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Overseas Military Base Closures

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We are living in a revolution, and hardly anyone has noticed. In just three months since the end of the Iraq war, the Pentagon has announced the essential evacuation of the US military from its air bases in Saudi Arabia, from the Demilitarized Zone in Korea, and from the vast Incirlik air base in Turkey – in addition to a radical drawdown of US¹ military personnel in Germany, the mainstay of the Great American Wall since 1945.

Charles Krauthammer, 2003

Charles Krauthammer has identified one of the primary methods that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is employing to transform today's American military from a Cold War-postured force to a global-war-on-terrorism (GWOT) postured force – closing military bases overseas. One of the most fascinating things about this effort is that it coincides with the final round of domestic military base² closures scheduled for 2005– 2007. As such, Secretary Rumsfeld has made it known that he intends to use US military base realignments and closures both domestically and worldwide to help transform the US Armed Forces to be better prepared to fight the battles of the 21st century. He pointed out that the Department of Defense (DOD) could save up to \$6 billion of its annual operating budget if it could close down between 100 and 150 military installations, many dating back to World War II or the Korean War,³ on some of the 26 million acres it currently occupies.

According to President George W. Bush's 2002 *National Security Strategy*:

The presence of American forces overseas is one of the most profound symbols of the US commitments to allies and friends.... To contend with uncertainty and to meet the many challenges we face, the United States will require bases and stations within and beyond Western Europe and Northeast Asia, as well as temporary access arrangements for the⁴ long-distance deployment of US forces.

Hence, this aspect of military transformation entails a “reconfiguration” of stateside and overseas bases,

not just the closure of bases. The military projected bases for closure are those established to fight in place during the Cold War and are no longer needed for the GWOT. This paper will analyze the closure of bases overseas with regard to three primary issues: 1) the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process; 2) the new paradigm for US international security; and, 3) the presence of our military forces overseas. The paper will begin with a brief review of the purposes for stationing American forces abroad and the history of our military presence overseas. Then, it will discuss the three primary issues before concluding with a recommendation for each of them.

Purpose

Professor David Yost of the Naval Postgraduate School cited several reasons for having American forces stationed overseas in his 1995 article, "The Future of US Overseas Presence." He noted that overseas deployments can:

- Provide early warning of aggressive actions and allow for prompt responses to such attacks;
- Allow for more effective post-conflict occupation and peacekeeping operations (PKO);
- Fulfill obligations made in peace treaties or defense alliances to protect friendly countries from aggression; and,
- Support the non-proliferation cause by reassuring nations that might otherwise develop nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction (WMD) for their own defense.

The stationing of American forces abroad lends stability to countries and their regions, allowing trade to prosper, economies to flourish, and democracy to take root. American forces overseas have opportunities to train in areas where they would more likely see combat, with allies alongside whom they would likely fight. During the 1990s, those overseas forces became a major element in military operations other than war (MOOTW) that included Bosnia and Somalia in addition to the more intense

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Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, and Allied Force.

One caveat, however, before proceeding. The US Navy is pursuing a concept called Sea Basing which would essentially be a small airport and storage facility stationed offshore in key areas. In an article recently published in the *US Naval Institute Proceedings* entitled, "Sea Basing Isn't Just About the Sea," Lt Cdr John Klein and Maj Richard Morales wrote:

[T]here is some concern about how it will affect existing bases. Will forward ground operating bases become obsolete? Absolutely not. Sea basing should not become the sole means of deploying and sustaining joint forces during extended land campaigns. The sheer volume of fuel, ammunition, maintenance, and related logistical requirements always will demand the use of a variety of supply and basing positions - including foreign bases,

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airfields, and ports.

As such, I will not be addressing the Sea Basing concept in this paper.

History

Professor Yost provided a history of American overseas military basing beginning during World War II. It was then that the US acquired an array of bases and facilities in Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and Asia. With the onset of the Cold War, the United States was forced to maintain most of these bases and military forces, particularly in Europe (122,000 troops), Japan (150,000 troops), and South Korea (500 troops) to deter the communist threat. With the end of the Cold War, troop levels in Europe were cut from a high of 341,000 in 1989 to 109,000 in 1995. By 1998, the United States had around 235,000 troops stationed abroad, to include 109,000 in Europe, 93,000 in Asia, and 23,000 in the Persian Gulf. With the drawdown of military forces, the military infrastructure established for the Cold

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War needed to be cut and remolded for the new threat environment.

In the late 1990s, Rand Corporation analyst Richard Kugler wrote a book, entitled *Changes Ahead*, in which he concluded that the United States would need to station large numbers of troops abroad for the foreseeable future, because withdrawing them “could be destabilizing and could inflict major damage on common western security interests.” He noted in his opening summary that today’s United States presence abroad was a product of threat-based planning during the Cold War. Without a major peer competitor, DOD has turned to a capabilities-based security strategy. Kugler reviewed the new strategy stating: “The new US strategy is one of engagement and is animated by the three concepts of ‘shaping’ the international strategic environment, ‘responding’ to a wide spectrum of potential contingencies, and ‘preparing now’ for an uncertain future.” He believed that the US strategy should focus on consolidating peace in Europe, stabilizing Asia’s security affairs, and dealing with growing dangers in the Middle East. His bottom line regarding overseas military basing strategy was to shift from stationary local missions to regional power projection: “[America’s] current main bases may shift from receiving reinforcements to serving as hubs for projecting operations outward, into new zones where US forces have not traditionally been present.” Finally, he determined that there still was no guiding vision for the

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Pentagon’s military force posture.

