is little evidence that military primacy yields appreciable geoeconomic gains” and therefore “an overreliance on military preponderance is badly misguided.”¹⁰⁹

Alternatively, a grand strategy of restraint holds that the preeminent power of the United States, coupled with an increasingly peaceful world, means it can afford to pull back from its worldwide military presence and rein in its activist foreign policy.¹¹⁰ The foregoing critique suggests that the sprawling U.S. basing system does not provide enough value to justify its continued existence. Instead, the U.S. presence abroad should be minimized to match with the dearth of acute threats and limited strategic benefits to U.S. interests. This section will make the case for withdrawing the U.S. base presence from three key regions—Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.

Europe

Europe is the simplest case for the withdrawal of U.S. military bases. One of the most stable regions on the planet, Europe contains four great powers—the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Russia. Conflict between any of them is unlikely. European Union member states have a combined gross domestic product (GDP) greater than that of the United States. Great Britain, France, and Germany are all liberal democracies and have advanced, peaceful relationships based on closely aligned political, diplomatic, and

economic interests. That statement does not apply to Russia, but the United Kingdom and France possess nuclear weapons, making military conflict even in the event of deteriorated relationships extremely unlikely. In Europe especially, the costs of conflict, even in a conventional war, have become prohibitive, while the gains have greatly diminished.

In addition to the declining utility of war, Europe is politically and culturally unique in the extent to which the memory of the devastation of the world wars has contributed to the decline of militarism and a greater focus on social stability and economic well-being.¹¹¹

Even in a pure balance-of-power analysis, none of the major states of Europe is strong enough to make a bid for regional hegemony, something nuclear weapons make essentially impossible. Russia, the regional power that generates the most calls for a U.S. presence, has an aging population and a relatively weak economy that is overreliant on oil and natural gas. Its GDP is about \$1.36 trillion, not much higher than Spain’s.¹¹² Although Russia possesses nuclear weapons, such weapons are not useful for offense and do not aid in coercive diplomacy, as Todd S. Sechser, associate professor of politics at the University of Virginia, and Matthew Fuhrmann, associate director of political science at Texas A&M University, show in empirical studies.¹¹³ In terms of conventional weapons and forces, the Russian military is comparatively frail, lagging behind the other great powers.¹¹⁴ Extended offensive operations against other states would put considerable strain on Russia and thus would be unsustainable for very long.¹¹⁵

NATO was established to contain Soviet growth and influence on the European continent. That objective has been achieved and an American exit from the military alliance is overdue.¹¹⁶ U.S. presence in Europe, especially in former Warsaw Pact states and former Soviet republics, arguably does more to provoke Russian meddling than to deter it. And bases in Europe do not provide much of an operational or tactical advantage for the United States, even for unlikely contingencies, meaning that

even if Washington upheld its current set of security commitments there, it could fulfill those obligations with a dramatically reduced overseas presence.¹¹⁷ Even though the positioning of U.S. military bases throughout the European nations did once pacify relations between Europe and Russia, the European Union is now rich and powerful enough to achieve that objective on its own.¹¹⁸

Middle East

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, terrorism has risen to the top of the list of national security priorities. Vast sums of money, considerable manpower, and a slew of new base sites abroad have been devoted to fighting Islamic terrorist groups. However, contrary to the bulk of the rhetoric from policymakers, terrorism does not represent an existential threat to the United States.¹¹⁹ Terrorism is a problem to be managed, not a war to be won. And a forward-deployed military posture is not very useful in addressing it. Indeed, U.S. military presence was one of the primary motivators and recruiting mechanisms of al Qaeda in the lead-up to 9/11, and U.S. military action in the region post-9/11 served as an even more potent generator of Islamic jihadism.¹²⁰

In most cases, a sensible military solution to terrorism does not exist, and heavy-handed military action can exacerbate the problem by fueling resentment and recruitment. The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), for example, is an outgrowth of the Sunni insurgency that rose up to fight U.S. forces in Iraq¹²¹ and subsequently gained strength in the Syrian civil war.¹²² Fighting blowback with more of the same interventionism that generated it in the first place is unlikely to produce desirable results.¹²³

The traditional justification for U.S. policy in the Middle East has been to secure the free flow of oil through the Persian Gulf via a forward-deployed posture, thereby stabilizing prices. But the argument that maintaining such a military posture in the Middle East protects the free flow of oil is flawed. According to Joshua Rovner, professor at Southern

