

Predominance of U.S. Global Military Presence: Personnel, SOFAs, and the Command Structure*

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I. Introduction

This paper is about U.S. overseas military presence. It lays out some basic data to show the extensiveness of the American military base network around the globe. Today, the United States is undisputedly the most powerful country in the world. America's status as a unipolar power is by no means guaranteed forever, but the level of primacy will not soon fade away, either. To be sure, the U.S. has the largest economy in the world. Its defense budget is larger than that of the rest of the countries in the world combined, and the nation is equipped with world's most advanced weapons system. U.S. power is primarily discussed in terms of material capabilities (Brooks and Wohlforth 2008; Wohlforth 1999). However, in such discussions, the bases and soldiers stationed overseas that allow the U.S. military to project force well beyond its borders are overlooked. Without such assets, the United States would be unable to wield its military and political power.

Comprehensive surveys of America's undisputed power projection capability are rare. Thus, the aim of this paper is to provide a general overview of the extensiveness of the U.S. military presence around the globe by looking at various data from different angles. More specifically, this paper is built around three questions: (1) How many military personnel are stationed abroad? (2) What is the trend regarding the number of Status of Force Agreements (SOFAs) signed by the United States and host nations? and (3) What is the structure of U.S. regional command? Answers to these questions should offer a complete picture of U.S. global presence, because they would not only provide the number of soldiers stationed overseas, which is a popular measure, but also explanations for the numbers, as well as the trend regarding SOFAs, especially after the Cold War. The paper also looks at the global command structure, which virtually covers the entire globe. Taken together, these constitute a comprehensive indicator of the degree of U.S. dominance around the world.

In the study of international relations, balance of power theory is considered one of the most influential theories. In essence, it says that a state creates a balance against powerful states either by forming alliances with other countries or by building up its own defenses (Waltz 1979). This theory relates to ways in which states align to counter external threats, but it may have something

to say about U.S. military presence around the globe. Given the reduction of the threat from the former Soviet states, it would be reasonable to assume that the United States would have engaged in substantial military downsizing both at home and abroad after the Cold War. This should not conflict with the basic logic of the theory. The analysis below suggests that the overall number of U.S. military personnel at home and abroad has indeed gone down, although it is worth noting that the number of overseas personnel has remained stable at around 250,000 between the Persian Gulf War and the Afghan War and Iraq War years.

In contrast, the number of countries in which U.S. forces have been stationed has increased after the end of the Cold War. Moreover, the U.S. global command structure is still alive and well, and in fact, several new command structures have recently been formed. One was the North America Command, created in the aftermath of 9/11 to strengthen defense of the American homeland, and another was the Africa Command, created solely to deal with the African region, for which different commands have shared responsibilities in the past.

These trends show that the United States is continuing to sustain its predominant military presence around the globe. In other words, the United States seems to be trying to maintain its unipolar status as the most powerful nation in the world.