Congress legislated a defense review every four years, called the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), which includes an assessment of the US overseas military posture. Shortly after President George W. Bush took office, another QDR was required (the final report was due to Congress by September 2001). Dr. Michele Flourney was tasked by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to organize a small working group at the National Defense University (NDU) to provide the intellectual underpinnings of the 2001 QDR. Flourney’s subsequent book, *QDR 2001: Strategy-Driven Choices for America’s Security*, covered the military posture in chapter five (cowritten with Col Sam Tangredi), “Defense

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Strategy alternatives: Choosing Where to Place Emphasis and Where to Accept Risk.”

Professor Flourney broke the book up into sections covering the three major regions of the world: Europe, Middle East, and Asia-Pacific. In Europe, the NDU working group determined that Russia was

still a potential threat to the security of the U.S., even though it had a democratically-elected president and was aligned with the West. As such, they recommended no major force changes in Europe in order to maintain peace and stability (more of the Cold War mantra: keep America in, Germany down, and Russia out). This included keeping the combat-heavy forces in place. They admitted their recommendation left the Cold War force posture pretty much intact, meaning it was positioned to fight in place; not to be deployed outside the region. To counter such criticisms, they recommended DOD develop new weapon systems that were more easily deployable.

In the Middle East, the NDU working group recommended an increase in naval presence, primarily because the Arab governments of these countries wanted the American security, but being sensitive to their Islamic citizens, wanted to keep US forces out of sight. As such, the US presence in the Middle East remained small, but supported by a significant amount of pre-positioned weapon systems and supplies (enough to field 11 Army brigades).

In the Asia-Pacific region, the group considered China to be the next peer competitor to America. So, once again, no change in the US military posture in this region was recommended. In fact, they recommended that the facilities in Guam and Diego Garcia be upgraded just in case. (Note: of all the recommendations the NDU working group proposed, this may have been the only one actually implemented.)

After the turn of the millennium/century, Kugler, along with Ellen Frost, coedited a two-volume set entitled *The Global Century: Globalization and National Security*, published by NDU's Institute for National Strategic Studies. In these two voluminous books, all of the authors noted the problems that globalization was causing within the non-connected (to the globalization movement) world. The problems in the "non-connected world," which Kugler referred to as "global outliers," will likely involve American forces, hence, the importance of understanding the Pentagon's international security paradigm. These books basically set the intellectual foundation for Thomas Barnett's recent book, *The Pentagon's New Map* (2004), in which he described his new paradigm based on Core and Gap states. Where Kugler referred to the disconnected states regarding the globalization movement as global outliers, Barnett referred to them as Gap states. Concerning a state's challenge regarding globalization, he wrote:

I will propose a map of the world that captures this challenge and the threats it poses. It will not be an East-West map. It will not be a North-South map. It will be a map that shows you which regions are functioning within globalization's expanding web of connectivity and which remain fundamentally disconnected from that process. It will show you where globalization has spread, there you will find stable governments.... But

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look beyond globalization's frontier, and there you will find the failed states....

As much as these two works are similar, to include the significance of the "arc of instability" identifying where the Gap states are located, there are a couple of distinct differences. First, Kugler's primary recommendation was to protect the Core states, while Barnett strongly advocated shrinking the Gap

states. Kugler continued the standard recommendation for the West to continue providing economic support to the Gap states to help them connect to the globalization movement. (Yet, in all the Gap nations, he found that globalization was perceived as a threat.)

The bottom line for these pre-9/11 intellectual works supporting the DOD's force posture was that they had all the indicators of the near future, but missed it. Kugler's work even mentioned non-state actors as becoming regional challengers, but never once did he mention terrorist groups as one of the non-state entities. In fact, all of Kugler's chapter authors continued to support the two major theaters of war (MTW) concept and force posture despite the continued downsizing of the US military noted previously – and, that was less than three years ago.

Many scholars believed that direct terrorist attacks against Americans and the United States did not begin on 11 September 2001, but as far back as November 1979 when the Iranians took 52 Americans hostage for 444 days. As evidence that the United States was indeed at war with al-Qaeda before 9/11, this terrorist organization, led by Usama Bin Laden (UBL), was linked to the attack at CIA headquarters and to the first bombing of the World Trade Center in early 1993. Despite this evidence, almost no one in government, the think tanks, or the Intelligence Community foresaw another attack on the World Trade Center and the subsequent GWOT. The GWOT requires a completely different overseas military base posture than the Cold War required. Since the end of the Cold War, America's overseas base posture has not changed that much, even though many installations have been closed.