Methodist University, and Caitlin Talmadge of George Washington University, the policy of “large, permanent peacetime land forces in the Gulf” is not particularly useful for oil security. That policy has often been “just as counterproductive as the vacuums created by hegemonic absence,” generating regional instability and making the terrorist threat worse through blowback.¹²⁴ Rovner and Talmadge argue that even if the United States had fostered a forward-deployed posture before Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, it’s not clear that this posture would have deterred Saddam Hussein.¹²⁵ It is possible that “the economic and political stakes may have been so high that, from his perspective, a different American force posture might not have affected his calculations.”¹²⁶ Similarly, Rovner and Talmadge conclude, it is “unclear that a hegemonic presence in the region could have done much to prevent” the OPEC oil embargo of 1973.¹²⁷ As Eugene Gholtz and Daryl Press conclude, “the day-to-day peacetime presence of U.S. military forces in the Persian Gulf region is not merely ineffective; it is probably counterproductive for protecting U.S. oil interests.”¹²⁸

The United States does have interests in the security and supply of oil, but those interests are often exaggerated, and the region’s energy resources are not as vulnerable as is often claimed.¹²⁹ Strictly in terms of the U.S. economy, the direct reliance on Persian Gulf oil imports is modest and declining.¹³⁰ But the price of oil is determined by global supply and demand, not by reliance on specific geographic sources. Fortunately, the United States is relatively insulated from price spikes associated with supply disruptions. Although a major disruption could cause an economic downturn, today’s economy is better equipped to deal with sudden changes in energy markets than it was in the 1970s. Kenneth Vincent explains that the causes are reduced oil imports and consumption, more flexible labor markets and monetary policies, and “reduced energy intensity of economic output—or the amount of energy required to produce a dollar of GDP.”¹³¹ In every major oil shock since 1973, global energy markets adapted quickly through increasing

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“The balance of power, both in the Persian Gulf region and globally, is favorable for energy security. The threat of an external power gaining a foothold in the region is not in the cards in the policy-relevant future.”

production from other sources, rerouting shipping transportation, and putting both private and government-held inventories around the world into use. These market adjustments mitigated the ramifications of the shocks and stabilized prices and supply.¹³²

The balance of power, both in the region and globally, is favorable for energy security. The threat of an external power gaining a foothold in the Persian Gulf region is not in the cards in the policy-relevant future. The Soviet Union is long gone, and today's Russia suffers from systemic economic problems that hinder its potential to project power in the Middle East. China, although increasingly powerful in its own sphere, lacks the political will to dominate the Gulf.¹³³

Regionally, the circumstances are similarly advantageous. According to Rovner, “the chance that a regional hegemon will emerge in the Persian Gulf during the next twenty years is slim to none. This is true even if the United States withdraws completely.”¹³⁴ There are only three potential major powers in the region: Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. None of them possesses the capabilities necessary to conquer neighboring territories or gain a controlling influence over Persian Gulf oil resources. In addition to being too weak to make a bid for regional dominance, all three are bogged down and distracted by internal problems. Overall, the region is in a state of defense dominance: the major states are too weak to project power beyond their borders, but they do have the capability to deter their neighbors. Deterrence works well in this environment because the costs of offensive action remain prohibitively high.¹³⁵

Some scholars argue that the decreased importance of Persian Gulf oil means the United States should completely phase out its military commitment to the region during the next 10 years.¹³⁶ But even if Washington rejects that position and continues to factor in military intervention to deal with supply disruptions and other contingencies, maintaining a peacetime military presence in the region is not necessary. The United States can rely on carrier-based airpower and long-range bombers if military intervention in a crisis becomes necessary.¹³⁷

East Asia

The United States' military presence in East Asia has several goals. It is meant to deter and contain China, to stave off spirals of conflict, to bolster the credibility of security agreements that bind the United States to defend allies, and to provide for a rapid contingency response.¹³⁸

China's rise is not nearly as much of a threat to U.S. security as is often claimed.¹³⁹ China's posture is defensive in nature.¹⁴⁰ According to official Chinese news sources, the country's military modernization effort “lags far behind advanced global peers,” and its “army is not capable enough of waging modern warfare.”¹⁴¹ Despite much consternation in Washington over China's renewed assertiveness, Beijing “has compromised more frequently than it has used force,” explains MIT professor of political science M. Taylor Fravel, and “has been less belligerent than leading theories of international relations might have predicted for a state with its characteristics.”¹⁴²

Nor is China a viable candidate for hegemony in the near term. Although the growth in China's economy is impressive, it is only a crude indication of actual and latent military power and it obscures the many metrics—technological innovation, overall military readiness, power projection capability, and a dearth of allies—that illustrate America's huge lead over China.¹⁴³ As Dartmouth University professors Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth argue, China is “nowhere near a peer of the United States,” which “will long remain the world's sole superpower.”¹⁴⁴ That statement coincides with findings from the Rand Corporation, which concludes that China “cannot possibly catch up to, much less ‘leapfrog,’ the United States or Japan in the foreseeable future,” when it comes to military capability.¹⁴⁵

