

LYNCHPIN OR LIABILITY: THE EFFECTS OF FOREIGN BASE POSSESSION ON
AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

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ABSTRACT

Lynchpin or Liability: The Effects of Foreign Base Possession on American Foreign Policy

The United States military prides itself on having global reach - the ability to conduct operations anywhere in the world at any time. However, the long arm of the U.S. military is often criticized as being overbearing and too frequently meddling in issues abroad. Resentment of the utilization of this power leads to delicate diplomatic situations and shifts in foreign policy relationships with international allies and enemies alike. One tool the U.S. military employs to extend their reach is the possession of permanently established bases in other countries, whether being official or unofficial ally states. The United States currently operates around 800 bases abroad in over 150 different territories and countries. Examples include Caserma Ederle in Italy, US Army Garrison Baumholder in Germany, Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, Busan Naval Base in South Korea, and Yokota and Kadena Air Bases in Japan.

These bases tie the U.S. to the countries they are located in and extend both U.S. power and the host country's defensive capabilities. In many situations, they affect the local population's perception of the United States and can be used as leverage by local or national governments. The presence of these U.S. bases are highly unusual in an international sense - for example, one of the greatest American adversaries, China, has only one foreign military base. Russia, France, and Great Britain (other 'great powers') have less than 60 combined. The bases are a source of risk; U.S. servicemembers are expected to behave when stationed at or visiting the installations, and missteps can prove disastrous - take, for example, the 1995 rape of a young local girl by servicemembers in Okinawa, Japan. Though much research has been done on the

economics of maintaining U.S. military bases abroad, as well as effects on the local population, not much literature exists on how the presence of a more permanent military installation in an ally country affects foreign policy relations. In order to explore this topic further, I ask: how does the presence of U.S. military bases in foreign countries affect political relations?

To answer this question, I have analyzed the impact of U.S. military bases in Japan, Italy, and South Korea as case studies. In using countries on different continents and with different economies and military policies, it has been easier to notice foreign policy effects that are specific, instead of part of a general trend. In addition to contributing to the understanding of foreign military base-related phenomena, this study may provide policy recommendations for the U.S. and host country government.

Literature Review and Analytical Framework

There have been countless factors that have shaped the complex political relationships of modern countries. Though these have shifted over hundreds of years, they typically include geographical location, religion, colonies/territorial possessions, individual or national desire for power, cultural values, government type, regime, trade and war (Calderwood, 1961). The last of these factors, war, is also a political tool used when one state is displeased with another state's handling of a different factor, such as trade. War describes a time of conflict, but its trappings can be seen long before and after the conflict. One example is military bases, both in their home country and abroad. When in their home country, military bases are generally not seen as a threat by foreign countries unless they engage in unusual activity, like forbidden nuclear proliferation, increases in the number of military installations or their size, or new/unauthorized exercises.

However, military bases located abroad occupy delicate spaces both politically and geographically (Calder 2007). These bases are akin to pieces of foreign soil embedded in their host countries and engaged in the most sensitive of political activities - military operations. A large foreign military presence can bring a state many benefits, but it can also stir up fear, uncertainty, and scandal. Bases represent alliances between countries and sometimes also against other countries, and the presence of military bases belonging to a third state may provoke or worry a neighboring state. Foreign military bases may also represent military drills and/or military sales between countries, whether for self-defense purposes or with the aim of going to war. Foreign military bases are embassies of a dangerous kind; they can be seen as political powder kegs. How do the risks associated with foreign military bases affect U.S. foreign policy - in particular with regards to security and trade?