Base Realignment and Closure Process and Political Influences

Turning to the current BRAC process that was reinvigorated by congressional legislation in 2001, the independent commission, consisting of nine commissioners, is tasked with vetting the DOD's BRAC recommendations by 8 September 2005, whereupon the president will have just two weeks to approve or disapprove the list in its entirety. Then, Congress will vote on the list, again in its entirety, within 45 days after that. So, before 2006, the BRAC-05 list of military bases should be approved and work begun

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to complete the recommendations within two years. Common knowledge is that BRAC-05 will affect between 20 and 25 percent of DOD's military installations, hence, it will be the largest BRAC of the five conducted. Reporters have identified Defense Secretary Rumsfeld as characterizing BRAC-05 as the "Mother of all BRACs."

Senator Kay Hutchison (R-Texas) and Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-California) have called for an additional congressional independent commission to assess the DOD's overseas basing posture with regard to the BRAC 2005 process. They noted that: "It may well make sense to close a stateside base if certain overseas bases will remain open and in use— and to make sure that same base remains open or is

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even upgraded should certain overseas bases be consolidated or closed." This new commission, consisting of eight members, would determine whether American bases are prepared to meet the nation's security needs in the 21st century, and provide its conclusions to the president, Congress, and the BRAC-05 commission before the end of 2004.

Meanwhile, Congress has already tasked DOD to provide a global posture review as part of the BRAC 2005 legislation. This review is intended to transform the US military into a more mobile, agile, and flexible force that can respond more quickly to a crisis that might arise along the arc of instability. The US military commanders during Operation Desert Shield were very frustrated that it took as long as six months to move equipment for US armored divisions out of Germany and deliver them to the Persian

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Gulf. As such, the DOD's global posture review will be an important factor during its development of the BRAC list that the congressional commission will vet. Hence, the disposition of overseas military bases has a direct effect on the disposition of domestic bases.

To make the issue more intriguing, Congress is considering legislation that will directly impact the BRAC-05 process. To begin, the Senate suspended all overseas military construction funding until after

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DOD has completed its global posture review. The Senate understandably decided not to spend money on any overseas bases that may be closed within three years. In the other chamber of Congress, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) announced plans to increase the US Army by 30,000 troops (equivalent to 15 brigades) and the Marine Corps by 9,000 troops over the next three years at a cost of \$4 billion (this is in response to the respective Chiefs of Staffs' urgent requests for more forces as a consequence of conducting two major military operations, in Iraq and Afghanistan, simultaneously). According to Anne Plummer of *Inside the Army*, Army officials have been told to put the newly formed

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brigades at any installation that has the facilities to support them. As well, the Marine Corps will also need to decide where to station its additional forces. In both cases, the stationing of these 39,000 troops will have direct implications on the upcoming BRAC deliberations.

Current Issues— Timing

There are three significant issues today regarding the BRAC-05 process. Presented in no particular order, the first has to do with the timing of BRAC-05 with regard to the disposition of the military bases overseas. Raymond DuBois, the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Installations and Environment, was Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's point man for BRAC-05. DuBois told the media that: "Rumsfeld promised Congress that he would rearrange and reduce the number of US bases overseas before cutting

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domestic bases through BRAC." This approach makes sense to Congress and to the media. Michael O'Hanlon, writing for the *Washington Times*, opined that: "It makes sense to develop this plan in its entirety before next year's base closure process, so we know what facilities need to be retained stateside."¹⁷

Yet, despite the logic of it and the promises made, determining the overseas base posture prior to determining the stateside base posture is actually not what is going to happen. Lisa Burgess, reporting for the *European Stars and Stripes*, quoted "Pentagon officials" as saying that because the global

posture review is connected to BRAC, and BRAC rules “expressly prohibit” any Pentagon or service action that would signal preference for any particular base, “the first time we’ll have a really good feel

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for the global reorganization plan is 2006.” Steve Liewer, also reporting for the *European Stars and Stripes*, reported that Douglas Feith, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, would be leading a delegation of government officials to negotiate American military base closures with foreign leaders around the world. Said Feith: “Our friends and allies are sensitive to changes in the US overseas posture, that’s why we’re consulting with them before the president or Secretary Rumsfeld make any decisions

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on changes.” An unnamed NATO diplomat told Judy Dempsey of the *London Financial Times* that: “The United States really wants to consult its allies. It does not want a repeat of last summer when it

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failed to consult with Iceland when it was going to close its bases there.” While that may be true, it is also in the administration’s interest not to hurry the process. Liewer noted that: “Feith and other Defense

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officials have been purposely short on specifics and have given no timeline for the change.” In my opinion, this appears to be a classic stall tactic - to delay any announcement of overseas base closures until after the BRAC-05 list of domestic base closures has been approved.