Even assuming China's continued rapid economic growth, the prospect that China would achieve regional dominance is remote.¹⁴⁶ Asia's geography, characterized by island and peninsular powers and mountainous regions throughout, provides challenging physical obstacles to China's quest for hegemony.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, China is surrounded by major powers such as

Russia, India, Japan, and South Korea, which would resist such a gambit. The U.S. military presence in Korea and its security commitment to Taiwan, explains Robert Ross, are “not major factor[s] in the balance of power or in U.S. protection of shipping lanes” and could be relinquished at little cost to U.S. security.¹⁴⁸

America’s military presence in East Asia is arguably exacerbating instability in the region by making China feel encircled.¹⁴⁹ The United States’ presence along China’s maritime periphery is highly militarized and provocative, with the U.S. Pacific fleet conducting 170 exercises and 600 training events with more than 20 allied countries in the region every year.¹⁵⁰ China sees Washington’s massive military presence on the Korean peninsula, and just across the East China Sea on the southern tip of the Japanese archipelago, as a threat to Chinese security.¹⁵¹ The United States’ status as the largest naval presence in the region also stokes fear in China; the roughly 40 percent of China’s seaborne oil imports that pass through sea-lanes and critical chokepoints such as the Strait of Malacca are subject to interdiction by the United States.¹⁵² China’s concern about that possibility at least partially explains Beijing’s attempts to militarize the South China Sea, which in turn contributes to regional instability.

The other reason to reevaluate the U.S. posture in Asia is that China’s rise, while not imminently on track to achieve regional hegemony, does raise the cost of U.S. commitments. If conflict were to break out, “Washington would need to dispatch reinforcements from thousands of miles away, sustain its military units over lengthy air and sea lines of communication, and operate them from a small number of bases,” writes Evan Braden Montgomery, senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, whereas China “would be able to concentrate its forces more rapidly and support them more easily.”¹⁵³ In this strategic environment, America’s security commitments to allies are increasingly strained and its military presence is a dwindling asset.

In the near term, careful retrenchment would likely have a favorable influence on

U.S.-China relations.¹⁵⁴ The job of defending allies such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia should be left to those countries to perform on their own. U.S. military presence and security guarantees discourage active self-defense among regional allies and unwisely obligate American intervention into local disputes that have little to no inherent importance for U.S. interests and security. Even if the United States were to maintain its commitments to allies, withdrawing the military presence from the region would allow allies to be the first line of defense in case of war, forcing the countries to do the heavy lifting, while America plays the role of balancer.¹⁵⁵

OVERSEAS BASES TO KEEP

If the United States were to withdraw from the regions described, there is a reasonable argument for keeping U.S. bases at two locations abroad in order to compensate for the decrease in contingency responsiveness and area access: Guam and Diego Garcia.

Strategically located in the Pacific Ocean, Guam is the nearest sovereign U.S. territory to the nations of the Asia Pacific—about 1,600 miles from Japan and about 1,550 miles from the Philippines. This location means that the Guam base is useful for decreasing transit times in case of any (unlikely) contingencies in which U.S. forces would be quickly needed. Submarines operating at 20 knots take about 5 days to reach the East Asian littoral from Guam, whereas they take about 8 days from Hawaii and 15 days from San Diego. A Guam-based brigade combat team could deploy by air or sea to key Asia-Pacific areas in a span of 5 to 14 days. Ships cruising at 25 knots from Guam can arrive at the Taiwan Strait in about two and a half days, not much longer than the one day they take from the Philippines. That extra distance from the East Asian littoral also means Guam is less vulnerable to Chinese and North Korean missiles.¹⁵⁶

Because Guam is a U.S. territory, it does not face the problems of uncertainty and host nation concerns that many bases in foreign

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“Despite the bipartisan support for extensive overseas bases, there is some interest in reform.”

territory must deal with. Plans are already under way to increase the military presence at Guam by relocating troops from Japan, thanks to a 2012 agreement with Tokyo meant to resolve intense local opposition to U.S. bases in Okinawa. As part of that overall shift, Guam is being further developed as a logistics hub to enable forces in Asia and serve as a base for at-sea prepositioning and air defense capabilities. Guam, therefore, serves as a convenient location for a low-cost, fully capable military base that avoids the strategic baggage of in-place forces on foreign territory.