To answer this, we must first analyze the U.S. foreign military base network and its history. The current state of United States military bases abroad is quite unusual historically, especially for a country which has never formally been or considered itself an empire. Because of this fact, much has been written about America's foreign bases, their formation and maintenance as well as public opinion in host countries and a multitude of base-related scandals. The effects of the existence of these bases on American foreign policy are undeniable but often vary widely from base to base, and many previous researchers have chosen to focus on only one region, country, or base (Kawato, 2015; Han and Bae, 2010; Oh and Arrington, 2007; Schober, 2016). Another U.S. foreign military base researcher compared two case studies, but they were in South America and Europe, not Asia and Europe, where the majority of the United States foreign bases are located (Yeo, 2010). Most of the research done previously has been on the economics of foreign bases with regards to the United States and specific anti-base movements and protests that have occurred in countries such as Italy, Japan, and South Korea (Enloe, 2014; Kawato, 2015; Yeo, 2010; Han and Bae, 2010; Calder, 2007; Calder, 2008; Oh and Arrington, 2007; Schober, 2016). This cited research frequently details anti-base movements, protests, and the interactions of protestors with local governments, but falls short of looking at the effects of these on United States foreign policy besides whether the base is allowed to continue to exist and operate in the host country or not.

There is not much research available on American foreign policy trends with regard to the presence of a foreign base irrespective of the host country, which is what my research concerning United States military bases - in 3 different countries and spread across 2 different continents - was intended to investigate. Available research following base policy norms focuses on democratization and larger-scale political trends in the host countries and their effects on anti-

base movements (Yeo, 2010). I proposed a different approach which focuses on the effects of bases not on the host country, but on the political goals of the base owner - the U.S. The available research on U.S. foreign military bases utilizes mainly public opinion surveys and protest data to draw conclusions and are generally focused on how the United States should comport itself within and without foreign military bases in order to appease the local populace, avoid scandal, and thus curry favor with the national government (Enloe, 2014; Kawato, 2010; Han and Bae, 2015; Oh and Arrington, 2007). My research helps fill two voids in the existing body of work: one of focus on national and international policy instead of local base behavior and policy, and another of synthesizing multiple base case studies across continents to draw conclusions about the foreign policy management and effects of America's military bases abroad writ large.

Research Design

I chose to conduct case studies for my research because they allow me to look in-depth at changes at U.S. foreign military bases and how they affect foreign policy and vice versa. Studying how incidents like the Okinawa rape scandal affect large-scale policy decisions by some of the world's richest and most powerful countries can provide useful guidance on how the United States can effectively use the privilege of having hundreds of military installations around the world. To do so, I will focus my research on the years after WWII up until the present. In addition, I interviewed multiple American service members that were stationed at U.S. military installations in the countries which I chose as case studies. I will discuss the interviews and the questions I used after explaining my case selection process.

Case Selection

Much of the existing research about foreign U.S. military bases includes Japan, South Korea, and/or Italy as examples. Calder's reasoning for studying bases in Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Italy is compelling. He notes that these countries "have diverse political heritages and cultures. Their peoples in several cases conducted bitter struggles in wartime against U.S. forces... Yet none of these nations has ever expelled the American military from its shores. Indeed, these four countries [Japan, South Korea, Italy, and Germany] continue to have the most substantial and enduring U.S. military presence anywhere in the world outside the Middle East," (Calder 2007). Japan, South Korea, and Italy also each contain multiple U.S. military installations from all 3 branches of service, and have had differing numbers of scandals throughout their existence.

Japan

I chose to study Japan because of the controversial U.S. base situation there. Japan as a country opened up to international trade through the U.S. military, became an enemy in WWII, and now is a close American ally with a defensive military and hosts 10 different major U.S. military installations. Japan also has U.S. military installations in the province of Okinawa, which is known for having a different culture from the mainland Japanese and a complex political relationship with the national government. There have been several high-publicity scandals relating to the U.S. bases in Japan, as well as massive anti-base protests by local populations. As of 2016, US Forces Japan (USFJ) comprises over 38,000 military personnel (Bialik 2017), and runs operations on 77,000 acres of Japanese land. USFJ was initially established at Fuchu Air Station on July 1, 1957, and was authorized to maintain a presence in

Japan by the U.S.-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security of 1960 (usfj.mil).