Along with the negotiation-with-allies line, DOD mid-level military officers have offered the argument that the infrastructure is not in place to make any significant troop movement at this time. Lt Col Amy Ehmann, the commander of the 414th Base Support Battalion in Hanau, Germany, stated that she did not anticipate moving for years because the military lacked the infrastructure to move or house troops in any of the proposed destinations. In fact, Col George Latham, the 104th Area Support Group Commander, took the counter-intuitive position stating: “it makes little sense to close overseas bases before Congress announces its round of stateside base closures.... What politician in his right mind would want to close

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something before then?” Undersecretary Feith told his German counterparts, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, that America will start pulling out its armored units after BRAC-05 is finalized (in late

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2005), eventually withdrawing up to 40,000 troops from Germany by 2006.

Current Issues – New Overseas Paradigm

Which military bases to close will depend a lot on what DOD’s paradigm of international security looks like. Professor Yost recommended using seven criteria for determining America’s military basing abroad to include: 1) history; 2) purpose of presence; 3) domestic economic factors; 4) domestic political factors; 5) future security environment; 6) changing nature of warfare; and, 7) post-Cold War realities. He determined that changes in high-intensity conflict implied *reduced* needs for forward bases and prepositioning of arms ashore, though some continuing purposes of overseas presence will require forces abroad – just not as much as during the Cold War allegedly for political, economic, and military

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reasons.

In their textbook, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, John Spanier and Steven Hook determined that much of American foreign policy has been based on power politics. Perceptions by allies and enemies have generally been considered when deciding a course of action. They recommended taking into account credibility, prestige, and reliability when deciding American foreign

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policy issues – such as military base closures. Kurt Campbell and Celeste Ward wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that: “The United States’ foreign military presence remains a compelling symbol and bellwether

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of US attitudes and approaches to foreign and defense policy, so it is watched closely.”

Charles Krauthammer noted that since 9/11, the United States has not been expanding its force structure abroad, rather lightening our military footprint, rationalizing our deployments, and rearranging our forces. He claimed the US is leaving the places where it is not wanted in favor of places where it is welcomed, and from countering the Soviet threat to countering terrorism and instability. He wrote:

So we’re shifting into a far more difficult and dangerous game of containing and ultimately destroying the new enemy – nimble, mobile, and undeterrable. That requires an entirely new strategy: small bases in new places, some simply forward staging areas with supplies awaiting the arrival of highly mobile troops in an emergency. Less plodding, less

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heavy, less static, less fixed. This is the new American strategy: *Empire Lite*.

Campbell and Ward likened our overseas force posture to a game of musical chairs: “the position of US forces abroad at any given time largely reflects where they happened to be when the last war stopped. . . . In the post-September 11 world, the Pentagon has new objectives. US forces are now

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responsible for fighting terrorism and curtailing the spread of WMD.”

Although DOD has not published a national military strategy (NMS) this millennium, the current version revolves around the numbers “1-4-2-1.” The military is expected to defend the homeland (1); deter aggression in four world regions (4); swiftly defeat adversaries in two other conflicts (2); and, conduct a limited number of small operations (1). This strategy was not really specific enough to design a force structure around for the near future. So, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld created another number catch phrase (patterned after long-distance telephone commercials) to complement the current strategy to give the military services more concrete guidelines for what is needed to fight in the 21st century: “10-30-30.” The services must each be able to deploy to a distant theater within 10 days, defeat an enemy within 30 days, and be ready for an additional fight within another 30 days. This is the new benchmark by which the US Armed Forces will be evaluated against for the near future. Unfortunately, it is not

achievable with today's transport capabilities, and the Army is still too heavy. The new 10-30-30 guideline emanated from lessons learned during Operation Iraqi Freedom—pounce quickly on the opposition to hamper its ability to fight back. Hence, the new strategy abandons the traditional doctrine calling for a three-to-one ratio of attackers to defenders in lieu of exploiting advanced technologies and

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superior firepower everywhere in the area of conflict.

Regarding general guidance for stationing US military forces abroad, former Admiral A.K. Cebrowski published a document entitled, "Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach." In this document, he outlined a "forward deterrent posture" that entailed US forces operating from forward positions. Specifically, the document noted that: "US power projection depends heavily on access to large overseas

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bases, airfields, and ports."

One idea to accommodate the new military strategy is to base a larger portion of the US military forces

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stateside and deploy from there to relatively austere staging areas around the world. Another idea is to

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establish smaller, more forward military bases with lighter, more mobile forces. However, the best idea came from Gen James Jones, commander of European Command (responsible for US interests in Europe, Russia, and most of the African continent). He envisioned creating small, lightly-staffed facilities with tailored quantities of prepositioned equipment, which he referred to as both "lily pads" (a reference to the Sea Basing concept) and "warm bases," that would be used as jumping-off points in a crisis. These small, expandable bases would be linked like spokes to a few existing large, heavy-infrastructure bases, which have been referred to as "enduring bases." Finally, he envisioned "virtual bases" where the United States would have negotiated a series of access rights to military facilities with

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numerous countries. Codifying Jones' vision, Rear Adm Richard Hunt, deputy director of strategy and policy on the Joint Staff, disclosed the essence of the soon-to-be-released *US National Military Strategy*: "The new basing construct includes strategically situated power-projection hubs and main operating bases, forward operating sites [warm bases] and security co-operation locations [virtual bases]. The latter entail arrangements with host nations that allow for the use of a port or airfield so that US

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forces can build up quickly in an area."