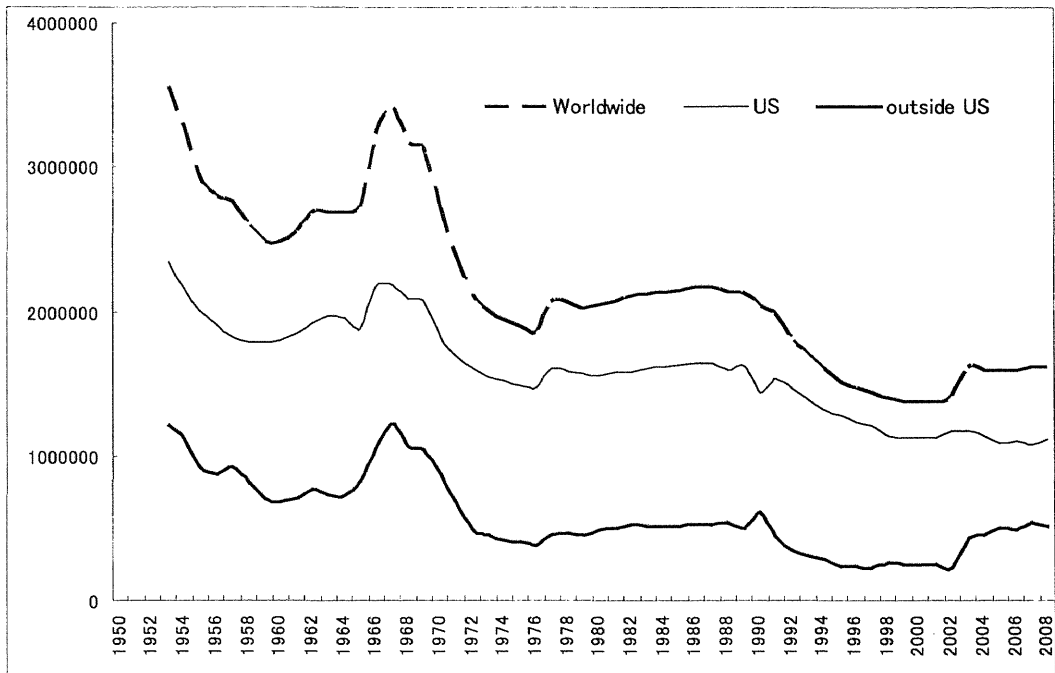
The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. First, I will provide a basic analysis of U.S. global presence by examining statistical data of U.S. military personnel stationed around the world. A brief discussion of international events will be included to give more meaning to the data. Second, I will look at the number of SOFAs to examine the trend, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Third, I will examine the history and structure of U.S. regional military commands. In the conclusion, I will briefly discuss some implications for international relations theory and future research.

II. U.S. Global Presence

The U.S. global military presence is, in a word, overwhelming. No other military can match the extent to which the United States can reach different parts of the globe. Although the number of U.S. forces has declined since the height of the Cold War, the United States still maintains the largest number of forces deployed overseas.

As of March 31, 2009, the total number of U.S. troops was 1,412,529. About 20 percent of all U.S. forces, or 293,701 soldiers, were deployed in foreign countries. This figure does not include the numbers of soldiers fighting in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq, which were 174,200 and 41,300, respectively. Adding these numbers to the peacetime foreign military presence figure and the worldwide total, about 31 percent, or 509,201 soldiers, would be considered stationed outside the continental United States and its territories (U.S. Department of Defense 2009). Just to consider the peacetime presence figure (293,701) alone in perspective, it is larger than that of

FIGURE 1. U.S. Soldiers Stationed Overseas, 1950-2009



Source: U.S. Department of Defense, "Active Duty Military Personnel Strengths by Regional Area and by Country (309A)," 1950-2009. <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/MILITARY/miltop.htm> (Accessed October 2, 2009).

Note: Data for 1951-1952 is not available.

Japan's Self Defense Forces, which is around 250,000 (Japan Ministry of Defense 2009).

Before the 1940s, the number of U.S. soldiers stationed overseas was quite limited, as the United States did not have an extensive base network around the globe. In fact, the United States did not even have a strong military in the 1890s, and the size of its military did not match the size of its economy. The number of Army soldiers was only about 25,000, and the Navy was still very small. Fifty years before WWII (around 1890), the U.S. Army was ranked 14th (after Bulgaria). Moreover, U.S. Navy was smaller than that of Italy, although America's industrial strength was 13 times greater (Kissinger 1994:37). The United States was busy expanding its territory in the North American continent through purchasing land and fighting wars in the name of Manifest Destiny.

The U.S. victory in the Spanish-American War of 1898 marked the beginning of major U.S. overseas expansion.¹ The United States gained a naval base in Guantanamo, Cuba, where the oldest U.S. base overseas is located. Moreover, the United States occupied the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam, which were under Spain's control. The Island of Hawaii was also annexed as a territory of the United States. Despite such overseas expansions, no significant U.S. military network was created until World War II entered full swing.²

The number of U.S. bases dramatically increased during World War II, because more bases were needed near the Axis countries as the United States scored victories and advanced well into the heart of the enemy territories. The fact that more bases were built during wartime comes as no surprise since bases constitute a crucial component when conducting military operations abroad; wartime is when bases are needed the most. The United States had fewer than 100 overseas sites before WWII, but by the time the war was over, there were well over 2,000 base sites spread throughout the globe. And no other country has ever built so many bases in such a short period as the United States (Blaker 1990:21).