According to the USFJ website, their vision is that

“USFJ enables USINDOPACOM's efforts to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific. U.S. force posture in Japan provides a ready and lethal capability that deters adversary aggression, protects the Homeland, aids in Japan's defense, and enhances regional peace and security. The U.S. – Japan Alliance serves as a beacon to those who value transparency in government, transparency in economic dealings, access to markets, access to domains, as well as respect for and protection of sovereignty.”

South Korea

South Korea as a case study lies somewhere between Japan and Italy, as it is located in Asia (and therefore has a culture less similar to the U.S. than that of Italy), but its U.S. military bases have had only a few scandals. Polls indicate that the majority of South Koreans support the U.S. presence, despite residual anger over American backing of the authoritarian Korean government that was in power until 1987 (Gamel 2018). However, there is still significant anti-base sentiment in South Korea over incidents such as the U.S. requesting more money from the Korean government and furloughing large amounts of Korean workers, as well as service members committing crimes. Nonetheless, South Korea has always been a strong U.S. ally, and today hosts 6 major American military installations (Military OneSource), where, as of 2016, 24,000 U.S. military service members work (Bialik 2017). US Forces Korea (USFK) has a fascinating joint command structure, known as Combined Forces Command (CFC). A four-star U.S. general commands CFC with a Republic of Korea four-star general as his deputy

commander. According to USFK, “Throughout the command structure, binational manning is readily apparent: if the chief of a staff section is Korean, the deputy is American and vice versa” (usfk.mil). Their vision statement is as follows:

“United States Forces Korea is the premier Joint force – Well led, disciplined, trained and ready to Fight Tonight and win. USFK Team Members earn the trust of the citizens of the Republic of Korea and the United States with their words and actions.”

Italy

I chose to study Italy because I felt that it would be noteworthy to examine a case outside of the Asian continent so that my research would prove relevant for and applicable to all U.S. military bases abroad, and not just those located in Asia. Italy is also different from South Korea and Japan in that there have been no major scandals involving its American military bases, and thus no major anti-base protests. Lastly, while USFK and USFJ are integrated into one command structure, there is no ‘US Forces Italy’, and the bases located in Italy fall under commands such as US Air Forces Europe and Air Forces Africa, or European Command, and are more distinctly separated by military branch. Thus, there is no ‘USFI’ vision statement. As of 2016, Italy hosted approximately 12,000 U.S. service members (Bialik 2017) on 7 different major military installations (Military OneSource), making up 15% of U.S. forces stationed in Europe.

Interviews

Interviewing American service members for this research was important to me because they are the U.S. 's eyes and ears on the ground, in-country, directing operations on these

military bases, interacting with locals, and responding to crises. Policymakers in the U.S. often have to make decisions about foreign military bases without having visited them, and hearing from a variety of patriotic Americans that live and work on those installations may be the next best thing. Through my Air Force connections, I was able to interview and survey the following service members. They are listed in the order that I interviewed them. Service members who took surveys instead of being interviewed are marked with an asterisk. I have indicated the one interviewee who served in the U.S. Army, and the two interviewees who have retired from the Air Force.

| Name and Current Rank | Base and Country | Dates Stationed There |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Lt Col Stephan DeHaas | Yakoda Air Base, Japan | 2003-2005 |
| Lt Col Matt Manning | Yadoka Air Base, Japan | 2003-2005 |
| Lt Col John Benson (Ret.) | Aviano Air Base, Italy | 2000-2001 |
| Major Jay Kim | Osan Air Base, Korea | 2007-08 |
| Major Edward Carr | Korea (w/Army) | Unknown |
| Mr. Thomas DeAngelis (Ret.) | Aviano Air Base, Italy | 2003-06 |

These are the questions that I asked, listed in order:

- What base were you stationed at in (Japan, Korea, Italy), when, and for how long?
- When you arrived at the base, and throughout your stay, would you say you felt welcomed by the local population? Can you recall a specific example of a time you felt particularly welcome or unwelcome?
- Were locals ever hostile towards you? If so, can you describe what that experience was like?