To facilitate this new infrastructure concept, the military services will need to down-size their traditional organizational units such as the Army division and the Air Force wing. These unit sizes will be too large for most military operations in the near future, as well as too large for the bases they will be operating from. Each of the military services is already breaking down their traditional units into more deployable modules that can be rapidly assembled into task forces tailored for specific missions and that are readily transportable. These task forces will be more interdependent on other service modules to exploit the

unique capabilities each brings to the fight. Now that we have an idea of the overseas basing concept, let us turn to where these sub-enduring bases are projected to be located.

Admiral Hunt explained that the new NMS will introduce a global “arc of instability” in place of the four areas of concern highlighted in the previous version of the NMS: Southwest Asia, Northeast Asia,

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East Asia, and Europe. Jamie Dettmer, a senior editor for *Insight Magazine*, defined the arc as: “troubled and failing nations in parts of Latin America, the Middle East, the Balkans, and Central Asia.” He noted that the US had been securing air bases, landing rights, and military agreements with a series

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of countries located along the arc of instability. Finally, Bradley Graham of the *Washington Post* interpreted the Pentagon’s approach by writing:

The administration still intends to retain a ring of permanent military hubs in closely allied countries.... But, many other bases the US has relied on would be supplanted by a number of spare ‘forward operating sites’ such as those planned for Eastern Europe. They would be supported by small support staffs. Other countries would be designated as ‘cooperative security locations,’ providing staging areas that US forces could occupy quickly in a conflict. These locations would have no permanent US military presence but could be

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used periodically for training exercises.

The manner in which DOD uses the phrase “arc of instability” differs from the concept that Dr. Barnett described in his book. Instead of an arc, which could imply a border to be defended, Barnett outlined a more macro paradigm of different regions of the world, to include core, gap, and seam, as a function of how connected each was to the globalization movement. He wrote: “If disconnectedness is the real enemy, then the combatants we target in this war are those who promote it, enforce it, and terrorize those who seek to overcome it by reaching out to the larger world. Our strategic goals, therefore, are to extend

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connectivity in every way possible....” Where globalization is commonly found in the fields of economics, information technology, and commerce, it is not really part of the Pentagon’s strategy lexicon. This is where Barnett provided perhaps his most significant insight, writing: “Knowing where globalization begins and ends essentially defines the US military’s expeditionary theater. It tells us where we will go and why. It tells us what we will find when we get there, and what we must do to

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achieve victory in warfare.”

Current Issues – Military Presence

The Air Force published a white paper in February 1995 entitled, “Global Presence,” authored by both

Sheila Widnall (then secretary of the Air Force) and Ronald Fogleman (then chief of staff of the Air Force). This white paper advocated a “virtual” overseas military presence, referred to as global presence, based on exploiting information technology and the Air Force’s global reach. The cornerstone for global presence included forces that possess the attributes of responsiveness, flexibility, survivability, and economy. The foundation for global presence was power projection. Power projection has two components: warfighting and presence. In the face of increasing demands on US military forces (adversely affecting responsiveness and flexibility) and shrinking defense budgets (adversely affecting economy), Air Force leadership decided it could no longer support the military presence around the world that had evolved during the Cold War.

The virtual presence concept was based on using new high-tech intelligence assets to monitor events in every country and region around the world. According to the white paper: “Situational awareness gives America an ability to anticipate crises and prepare appropriate responses to them. Improvements in space-based and air-breathing platform sensors and information-based systems in the coming years will

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steadily increase the situational awareness of military leaders and military forces at all echelons.” As soon as a crisis appeared imminent or actually occurred, then the Air Force would deploy, from the continental United States (CONUS), the appropriate aircraft to halt the crisis quickly, and would transport the necessary troops and equipment to stabilize the situation for as long as it was required. Between crises, combat forces would be rotated overseas to conduct on-site field exercises, train with allies, and visit other countries, before returning to their CONUS bases.

Global or virtual presence in essence meant that the Air Force wanted to move from world policeman continuously “on the beat,” to world fireman, ready to respond when and where needed. In addition to satellite coverage of key areas and CONUS-based bombers and troop transports, defense and air attaches, security assistance officers, mobile training teams, and military forces deployed for allied exercises would also play a key part in providing warning of impending crises to the world’s fire station.

In 1998, Spanier and Hook encouraged America to stay engaged around the world and not to withdraw or downsize the US military. Yet, while the United States was still engaged around the world, it continued to downsize its military forces. They encouraged the United States to exploit its clout as the remaining superpower as timidity only invited challenges to the status quo. They noted that realists are motivated by national interests, while idealists are motivated by national and universal values. They

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warned that foreign policy based on idealism is a lot harder to sustain.