After WWII, many American soldiers returned home, and the number of U.S. soldiers stationed overseas dropped significantly. However, some remained abroad to occupy defeated powers such as Germany and Japan. Bases used during the occupation in Japan and Germany, as well as others, were later used to contain the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

The number of U.S. soldiers overseas was to rise again during the Korean War. Bases in Okinawa played a pivotal role in providing logistical support. The Korean War shocked the U.S. administration as well as America's allies in Europe. The Soviet Union's support of the North Korea was suspected, and the aggressive Soviet intentions worried U.S. allies. This fear, in particular, led to the consolidation of Western allies.

Another cause for the increase of U.S. soldiers overseas came with the war in Vietnam. The United States' involvement in the Vietnam War was at its peak when Richard Nixon took office in 1969 (Frontline 2004a). In East Asia and the Pacific region, there were more than 750,000 soldiers, and over 500,000 of them were stationed in South Vietnam. For the next six years, the U.S. troop presence continued to decline in the region. The troop level in this region was at around 140,000, which included routine presence in Japan, South Korea, and Thailand, but the number of U.S. troops in South Vietnam dropped significantly to only about 150. The year 1973 marked the end of the draft and a return to a volunteer system. This contributed to the considerable

1 However, there were some cases in which small islands were incorporated to the United States before the Spanish-American War. The 1867 Midway annexation was a case in point. See Zakaria (1998).

2 The reason why the United States did not remain at its overseas bases after World War I seems to be a puzzle. U.S. strategic thinking—isolationism—may have been the cause. See Legro (2005).

loss of active-duty military personnel—over 1 million, or about a third of all service members. Moreover, the United States was less willing to deploy a large presence, especially after the Vietnam experience. However, in the Middle East, the number of U.S. soldiers increased by about 50 percent between 1969 and 1974, from 938 to 1,460 troops.

The United States officially withdrew from Vietnam when Saigon fell on April 30, 1975 (Frontline 2004b). During the Ford administration, the U.S. military did not engage in military interventions. Moreover, while the United States had an extensive military presence in Thailand since the 1950s, the U.S. forces withdrew most of its 15,000 troops from that nation in 1976.

In the late 1970s, the Middle East was the main focal point of America's foreign policy (Frontline 2004c). Many important events took place in this region during the Carter administration. In fact, in 1979, President Carter himself negotiated a peace treaty between the two rivals, Israel and Egypt, which helped them to resolve their border disputes. In the same year, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. The U.S. relationship with Iran deteriorated rapidly during the Iranian Revolution, and the U.S. Embassy was seized by Iranian students, who took hostages for 444 days. Because of the dramatic change in relations between the two countries, the United States withdrew its troops from Iran, where about 600 to 1,000 U.S. troops had been present every year. To make up for the withdrawal, the United States increased the number of troops afloat from 1,000 a few years before to more than 18,000. In Asia, China and the United States normalized relations on January 1, 1979. This became possible due to the secretive and bold diplomacy of Henry Kissinger, the National Security Advisor under Nixon. Ten troops were stationed there for the first time since 1947. Part of the deal between China and the United States involved the permanent withdrawal of U.S. troops from Taiwan. As a result, about 700 U.S. troops withdrew from Taiwan.

During the Reagan administration, the United States recorded the largest military build-up in peace time (Frontline 2004d). The number of troops had continued to rise until 1987. The United States had been refraining from military intervention after the Vietnam War, but for the first time since the fall of Saigon, the U.S. sent forces to invade Soviet-leaning Grenada in 1983. This and other issues worsened the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, and consequently, U.S. forces in Germany had been increased to about 250,000 per year, which was more than were present during the Carter administration.