Diego Garcia, a small island in the Indian Ocean, offers similar advantages without the liability of most other forward-deployed bases. It is approximately 1,000 miles south of India, 700 miles southwest of Sri Lanka, and 2,500 miles southeast of the Persian Gulf. Owned by our close ally Great Britain, Diego Garcia has hosted U.S. military facilities since the 1960s. Like Guam, Diego Garcia's distance from potential adversaries on land means it is less vulnerable than many bases along the Asian littoral or in the Middle East.¹⁵⁷

Diego Garcia has limitations as a basing hub. It is only 11 square miles, with an average land elevation of only 4 feet, meaning it cannot necessarily host large Navy platforms.¹⁵⁸ But it nonetheless allows the United States to project considerable military power. According to Walter C. Ladwig III and others, it currently “serves four primary functions for American commanders: a full one-third of the entire U.S. Afloat Prepositioning Force occupies the lagoon; fast attack submarines and surface ships use the deep-draft wharf; an Air Expeditionary Wing supports tactical and long-range broadcasts to units in the area; and a telecommunications station tracks satellites and relays fleet broadcasts to units in the area.”¹⁵⁹ Diego Garcia has been one of the Air Force's most important assets for the war in Afghanistan. It is situated so that long-range bombers based there, such as the Air Expeditionary Wing's B-52s, do not require refueling support for missions in South Asia or the Middle East.¹⁶⁰

Facilities at Diego Garcia are not (and should not be) designed for deterrence and reassurance objectives; they merely provide proximity to strategic areas for any potentially serious contingency requiring U.S. intervention. Diego Garcia is far enough afield to be much safer from attack by long-range ballistic missiles and poses a negligible risk of entangling the United States in elective conflicts or creating host nation complications.

CONCLUSION

Despite the bipartisan support for extensive overseas bases, there is some interest in reform. In 2011, Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR), along with five of his Senate colleagues, signed a bipartisan letter calling for “dramatically reducing our overseas military presence,” which would have “minimal negative impact on our nation's readiness or ability to efficiently respond to emerging threats.”¹⁶¹ The following year, Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT) and then Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) introduced legislation calling on the Defense Department to “appoint an independent commission to review the military's overseas basing needs and their associated costs as a first step toward closing facilities that are no longer needed.”¹⁶²

The George W. Bush administration, though by no means advocating a retreat from America's global role, initiated a Global Defense Posture Review that proposed moving away from large, elaborate bases in favor of maintaining access to smaller facilities with little or no permanent U.S. military presence, but which could be used for deployments when needed. The plan included “reduc[ing] and consolidat[ing] the existing U.S. overseas military presence in Western Europe and Northeast Asia, which was seen as less useful for dealing with future security challenges,” write Lostumbo and others.¹⁶³ Furthermore, polls show that a plurality of Americans remain very skeptical of the United States' activist role in international affairs, and some polls find a majority who think the nation should “deal with its own problems and let other countries deal with their problems the best they can.”¹⁶⁴

The lack of serious efforts to reduce America's overseas military base presence is less a function of such ideas being out of the mainstream and more a function of bureaucratic inertia. As far back as December 1970, a congressional investigation led by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations studied "Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad." The report explained why the strategic use of U.S. military bases abroad is never seriously scrutinized: "Once an American overseas base is established, it takes on a life of its own. Original missions may become outdated, but new missions are developed, not only with the intent of keeping the facility going, but often to actually enlarge it," the study concluded. "Within the government departments most directly concerned—State and Defense—we found little initiative to reduce or eliminate any of these overseas facilities," which "is only to be expected" since they would be "recommend[ing] a reduction in their own position." It went on: "Such reductions were often resisted on the ground that they would appear to be a withdrawal from a commitment, and a lessening of will on the part of the United States—conclusions which do not necessarily follow."¹⁶⁵

The same logic holds today. Entrenched interests both inside and outside government, remain committed to America's global military presence. Those interests, combined with the ideological belief that forward deployment is the cornerstone of a stable world order, result in scant political incentive to propose even partial withdrawal from overseas bases.

To the extent that overseas bases are intended to prevent war and manage faraway disputes through deterrence and reassurance, they serve outdated foreign policy objectives and a grand strategy that needs to be narrowed. On top of that, modern technology has reduced the problems of travel times over long distances and simultaneously has increased the vulnerabilities of in-place forces. Acknowledging these new realities and initiating appropriate reforms, including full withdrawal from nearly all overseas bases, would serve U.S. interests.