In his 1998 book, *Changes Ahead*, Richard Kugler characterized virtual presence as: “Power projection from CONUS would become the sole means by which DOD would mount military operations abroad

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and react to crises and wars.” He noted that the primary impetus behind the virtual presence military posture overseas was to save money. Having US military forces stationed stateside would save billions of dollars in the long run, hence, worth exploring as an option. However, he did not believe virtual

presence would work in anything other than a *tranquil* world environment. Because Kugler is a realist, he concluded that: “virtual overseas presence is flawed because it would provide a less-than-adequate

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overseas presence and/or a more costly one.”

Kugler also assessed that America would need to continue stationing military forces abroad to preserve regional stability. He noted that the concept for overseas presence during the Cold War was “forward defense,” while until 9/11, the concept of forward basing was “forward presence.” The Pentagon’s forward presence came at a cost of \$15-25 billion per year (i.e., four-to-six percent of the DOD budget, and 15 percent of its manpower). Kugler’s analysis indicated that: “US defense strategy will require a robust overseas presence for the foreseeable future.” In 1998, the American military overseas presence

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was about 60 percent of what it was during the Cold War.

Today, five years later, it is closer to 100 percent, with military operations on-going in Afghanistan and Iraq. Chalmers Johnson, a professor emeritus at the University of California at San Diego, writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, cited the Pentagon’s annual “Base Structure Report” for fiscal year 2003 to highlight that DOD claims to have over 700 military bases in over 130 countries (and another 6,000 military bases in the United States and its territories) with over 253,000 troops deployed abroad (but, that does not count DOD civilians, contractors, and locally-hired foreigners). He calculated the total number of DOD personnel stationed overseas to be in excess of 530,000, well more than double the Pentagon’s estimation. In fact, he believed the Pentagon’s calculations regarding overseas bases are also a gross underestimate because they fail to include installations in places such as Kosovo, Bosnia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. As an aside, he noted that: “Pentagon bureaucrats calculate that it would require at least

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\$113.2 billion to replace just the foreign bases.”

Kugler identified the three missions for forces abroad as conducting peacetime missions, PKO, and warfighting. He projected that peacetime missions would become more important, diverse, and demanding; that PKOs would become more numerous; that the number of minor crises would increase; and, that major warfighting missions would mutate into preparations for combat as a show of force and intent. Unfortunately, with the terrorist attacks on 9/11 triggering America’s GWOT, major warfighting

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operations have become the norm for US military forces overseas.

Kugler did not believe in “virtual presence:” “The act of influencing world affairs is heavily dependent

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on ‘being there.’” He did not recommend bringing all the American military forces home for a number of reasons. For US forces, continuous training abroad is much more realistic than training in America, especially alongside the allied or coalition forces you might be fighting with. Plus, having military forces in every region of the world means that they will be closer to any crisis that arises,

meaning they can get to the conflict quicker than if they were stationed in the United States. He noted that 85 percent of an army's equipment can be pre-positioned in the region, allowing the forces to be combat ready even quicker. Finally, regarding the nature of the American force presence, he observed

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that: "What matters most is not the size of the US presence, but its appropriateness for the occasion."

Air Force Gen Gregory Martin, former commander of European Command, wrote an article published in the *Air and Space Power Journal* in the summer of 2003 entitled "US National Security Strategy and the Imperative of 'Geopresence.'" Martin's opinion tracked closely with what Kugler had written, only with the knowledge of 9/11 and the GWOT: "Now there exists a much more fleeting and dangerous set of international actors bent on radical change, who may possess the means to effect change. . . . This new understanding, in turn, has helped create a defense posture that clearly has moved . . . to a new "capabilities-based model" that concentrates on identifying and arranging the required means to meet the

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new security challenge." He defined a new term, "geopresence," to mean: "a multifaceted presence that allows the US military to operate in any region of the world. . . . [Geopresence] helps us access various regions of importance, engender cooperation, achieve effective interoperability, and ultimately

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influence the outcomes of events."

With geopresence defined, Martin then explained what it meant to the US Air Force:

When the US projects and sustains forces on a global basis, its airpower will require access to air bases or international airports spaced about every 2,500-3,500 miles. These bases allow our airlift aircraft to land, refuel, change crews, and relaunch.... [I]f the objective area for relief is greater than 2,500-3,500 miles away, we will require two or

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three en route support bases to enable an 'air bridge' operation.

He instructed that the Air Force's overseas presence needed to achieve access, cooperation, interoperability, and influence. Furthermore, being a realist, he recognized that at times there may be difficulties utilizing military facilities in a country due to unforeseen circumstances, or that to support a major military operation will require more than one installation to handle all of the logistics. During Operation El Dorado Canyon, a military action that President Reagan directed against Libya in retaliation for their bombing of the La Belle discotheque in West Berlin, which took the lives of an American soldier and a Turkish woman and injuring 200 more, including 63 American soldiers. Although the President claimed there was "irrefutable proof" that Libya had directed the bombing, several European countries (France, Spain, and Portugal) decided not to support US military operations and denied US warplanes the use of their sovereign airspace. That action required US forces to remain over international waters during their much-longer flight from their UK bases to the Libyan targets and back. To preclude this lack of allied support in the future where international issues are not as black and white as Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the United States will negotiate military agreements

with as many nations along and within the arc of instability as possible. Therefore, if one country objects to an American military action, then the United States would have the flexibility to use another military facility in a neighboring country. As Dettmer wrote: “By having a lot more options from which to

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launch strikes, the United States won’t be so reliant on a handful of allies.”