- Were there any significant, large-scale protests while you were stationed abroad? If so, why? How did the protests affect daily life and/or your work on the base?
- Can you recall hearing about any incidences of crimes committed by service members while stationed at your base? If so, what were they, and what was the base community's reaction?
- Did you hear of any major base policy changes while you were stationed abroad that related to crimes, protests, base funding, the number of troops allowed, or relations with the host country? If so, what were they?
- Overall, did you feel as if the majority of the locals had a positive view of the base and America, or a negative view? Why?
- What were your interactions (if any) with host country forces like?
- Do you believe that the base you were stationed at is more strategically/politically beneficial for the host country or for the U.S.? Why?
- Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience abroad?

Findings

My research findings are intended to help mitigate the policy risks that the U.S. undertakes when it chooses to create and/or maintain possession of a foreign military base. These findings are something that U.S. military personnel and policymakers can look at to aid them in determining whether a base is worth keeping, and how exactly it may be affecting overall U.S. goals - whether or not the base in question is located in one of the countries in my case study. As I conceived of studying three varying countries with U.S. military bases, my research can be applied to all U.S. military bases abroad, and fleshed out by other researchers concerned with

specific bases outside of my case states. I hope that my research shows that foreign military bases are much more than they appear on the surface, and that diplomats and politicians should concern themselves with these bases alongside military leaders. Foreign military bases can make or break diplomatic relations, which could cost the U.S. a degree of security, millions or even billions of dollars in trade deals, and potentially valuable alliances. I present my findings by detailing positive effects of U.S. overseas base possession on foreign policy and negative effects on the same. Though the number of positive and negative effects differ, I do not wish to imply that America's military bases overseas are, overall, more positive than negative when considering them through the lens of foreign policy; not all effects they produce affect American foreign policy to the same degree. I conclude with a few other lessons I have learned about American military bases abroad, as well as two policy recommendations.

Positive Effects

Deterrence

Deterrence is the security strategy of having sufficient weapons, personnel, installations, etc. in a military's possession, or certain place, to keep adversaries from attacking. This is one of the most lauded effects of military base possession abroad, and directly contrasts with the negative effect of provocation, which I will cover later. Japan, South Korea, and Italy are all located near global 'hot spots' for the U.S., or sites of past, present, and potentially forthcoming international conflict. Bases in Japan intend to deter North Korea and China, and bases in Italy intend to deter Russia and various state and non-state actors in North Africa. Both service members I spoke with who had been stationed in South Korea referenced American military bases there as being strategically important for deterring North Korea and China. The U.S.

curries favor with host nations through deterring attacks on their homeland - and so far, strategic deterrence has appeared to work. Deterrence, often referred to in discussions on nuclear proliferation, is meant to keep the world as a whole more peaceful and safer, and thus helps U.S. foreign policy to focus on diplomacy and conflict prevention, rather than keeping U.S. and host country militaries and governments on a war footing. Deterrence, in theory, should continue to work into the future, as it shows that the U.S. military (the strongest, best equipped and most advanced in the world) is a “deep engager” in the countries in which it maintains a military presence (Kawato 2015). Additionally, “The U.S. military presence strengthens deterrence against external aggression by signaling U.S. resolve to fight alongside its allies” (Kawato 2015). This exemplifies a second positive effect of overseas bases, reassurance/legitimacy.

Reassurance/Legitimacy

The U.S. military’s presence in its allies’ countries is a physical manifestation of its commitment to come to their aid immediately in the event of an attack. Keeping troops abroad affects U.S. foreign policy by nearly inextricably linking the country with its allies, and proving that the U.S. government can be relied on. This trust that stems from overseas bases likely translates into trade agreements, multilateral treaties, votes in international organizations, etc. When countries depend on one another for international security and invest millions of dollars into joint exercises and installations, it is difficult to have true, unresolvable conflict about any issue. In addition, since the U.S. is held in high regard by most countries around the world, the permanent/semi-permanent presence of its armed forces acting peacefully in a state grants that state leadership international legitimacy and credibility (Calder 2007). Lt Col DeHaas told me

that American bases in Japan strengthen U.S. foreign policy with the nation on account of this reassurance and deterrence.