As the United States restored formal relations with Iraq in 1984, eight U.S. troops were stationed in Iraq for the first time since 1967, when Iraq had broken off ties with the United States during the Arab-Israeli War (Frontline 2004e). In Southeast Asia, the U.S. increased its troop presence in the Philippines every year during the Reagan administration. The central aim was to counter the Soviet navy base that was located close by. The United States was worried about a possible coup that might oust an unpopular President Ferdinand Marcos, who was

backed by the U.S. Marcos was voted out of office, and by the time he was sent into exile in 1986, more than 16,000 U.S. troops were stationed in the Philippines. In North Africa, in 1986, the United States conducted air strikes against Libya, a country suspected of sponsoring terrorism. In response, in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, troop levels peaked at 20,000 in 1987. During the second Reagan administration, U.S. troops deployed worldwide had continued to grow and in 1987, the number reached 2,174,217, a post-Vietnam high.

Not long after George Bush took office, 20,000 U.S. troops were sent to Panama to capture President Manuel Noriega, who was wanted in connection with narcotics charges (Frontline 2004f). After that, the Bush administration faced dramatic changes in the international environment with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. These events contributed to the significant decline of the number of U.S. forces abroad. In Europe, at the end of Reagan's second term, the number was about 350,000, but by the end of the Bush administration, it had declined to 200,000—a 40 percent decrease. East Asia and the Pacific region also showed similar trends. The number fell by 30 percent from about 135,000 (1988) to 95,000 (1992). However, this was partially due to the temporary concentration of forces in the Middle East to fight the 1991 Gulf War. Of the approximately 70,000 U.S. troops in the Middle East, about 30,000 were in Saudi Arabia and 40,000 were afloat. By the autumn of 1992, the troop levels in the Middle East returned to just above their 1989 numbers. President Bush, just before leaving office, sent 25,000 U.S. soldiers to Somalia for famine relief.

In the next administration, President William J. Clinton continued to deal with the problem in Somalia (Frontline 2004g). He reduced the troop level to 5,000, and ordered a complete withdrawal after 18 U.S. Rangers were killed in that nation. However, Clinton decided to send 25,000 U.S. troops to yet another country, Haiti, where social order had been deteriorating since 1991, when President Aristide had been removed from office in a coup. The U.S., however, sent only a handful troops to Rwanda in 1994, where more than 800,000 were killed in 100 days.³ From September 1995 to September 1996, approximately 19,000 U.S. forces were sent to the three former Yugoslavian countries and participated in the attack on Bosnian Serbs, led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Although the United States was engaged in three different theaters, Clinton went ahead with the military downsizing plan. As a result, during the first Clinton administration, the number of troops had been reduced to 1,470,000 in 1996. This was a reduction of about 30 percent from 2,140,000 in 1988 during the Reagan administration.

Clinton continued to decrease America's worldwide military presence in countries in which it enjoyed a stable presence (Frontline 2004h). U.S. troops in the nation's closest ally, the U.K.,

3 For a detailed account of non-U.S. involvement, see Power (2002).

fell from 20,000 (1992) to 11,000 (2000). During the same period, in Panama, the number was reduced from 10,000 to a mere 20. In a NATO-led war in Kosovo, the United States participated in operations to put a halt on the ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians by Serb nationalists. When the conflict was at its peak in 1999, about 13,500 U.S. forces were deployed in Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Serbia.

Additional troops were deployed in the Middle East, where Iraq had failed to cooperate with the U.N. team inspecting Iraq's weapons. The number had gone up from 12,400 in 1997 to 29,800 in 1999 throughout North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia (the region in which Iraq is included). By deploying aircraft carriers to the region, the United States threatened to attack Iraq. Within the region, about 5,500 U.S. troops were in Saudi Arabia, 4,000 in Kuwait, and 16,100 afloat. Although no ground troops were deployed, the United States launched a cruise missile attack on Afghanistan as well as Sudan in response to the bombing of U.S. embassies carried out by Osama bin Laden.