Given this past experience, General Martin recommended that: “[F]or every base needed, the United States probably should cultivate relationships with about three nations. Further, the United States will need two to three bases in the region to support contingencies. . . . To conduct a major campaign, airpower will need between 15 and 20 air bases within a major region. . . . We should cultivate the

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number of relationships to allow only three or four bases in each [nation].” Doing the math using Martin’s numbers, one soon realizes that the Air Force will need to have some sort of air base arrangement with just about every country in the world with suitable airfields.

Gen Robert Foglesong, commander of US Air Forces in Europe, noted in a recent interview with *Defense News* editors and reporters that:

We don’t want to keep anybody that we don’t need overseas right now. Now we can reach back to centers anywhere in the Defense Department. . . . I’m a big believer in the ‘go south and go east’ philosophy. The military requirement is we need training space. Airspace for us is important, and Western Europe is jammed now. . . . In Eastern Europe, the airspace is better. . . . We’re also looking at the northern part of Africa. . . . In the

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winter, going south is a good thing for us.

Hence, the Air Force is actively seeking to expand its access overseas, while the Army is actively engaged in military operations around the world. As such, the force posture abroad is experiencing a significant amount of flux today, creating a challenge for any planner trying to determine the appropriate global force posture thereby allowing decision-makers the ability to determine which overseas and stateside bases to close. Combine this with efforts by Congress to increase Army and Marine Corps personnel by 39,000, and the problem becomes even more complicated.

At this point, you might be wondering if the United States is planning to close *any* military bases overseas. Indeed, the “warm basing” facilities DOD is negotiating for will not entail many military members to maintain, if any at all (given that DOD contractors could do the job). This type of installation would be called a “cooperative security location.” These CSLs are being planned for such countries as Morocco, Cameroon, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Algeria, Uganda, Australia, and possibly even Vietnam. What are scheduled to be closed are the legacy bases from the Cold War in which thousands of military members worked and lived in, many with their families. As mentioned earlier, those legacy bases that survive the cut will be referred to as enduring bases, such as Ramstein Air Base

in Germany, the RAF Lakenheath– RAF Mildenhall complex in England, Aviano Air Base in Italy, Osan Air Base in South Korea, and Misawa Air Base in Japan. The United States has permanent military installations, though not “mini-America” facilities like the aforementioned air bases, in Djibouti, Qatar, Oman, Pakistan, Kuwait, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, the Philippines,

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and Bahrain, just to name a few. This type of installation would be called a “forward operating site.” Today, US engineers in Iraq are constructing 14 FOSs for the thousands of American troops expected to serve there for at least two years.

The perception among many of the citizens within the arc of instability is that the American military force disposition overseas is primarily to protect the world’s access to oil, not, as Barnett would advocate, to facilitate their connection to the globalization movement. Air Force Maj Gen Jeffrey Kohler, the European Command’s former point man for force reconfiguration, visited the Saharan nations of Mauritania, Mali, and Niger recently to negotiate military basing rights: “because of terror

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links and oil, which is seen as a possible alternative to Middle East fuel.” The terrorist links refer to the Salafist Group that operates out of Algeria throughout northwestern Africa. The US Navy has even approached Sao Tome, an island nation off the west coast of Africa, to pursue the possibility of building

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a naval base there: “to protect growing Western oil interests in West Africa.” Professor Chalmers

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Johnson observed that the “arc of instability” coincidentally covers the world’s key oil reserves. It appears the citizens of the disconnected world may have a point, but, in any case, the United States must endeavor to promote globalism everywhere, to connect with the disconnected states. The “Gap” must be eliminated. As such, it is acceptable that the United States prioritizes how it allocates its attention and resources towards this effort.

Finally, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld has been giving the impression that none of these new military bases is permanent. *Chicago Tribune* correspondent Michael Kilian reported that Rumsfeld rejected the notion that the United States is interested in a permanent large-scale presence in the Middle East and Central Asia. Rumsfeld reportedly stated that once the Taliban and al-Qaeda have been defeated, the United States will have “no bases” in Afghanistan. Currently, the United States has military bases in just about every country in both regions. While visiting Uzbekistan in February 2004, he said: “We have no plans to put permanent bases in this part of the world.” But, as Kilian commented: “Some big,

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permanent bases in the region are likely.”

Secretary of State Colin Powell also commented on the new overseas military base disposition stating: “What we are interested in are, perhaps, forward operating locations that we could train at temporarily, or we can have agreements at particular airfields that make it easier for us to deploy to particular areas of

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potential crisis.” Instead of deploying overseas for years sometimes with families, troops would deploy for three to six months without their families to military installations lacking the creature comforts of today’s large bases in Europe. Brian Whitmore, *Boston Globe* correspondent, quoted one US military official as saying that using the facilities: “will be sort of like opening and closing your beach

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house.”