NOTES

1. David Vine, *Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2015), pp. 6–7.
2. Michael J. Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing of U.S. Military Forces: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2013), p. 20.
3. The Heritage Foundation, "2017 Index of U.S. Military Strength," ed. Dakota L. Wood, <http://index.heritage.org/military/2017/resources/download/>.
4. The troop levels listed in this paragraph come from the Defense Department's Defense Manpower Data Center, updated February 2017.
5. Anthony H. Cordesman, "The Changing Gulf Balance and the Iranian Threat," Center for Strategic and International Studies, Working Draft, August 3, 2016, p. 41, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/160804_Gulf_Balance_Iranian_Threat.pdf.
6. Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing*, p. 25.
7. Andrew S. Erickson and Justin D. Mikolay, "Guam and American Security in the Pacific," in *Rebalancing U.S. Forces: Basing and Forward Presence in the Asia-Pacific*, ed. Carnes Lord and Andrew S. Erickson (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2015), p. 16.
8. Kent Calder, *Embattled Garrisons: Comparative Base Politics and American Globalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 56. Calder estimates \$60 billion, while Vine, in *Base Nation*, p. 9, cites estimates as high as \$120 billion.
9. William Kristol and Robert Kagan. "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 4 (July/August 1996): 18–32.
10. "Excerpts from Pentagon's Plan: 'Prevent the Re-emergence of a New Rival,'" *New York*

“Entrenched interests both inside and outside government, remain committed to America's global military presence.”

- Times*, March 8, 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/excerpts-from-pentagon-s-plan-prevent-the-re-emergence-of-a-new-rival.html?pagewanted=all>.
11. Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *America Abroad: The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).
 12. Stacie L. Pettyjohn, *U.S. Global Defense Posture, 1783–2011* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2012), p. 12.
 13. Vine, *Base Nation*, p. 18.
 14. Robert E. Harkavy, *Strategic Basing and the Great Powers, 1200–2000* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 29–30.
 15. For a different view arguing that bases facilitate trade, see Daniel Egel, Adam R. Grissom, John P. Godges, Jennifer Kavanagh, and Howard J. Shatz, *Estimating the Value of Overseas Security Commitments* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2016), http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR500/RR518/RAND_RR518.pdf.
 16. Mark W. Zacher, “The Territorial Integrity Norm: International Boundaries and the Use of Force,” *International Organization* 55, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 215–50.
 17. Vine, *Base Nation*, p. 4.
 18. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), pp. 357–59.
 19. Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, “Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation,” *International Security* 21, no. 4 (Spring 1997): 15. The Persian Gulf gained in importance over the years, but its importance was recognized not long after the war, as a Top Secret National Security Council briefing put it in 1954, “the Near East is of great strategic, political, and economic importance,” as it “contains the greatest petroleum resources in the world” as well as “essential locations for strategic military bases in any world conflict.” National Security Archive, “United States Objectives and Policies with Respect to the Near East,” July 23, 1954 (declassified February 27, 1981), <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/propaganda%20127.pdf>.
 20. Nicholas J. Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1942), p. 124.
 21. Patrick Porter, *The Global Village: Distance, War, and the Limits of Power* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2015).
 22. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), pp. 157–59.
 23. Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 88–91.
 24. Alexander Lanoszka and Michael Hunzeker, “Land Power and American Credibility,” *Parameters* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2015–2016): 17–26.
 25. Ibid.
 26. Josef Joffe, “Europe's American Pacifier,” *Foreign Policy* 54 (Spring 1984): 64–82.
 27. Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing*, p. xx.
 28. Robert H. Johnson, *Improbable Dangers: U.S. Conceptions of Threat in the Cold War and After* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), pp. 78, 126. And Robert Jervis writes, “The Soviet archives have yet to reveal any serious plans for unprovoked aggression against Western Europe, not to mention a first strike on the United States.” Robert Jervis, “Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 3, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 59.
 29. Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 7.

30. Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, "Deterrence: The Elusive Dependent Variable," *World Politics* 42, no. 3 (April 1990): 336–69.
31. Steve Chan, "Extended Deterrence in the Taiwan Strait: Learning from Rationalist Explanations in International Relations," *World Affairs* 166, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 109–25. Also see Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 90.
32. Amos Yadlin and Yoel Guzansky, "The Strait of Hormuz: Assessing and Neutralizing the Threat," *Strategic Assessment* (Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv, Israel) 14, no. 4 (January 2012): 7–22.
33. See William D. O'Neil, "Correspondence: Costs and Difficulties of Blocking the Strait of Hormuz," *International Security* 33, no. 3 (Winter 2008/09): 190–198. Also see Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin and Sameer Lalwani, "It's a Commons Misunderstanding: The Limited Threat to American Command of the Commons," in *A Dangerous World? Threat Perceptions and U.S. National Security*, ed. Christopher A. Preble and John Mueller (Washington: Cato Institute, 2014), pp. 238–39. They argue that U.S. presence in the Persian Gulf "can create new incentives for other actors to threaten, disrupt, or close strategic chokepoints as a way of deterring or retaliating against American activities."
34. As these authors write, "By supplying reassurance, deterrence, and active management, the United States lowers security competition in the world's key regions." Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America: The Case Against Retrenchment," *International Security* 37, no. 3 (Winter 2012/2013): 39.
35. See Bruno Tertrais, "The Demise of Ares: The End of War as We Know It?" *Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 7–22. For a comprehensive review of explanations for the decline of war, see Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011).
36. Dale C. Copeland, *Economic Interdependence and War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); John Mueller, "Capitalism, Peace, and the Historical Movement of Ideas," *Cato Policy Report* (March/April 2012); Erik Gartzke, "The Capitalist Peace," *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 1 (2007): 166–91.
37. For a nuclear peace argument, see Kenneth Waltz, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better," *Adelphi Papers* 21, no. 171 (1981). Also see Robert Rauchhaus, "Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis: A Quantitative Approach," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 2 (April 2009): 258–77.
38. John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989). Also see Ed Rhodes, "The Search for Monsters to Destroy: Theodore Roosevelt, Republican Virtue, and the Challenges of Liberal Democracy in an Industrial Society," in *U.S. Grand Strategy in the 21st Century: The Case for Restraint*, ed. Benjamin H. Friedman and A. Trevor Thrall (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).
39. Stephen Van Evera, "Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 3 (Winter 1990–1991): 7–57.
40. As these authors write, "Primacy likely causes more proliferation among adversaries than it prevents among allies. States crosswise with the United States realize that nuclear arsenals deter U.S. attack and diminish its coercive power." Benjamin H. Friedman, Brendan Rittenhouse Green, and Justin Logan, "Debating American Engagement: The Future of U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* 38, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 181–99.
41. John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982/2005 edition), p. 166.
42. Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing*, p. 81.
43. *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

44. Stacie L. Pettyjohn and Jennifer Kavanagh, *Access Granted: Political Challenges to U.S. Overseas Presence, 1945–2014* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2016), p. xv.
45. Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing*, pp. 107–8.
46. Harkavy, *Strategic Basing*, pp. 25–26.
47. Benjamin S. Lambeth, *American Carrier Air Power at the Dawn of a New Century* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2005).
48. Harkavy, *Strategic Basing*, p. 167.
49. Ibid.
50. Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, p. 48.
51. Ibid., p. 213.
52. Ibid., p. 211.
53. Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing*, p. xx. Also see p. 256: “the movement and time advantages for moving light and medium BCTs from overseas compared with CONUS by air is minor.”
54. Ibid., p. 291.
55. Erickson and Mikolay, “Guam and American Security,” p. 25.
56. Bernard Brodie, “The Development of Nuclear Strategy,” *International Security* 2, no. 4 (Spring 1978): 80–81.
57. Indeed, this tripwire effect is technically an intended feature of the strategy, although policymakers and the public rarely understand it this way. Public support for U.S. intervention to defend allies like Taiwan, South Korea, and the Philippines is low. See Andrew Shearer, “Can America Still Rely on Its Allies?” Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, Dec. 15, 2016, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/can-america-still-rely-its-allies>.
58. Such reassurances have been widely reported, for example, Thomas Friedman, “Iran and the Obama Doctrine,” *New York Times*, April 5, 2015. In addition, the U.S. Senate in 2013 passed Resolution 65, which states, “If the Government of Israel is compelled to take military action in legitimate self-defense against Iran’s nuclear weapons program, the United States Government should stand with Israel and provide, in accordance with United States law and the constitutional responsibility of Congress to authorize the use of military force, diplomatic, military, and economic support to the Government of Israel in its defense of its territory, people, and existence.”
59. Austin Long et al., “Weighing the Benefits and Costs of Military Action Against Iran,” research paper, The Iran Project, New York, 2012. <https://www.scribd.com/document/106806148/IranReport-092412-Final>.
60. Robert Pape and James K. Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 19. Also see Robert Pape, “The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (August 2003): 343–61.
61. Since 2002, there have been at least 25 terrorist attacks on U.S. bases, consulates, or embassies in the Middle East, according to a compilation of news reports by the author.
62. In his 1996 fatwa, bin Laden declared, “There is no more important duty than pushing the American enemy out of the holy land. . . . The presence of the USA Crusader military forces on land, sea and air of the states of the Islamic Gulf is the greatest danger threatening the largest oil reserve in the world. The existence of these forces in the area will provoke the people of the country and induces aggression on their religion, feelings and prides and pushes them to take up armed struggle against the invaders occupying the land.” See “Osama Bin Laden v. the U.S.: Edicts and Statements,” PBS *Frontline*, WGBH Educational Foundation, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/who/edicts.html>.