Nonproliferation in Allies

The U.S. does store nuclear weapons and station nuclear submarines at some of its overseas bases. Protests have been held in Okinawa over this issue, but many argue that the American nuclear presence abroad keeps our host country allies from pursuing nuclear proliferation themselves (Kawato 2015). Indeed, Time states that a “core argument is that the U.S.’s forward presence prevents arms races, particularly nuclear proliferation, by reassuring allies”. Global nonproliferation has long been a U.S. foreign policy goal, though the U.S. itself keeps a large and sophisticated nuclear arsenal as a deterrent to nuclear adversaries like North Korea and Iran, and even nuclear allies. However, the ‘nonproliferation in allies’ positive effect of overseas bases is tempered by the ‘proliferation in adversaries’ negative effect.

Military Cooperation

Another positive effect of the U.S. possession of over 800 foreign military bases is that these installations require and enhance cooperation with host country militaries and with other U.S. allies. Many overseas bases host annual, large-scale joint or multilateral military exercises, often designed to deter and/or prepare for attacks from a specific country. Kawato writes that “the U.S. and host states’ forces are able to improve interoperability” due to these exercises (Kawato 2015). Military cooperation strengthens U.S. and host country military capabilities and allows each military to synthesize strategies, tactics, technology, etc, thus ensuring that they are fully prepared to fight together. This level of interoperability is a deterrent in and of itself and

also forces individuals from each country to work together, encouraging ‘Track II’ or informal forms of diplomacy. Foreign policy is civilian cooperation at the highest level, and it is easier for diplomats and officials to cooperate when they have their militaries as a positive example of working together.

Cultural Exchange

Most U.S. service members I interviewed spoke with me about valuable cultural exchanges and experiences they had while stationed abroad. Lt Col DeHaas was a self-proclaimed ‘Idaho farm boy’ when the Air Force stationed him in Japan, and after 20 years of service, he still names it as one of his favorite assignments. Major Kim told me that many military members haven’t been exposed to other cultures, but when he saw them arrive in Korea, their eyes were opened; they returned home with new, less America-centric perspectives and fond memories of South Korean friends. According to Lt Col Manning, Yakoda Air Base hosts an annual ‘Friendship Festival’ to celebrate Japanese culture and welcome the local community on the base for a day of fun. This is another example of informal, ‘Track II’ diplomacy, and American military bases abroad spread pro-host country sentiment amongst most military members stationed in places like Japan, South Korea, and Italy. Some service members help shape foreign policy through intelligence briefings, policy recommendations, advisory government roles, fellowships at think tanks, and more. Their experience living abroad affects how they shape foreign policy and speak about those countries informally. Cultural exchange, even through a military lens, helps countries understand each other better, and thus strengthens their foreign policy relations.

'Superpower'/'Great Power' Perception

Lastly, I believe that America's network of overseas military bases is vital to its perception as a global 'superpower' or 'great power'. China - the U.S.'s greatest adversary, according to many security experts - has only one base abroad, in Djibouti. Russia, France, and Great Britain combined have only 60 (Hjelmgaard 2021). The U.S. effectively operates a worldwide network of power projection platforms, meaning that U.S. combatants and military might are, quite literally, almost everywhere. It follows that U.S. Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance are practically everywhere as well, allowing for relative ease when monitoring other countries' political and military activities. America's bases abroad are an incredibly unique advantage, and have all of the aforementioned positive effects on its foreign policy. When used efficiently, U.S. bases abroad ensure foreign policy and international security dominance. When managed inefficiently or ineffectively, the bases can be a point of contention for a bilateral alliance. Nonetheless, whether run normally or incompetently, U.S. bases overseas always have some negative consequences for American foreign policy.