Professor Barnett had practically the exact opposite perception of what the US military presence overseas should be as Defense Secretary Rumsfeld. In his book, he noted that only the United States can provide the security around the world to allow globalization to expand. He wrote that: “America’s gift to the world is not military empire but economic globalization and the collective security it both engenders and demands.” Hence, where the US military was present, there was stability and the potential for a nation to become part of the globalization movement and leave the Gap. He believed that the Pentagon would be stationing forces permanently overseas stating: “we will conduct such massive shifts in how we permanently position our military forces around the world. . . .” As such, he wrote that: “we are never leaving the Gap and we are never ‘bringing our boys home.’ There is no exiting the Gap, only

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shrinking the Gap. . . . No exit means no exit strategy.”

Recommendations

Taking the issues in the order presented, I believe it makes sense to resolve the overseas force posture *prior* to BRAC-05, regardless of the implications that closing bases overseas might have on stateside base closures. The United States needs to remain engaged overseas to enhance its own security. In this regard, Barnett was correct, the United States needs to lead the effort around the arc of instability to shrink the Gap. Therefore, deciding which enduring bases to maintain abroad first should improve the BRAC commission’s decision-making process.

If DOD is physically not able to determine what the overseas military base posture should be at this time, then perhaps BRAC-05 should be delayed a couple of years until the Pentagon has an approved approach for base closures abroad. Two key House Representatives, Joel Hefley, R-Colorado, and Gene Taylor, D-Mississippi, want, at minimum, to postpone BRAC-05 until at least 2007. Hefley commented: “The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, combined with US moves to pull troops from bases in Europe, justify the delay. . . . The fact is it would be irresponsible to make irreversible base closure decisions

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with so many significant issues remaining unresolved.” John Pike, executive director of the defense policy think tank GlobalSecurity.org, said Hefley is right about this being the wrong time to close military bases. He stated that: “It’s difficult for the Pentagon to plan a couple of decades in advance

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when they can’t plan a couple of weeks in advance.” The Readiness Subcommittee of the HASC (of

which Hefley is the Chair) voted on 6 May 2004 to delay BRAC-05 two years to conduct more studies

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of military base requirements.

As for which overseas bases should be kept and which should be closed, Professor Yost offered seven criteria that should be considered when making such a decision. Criteria numbers five (future security environment) and seven (post-Cold War realities) are the relevant ones to the process. As such, Barnett's paradigm about protecting the Core states while shrinking the Gap states is the most applicable. The other factors are fairly similar, just packaged differently. The Pentagon has already decided its paradigm regarding overseas presence – enduring main operating bases with spokes to forward operating sites and sub-spokes to cooperative security locations. Hence, the most important criteria that DOD should consider when negotiating with any country to gain military access is whether or not it is capable of making the transition from the Gap to the Core. It would be another strategic mistake for the Pentagon to deal with any failed state, such as Somalia, where a negotiated agreement can be easily be broken or not lived up to, resulting in squandered US resources. Furthermore, the Pentagon should negotiate with those Gap countries closest to making the transition to the Core because as the Gap grows smaller, the extremists who resist globalization will have progressively less room to maneuver until there is no longer room to resist.

Finally, the Pentagon could be making another strategic mistake if the military base agreements negotiated with foreign countries had any time limits attached to them. Time limits only complicate matters, such as causing elected officials to become “lame ducks” before the end of their last term with everyone knowing that they cannot be reelected. In the case of foreign basing agreements, the Pentagon would be subjecting itself to the whims of whichever faction was in power in the foreign country when it was time to negotiate an extension. With enduring base agreements, the only thing the Pentagon would need to worry about is renegotiating the status of forces agreements due to host nation domestic discontent, such as the United States has experienced recently in Japan and South Korea. In this case, long-term thinking would preclude claims that military bases in the Middle East and Central Asia are not permanent. Such an approach would help avoid the mistake made by President Clinton when he stated that the American military forces in the Balkans would be home within a year. Shortly after that became untenable, Clinton stated the forces would be home within five years. It has been almost a decade, and American forces are still in the Balkans, with no end in sight for their peacekeeping mission. As Barnett concluded, there is no exiting once committed. The United States should plan on staying engaged using all instruments of national power until the Gap has been eliminated.

Notes

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8. Richard Kugler, *Changes Ahead* (Santa Monica: RAND Corp., 1998), pp. xiii-xx
9. Richard L. Kugler and Ellen L. Frost, eds., *The Global Century: Globalization and National Security*, (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2001), pp. 357-87.
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Petty Officer 1st Class John Delong and another parachutist doing free fall training above Naval Station Rota, Spain. Credit: Defense.gov. A big reason why many people sign up to serve Uncle Sam is for the opportunity to see the world. Travel gets expensive fast, so being paid to experience a new country and culture is a pretty sweet gig. With that said, not all duty stations are created equal, and one person's paradise may be another's hell. Everyone will have different work environments and life experiences. For those of you preparing for an OCONUS PCS, check out our 12 tips for a painless P