63. See Pape and Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse*, p. 2: “In the 24-year period from 1980 to 2003, there were just under 350 suicide terrorist attacks around the world—of which fewer than 15% could reasonably be considered directed against Americans. By contrast, in the six years from 2004 to 2009, the world has witnessed 1,833 suicide attacks—of which 92% are anti-American in origin.”
64. Toshi Yoshihara, “Japanese Bases and Chinese Missiles,” in *Rebalancing U.S. Forces: Basing and Forward Presence in the Asia-Pacific*, ed. Carnes Lord and Andrew S. Erickson (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2015), p. 53.
65. Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing*, p. III.
66. This report is according to Toshi Yoshihara, who cites Chinese military publications laying out such a strategy. See Yoshihara, “Japanese Bases and Chinese Missiles,” p. 38. See also David A. Shlapak et al., *A Question of Balance: Political Context and Military Aspects of the China-Taiwan Dispute* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2009).
67. Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 167–74. See also Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, pp. 58–113.
68. In a letter to Kennedy, Khrushchev wrote, “You are worried over Cuba. You say that it worries you because it lies at a distance of ninety miles across the sea from the shores of the United States. However, Turkey lies next to us. . . . You have stationed devastating rocket weapons, which you call offensive, in Turkey, literally right next to us.” Quoted in Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 451. There are other explanations for the Soviet decision to place missiles in Cuba, but this rationale is also explored in Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *The Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1999), pp. 93–98.
69. Quoted in Lebow, *A Cultural Theory*, p. 452.
70. See Stephen Kotkin, “Russia’s Perpetual Geopolitics,” *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 3 (May/June 2016). See also John J. Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault,” *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (September/October 2014): 1–12.
71. Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, “Deal or No Deal? The End of the Cold War and the U.S. Offer to Limit NATO Expansion,” *International Security* 40, no. 4 (Spring 2016): 7–44. Also Jonathan Masters writes, “Russia’s invasion of Georgia in the summer was a clear signal of Moscow’s intentions to protect what it sees as its sphere of influence.” Masters, “The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO),” CFR Backgrounder, Council on Foreign Relations, February 17, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/nato/north-atlantic-treaty-organization-nato/p28287?cid=soc-twitter-in-nato-080316>.
72. Masters, “The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).”
73. John Mueller, *Atomic Obsession: Nuclear Alarmism from Hiroshima to Al-Qaeda* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 95–96.
74. See Ted Galen Carpenter and Doug Bandow, “U.S. Conduct Creates Perverse Incentives for Proliferation,” Nuclear Proliferation Update no. 4, Cato Institute, December 28, 2009. Carpenter and Bandow write, “In particular, countries such as Iran and North Korea have seen how the United States has treated non-nuclear adversaries such as Serbia and Iraq, and that may have led to the conclusion that the only reliable deterrent to U.S. coercion is a nuclear arsenal.”
75. See Joseph A. Bosco, “Entrapment and Abandonment in Asia,” *The National Interest* (online), July 8, 2013, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/entrapment-abandonment-asia-8697?page=show>; Glenn H. Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics,” *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (July 1984): 461–95. For a skeptical view on the role of entangling alliances, see Michael Beckley, “The Myth of Entangling Alliances,” *International Security* 39, no. 4 (Spring 2015): 7–48.

- Also see Jennifer Lind, "Article Review 52 on 'The Myth of Entangling Alliances,'" *International Security Studies Forum*, April 13, 2016.
76. See Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).
77. Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), pp. 44–50.
78. Philip F. Bennett, "Korea and the Thirties (A): Case Study," John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1983.
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81. Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, p. 116.
82. Ibid., p. 115.
83. Ted Galen Carpenter and Malou Innocent, *Perilous Partners: The Benefits and Pitfalls of America's Alliances with Authoritarian Regimes* (Washington: Cato Institute, 2015), p. 477.
84. Human Rights Watch, "Uzbekistan: Detainees Tortured, Lawyers Silenced," December 13, 2011, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/12/13/uzbekistan-detainees-tortured-lawyers-silenced>.
85. Casey Michel, "The Obama Administration Is Gifting War Machines to a Murderous Dictator," *New Republic*, February 3, 2015. Also see Craig Whitlock, "U.S. Turns to Other Routes to Supply Afghan War as Relations with Pakistan Fray," *Washington Post*, July 2, 2011.
86. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 146.
87. David E. Sanger, "Philippines Orders U.S. to Leave Strategic Navy Base at Subic Bay," *New York Times*, December 28, 1991.
88. Vine, *Base Nation*, p. 267.
89. Jonathan Soble, "At Okinawa Protest, Thousands Call for Removal of U.S. Bases," *New York Times*, June 19, 2016.
90. Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing*, p. xxv.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. "Operation and Maintenance Overview: Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Estimates," Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, p. 195, http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2015/fy2015_OM_Overview.pdf.
94. David J. Berteau and others write, "The overall cost of the U.S. military presence, according to DoD, has been approximately \$36 billion for fiscal years 2010–2013. These costs do not include expenditures for equipment or operation of the U.S. Naval fleet that supports the PACOM AOR." The \$12 billion cited above divides by three this cost estimate for three years to give a rough annual cost. Berteau et al., *U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia Pacific Region: An Independent Assessment* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 2012).
95. Posen, *Restraint*, p. 108.
96. Vine, *Base Nation*, pp. 198–99.
97. Ibid., p. 202.
98. Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing*, pp. 131–64.
99. Vine, *Base Nation*, p. 204.
100. U.S. State Department, "Congressional