Negative Effects

Cost & Cost/Basing Negotiations

Basing cost and base agreement or Status of Forces negotiations are amongst the most discussed aspects of the U.S. foreign base network. These are what overseas bases hinge on, and often have negative effects on U.S. foreign policy as the American government and host country government bicker over how much each will pay for the deterrence and reassurance that the U.S. military's presence provides. Politicians throw indirect verbal jabs back and forth on the matter - for example, former U.S. President Trump's comment in a speech on the Japanese being

“freeloaders” for not paying enough for the U.S. military to be based there, and not having their own offensive military. The White House asked Japan for “for “cost plus 50”—or the full cost of hosting American servicemen, plus a 50 percent premium” (Seligman and Gramer 2019). The cost of keeping military personnel overseas is also not lost on the American taxpayer, nor is it lost on Congress, where voices on both sides of the aisle demand military budget cuts. A loss of trust in the American military overseas is harmful to U.S. foreign policy as well, because a lack of public support robs military leaders and diplomats of credibility when negotiating or voting on international matters. Though closing bases to save money is a popular argument that continues to be echoed through every presidency, solutions aren’t easy or forthcoming. U.S. military bases abroad are already built, and would be sunk infrastructure costs for the government. Some suggest rotating units abroad instead of keeping them there personally, but “an Army War College study found that the Department of Defense would spend \$135 million more per year to rotate a single brigade to Germany from the United States than simply to forward station the unit there” (Cohen 2021).

Provocation/Proliferation

In interviews and surveys, communities abroad that host the U.S. military frequently express fears that its presence will provoke adversaries into attacking, or encouraging neighboring countries to invest in building up their nuclear arsenal in case of American aggression. Before the Iran Nuclear Deal was struck, Iran “built up its nuclear program in large part as a deterrent to threatening nearby U.S. bases”, and some U.S. allies like Britain and France acquired or maintained nuclear weapons despite having American bases in their countries (Glaser 2016). Experts wonder if bases preventing allies from proliferating is beneficial if it

means that adversaries are more likely to proliferate instead. Host country citizens that are uncomfortable with having American nuclear weapons in their country, like those in Okinawa, are likely even more uncomfortable with nearby hostile countries like China and North Korea having another reason to stockpile nuclear weapons. This affects U.S. foreign policy by being detrimental to the American goals of global democratic peace and nonproliferation.

Host Community Welfare

Members of communities that surround U.S. military bases protest the base presence because of noise from aircraft, drunken service members, accidents that occur near bases, American encroachment on local culture, environmental pollution, and occasional high-profile crimes. Angry host country communities make for a bad U.S. reputation in foreign policy, and leads to communities protesting against new military bases before they're even built. Human rights advocates have formed anti-base organizations for these reasons. In Korea, massive protests "broke out after two South Korean schoolgirls were crushed under a U.S. military vehicle in 2002" (Gamel 2018). 65,000 protestors took to the streets in Okinawa after the sexual assault and murder of a Japanese woman by a former Marine who worked on base, and tens of thousands protested the expansion of a U.S. base in Italy in 2007 as well (Jucca 2007).

Moreover, host communities have suffered under brutal governments when the U.S. has turned a blind eye. For example,

In Uzbekistan, the recently deceased dictator Islam Karimov was famous for massacres and widespread torture, yet nevertheless received U.S. backing in exchange for basing rights. During the Arab Spring in Bahrain, where the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet is stationed, the regime cracked

down on peaceful dissent with gross human rights violations. But Washington kept largely silent (and willing to continue sending money and arms to the regime) because the base is considered so geopolitically important (Glaser 2016).

Letting host communities bear the negative effects of living near a U.S. base can backfire when it comes to foreign policy, as it fosters resentment amongst locals, and can occasionally unite a country in anger, as it did before the mass protests in Japan, South Korea, and Italy. It also reflects poorly on the U.S. in the eyes of the international community at large, and may make other states skeptical about hosting U.S. bases, whether they are considering hosting some for the first time, or allowing more. Treating host communities poorly and/or not taking into consideration their wants and needs fosters Anti-American sentiment. Anti-American sentiment can be directed at the overall U.S. defense presence, individual service members, or both. Lt Col Manning indicated to me that both Japanese and Italian citizens expressed frustration and Anti-American sentiment to him while he was stationed in their countries. However, the citizens differed in that the Japanese were not openly hostile towards military personnel - perhaps because of their culture, which values politeness - while the Italians were much more outspoken and would occasionally treat U.S. service members poorly.