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101. Stephen Daggett, "Defense Budget: Alternative Measures of Costs of Military Commitments Abroad," Congressional Research Service, June 16, 1995.
102. Vine, *Base Nation*, p. 207.
103. Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing*, pp. 256–57, 284. This scenario would save \$3 billion annually through minor cutbacks and base closures in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.
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106. See *The Military Balance 2016* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2016), p. 17.
107. Robert Jervis, "International Primacy: Is the Game Worth the Candle?" *International Security* 17, no. 4 (Spring 1993): 52–67.
108. Charles Glaser, "Why Unipolarity Doesn't Matter (Much)," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 24, no. 2 (June 2011): 135–47.
109. Daniel Drezner, "Military Primacy Doesn't Pay (Nearly As Much As You Think)," *International Security* 38, no. 1 (Summer 2013): 52–79.
110. Posen argues for "demobiliz[ing] most U.S. Army troops based abroad" and contends most U.S. bases across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East should "ultimately close." Posen, *Restraint*, pp. 158–60.
111. James J. Sheehan, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone? The Transformation of Europe* (New York: Mariner Books, 2008).
112. The World Bank, "Russian Federation," <http://data.worldbank.org/country/russian-federation>; and The World Bank, "Spain," <http://data.worldbank.org/country/spain>.
113. Todd S. Sechser and Matthew Fuhrmann, *Nuclear Weapons and Coercive Diplomacy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
114. Jonathan Masters writes that despite ongoing efforts to revitalize its military, "rearmament has been slow, and much of the military's equipment remains decades old." Masters, "The Russian Military," CFR Backgrounder, Council on Foreign Relations, September 28, 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/russian-federation/russian-military/p33758>.
115. Justin Logan writes, "The Russian military is weak and constrained, and the further it gets from home, the weaker and more constrained it gets." Logan, "NATO: Think Again," *Foreign Policy* (online), June 20, 2014.
116. Ted Galen Carpenter, "NATO at 60: A Hollow Alliance," Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 635, March 30, 2009.
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118. Todd Sandler and Hirofumi Shimizu, "NATO Burden Sharing 1999–2010: An Altered Alliance," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 10, no. 1 (January 2014): 59.

119. See John Mueller, *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats and Why We Believe Them* (New York: Free Press, 2006).
120. The 2006 National Intelligence Estimate on Trends in Global Terrorism concludes that the Iraq War was “breeding deep resentment of U.S. involvement in the Muslim world and cultivating supporters for the global jihadist movement,” https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Special%20Report_Global%20Terrorism%20NIE%20Key%20Judgments.pdf.
121. “The Islamic State (Full Length),” VICE News interview, December 26, 2014, <https://news.vice.com/video/the-islamic-state-full-length>. President Obama said, “ISIL is a direct outgrowth of Al-Qaida in Iraq which grew out of our invasion which is an example of unintended consequences which is why we should generally aim before we shoot.”
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124. Joshua Rovner and Caitlin Talmadge, “Hegemony, Force Posture, and the Provision of Public Goods: The Once and Future Role of Outside Powers in Securing Persian Gulf Oil,” *Security Studies* 23, no. 3 (2014): 549–50.
125. Ibid., p. 571. Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait was hardly a failure of deterrence in the first place. Chaim Kaufmann describes the “conventional wisdom” as being that “Hussein was misled by a series of U.S. official statements,” signaling that the United States was not interested in defending Kuwait’s territorial integrity. Kaufmann, “Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of Ideas: The Selling of the Iraq War,” *International Security* 29, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 13.
126. Rovner and Talmadge, “Hegemony.”
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