Other Lessons About Overseas Bases

In conducting my research, I discovered two notable points about U.S. foreign military bases that are not directly related to American foreign policy. The first of these is that I realized U.S. bases overseas are one of the largest incentives for American citizens to join the military. All three branches of service advertise international travel as a perk of signing up to serve, and

that appeals greatly to both middle- and low-income young men and women who have not been able to afford to see the world. Though I myself have been fortunate enough to travel abroad with my family, the hope of being sent overseas for “free” is one of the reasons that I decided to participate in Air Force ROTC. Since then, I have been rewarded with a two-month trip to India to study the Urdu language, and I look forward to traveling more with the Air Force in the future. I now know that without U.S. bases abroad, America’s all-volunteer military force may not be able to persuade so many citizens to join.

The second point I wish to make about military bases overseas is that there is a growing discourse on the changing nature of war and the differing types of threats to the American homeland. In 2021, the U.S. has dealt with a global pandemic, domestic extremism, and the effects of climate change. U.S. cyberintelligence fends off attacks by foreign and domestic hackers daily, and more and more military operations are conducted by remotely piloted aircraft, or drones, from bases in the U.S. Inter-state, symmetrical war is becoming less common. Are overseas bases archaic? Are they protecting the U.S. from the most important and pressing threats? These are questions that can only be answered with time. Until then, I will present two policy recommendations for the operation of overseas U.S. bases.

Policy Recommendations

One: A single U.S. military base per host country is enough to provide deterrence & reassurance.

Limiting the U.S. to one military base in each host state (with all 3 services operating from it) would save the U.S. money, reduce its footprint overseas, and still deter adversaries and reassure allies. One large military base in a port city can hold nuclear weapons, naval ships, submarines,

aircraft carriers, infantry, special operations personnel, and planes. It would also prevent host countries from squabbling over which country has the most U.S. defense personnel, or most bases. Status of Forces agreements could be made more equal, and policymakers could argue to taxpayers that the military was keeping the “bare minimum” presence in each country. Temporary installations could be opened and closed on an as-needed basis in times of strife, and naval vessels could serve as homes for additional temporary personnel.

Two: The negative effects U.S. bases have on foreign policy can be mitigated by making some or all joint U.S.-host country installations.

Learning about Misawa Air Base in Japan inspired this policy recommendation. There, Japanese Air Self-Defense Forces are stationed alongside U.S. troops from all branches of service, making it the only joint forces base in the South Pacific. Transitioning some or all overseas bases to joint bases would appease local host community populations and shift more of the economic burden of hosting the bases onto the other country. Joint readiness, cooperation, and cultural exchange - some of the positive effects on U.S. foreign policy - would increase. Anti-American sentiment and problems related to base costs and negotiations would likely decrease.

Conclusion & Plans/Suggestions for Future Research

I hope that my thesis will ultimately serve as a starting point for my own further research on this topic, and perhaps the research of others as well. There is much more to be studied regarding America’s overseas military bases as a whole, and also as groups of bases in a single country, or even individual bases themselves. As a student of diplomacy and international

relations, as well as a member of the military, I want U.S. bases in foreign countries to be effective and efficient for national and international security while fostering goodwill, peace, international friendships, and productive diplomatic relations. They are a tool that is mostly unique to the American armed forces, and have proved to be extremely advantageous in the past. However, domestic and international public opinion continue to be divided on the bases' optimal cost, number, and operation, as well as general existence. In the coming decades, it remains to be seen whether these installations prove to be a lynchpin of American foreign policy, or a liability.

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