A notable change occurred after September 11, 2001, when a terrorist group attacked the World Trade Center in New York and the Department of Defense in Washington, D.C. In response to these attacks, the United States started a bombing campaign on October 7, 2001, in Afghanistan to bring down the Taliban regime that harbored the al Qaida terrorist group (Frontline 2004i). The United States quickly turned its eyes toward Iraq, searching for links with al Qaida. Although there was no clear evidence of such links, the U.S. invaded Iraq on March 19, 2003, with approximately 200,000 soldiers, and achieved a quick military victory in three weeks. The U.S. maintained over 200,000 troops in Iraq to continue the occupation. Due to the need to reinforce the U.S. presence in the Middle East, the number of U.S. soldiers in the Western Hemisphere had decreased from about 14,000 troops in 2001 to only 2,000 in 2004. In the second Bush administration, the president ordered a so-called surge to increase the number of troops in Iraq. During the Obama administration, more troops were redirected to Afghanistan as the new administration shifted the focus of war from Iraq to Afghanistan.

In sum, the number of U.S. forces abroad has fluctuated, and it has been most significantly affected by wars. The Korean and Vietnam Wars were cases in point. After the Cold War, the overall troop level declined, following which it remained stable until 9/11. After 9/11, due to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the number of overseas troops increased, while in other regions, especially in Europe and Latin America, the number went down. During peacetime, the policies of different administrations have influenced the trend. For example, Reagan was eager to beef up defense, and this was reflected in the troop level both at home and abroad. Overall, despite a general trend of reduced troop presence overseas, the United States seems not to be ready to bring its forces home. The changing pattern of presence discussed below indicates that this may indeed be the case.

III. Status of Forces Agreements

A Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) is an agreement concluded between a sending nation and a host country. It stipulates various rights and responsibilities between, for example, the United States (the sending nation) and Japan (the host government). SOFAs are negotiated individually with each host country. In principle, there are no substantial differences among them. Specific situations in host countries, however, make for some differences in certain issue areas.

TABLE 1 List of Countries Signing SOFAs by Year (1945-1999)

1945	Turkey*	1974	
1946		1975	
1947		1976	
1948		1977	Antigua and Barbuda
1949		1978	
1950		1979	Panama, St Lucia**, Turks and Caicos Island
1951	Iceland, Spain	1980	Oman, Somalia
1952	United Kingdom***	1981	Egypt, Sudan
1953	Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France*, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Saudi Arabia	1982	Honduras, Morocco
1954		1983	Bahamas
1955		1984	
1956		1985	
1957	Ascension Island	1986	Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands
1958		1987	St. Kitts & Nevis
1959	New Zealand	1988	Dominican Republic
1960		1989	
1961		1990	Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Western Samoa
1962		1991	Bermuda, Kuwait, Solomon Islands
1963	Jamaica**, Trinidad and Tobago**	1992	Qatar, Tonga
1964	Australia, Germany, Greece	1993	Grenada
1965		1994	Brunei, Ethiopia, Israel, Palau, United Arab Emirates
1966		1995	Bosnia-Herzegovina (for IFOR/SFOR), Croatia (for IFOR/SFOR), Haiti, Sri Lanka
1967	Diego Garcia, Korea	1996	Albania, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Czech Republic, Estonia, FYROM (Macedonia), Hungary, Jordan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mongolia, Romania,
1968			
1969			
1970			
1971	Bahrain		
1972			
1973			

	Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Uzbekistan (provisionally)	Agreement apply, and were continued in application by former United Kingdom territories when they gained their independence.
1997	Former Republic of Yugoslavia, Finland, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Mali, Moldova, Poland, Uganda, Ukraine (provisionally)	***The 1952 Visiting Force Act is a unilateral British statute enacted to supplement the NATO SOFA of 1951 within the United Kingdom. Britain elected this approach, rather than concluding a supplementary agreement with the United States as a sending state. Unfortunately, the Visiting Forces Act does not fully agree with the NATO SOFA, particularly regarding claims, and this has led to disputes from time to time.
1998	Australia, Bangladesh, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Philippines	
1999	South Africa	
<p>Note:</p> <p>*Both France and Turkey have resisted the application of the NATO SOFA to activities in their territory that are not in support of NATO purposes.</p> <p>**SOFA provisions of 1941 United States-United Kingdom Lend Lease</p>		

Source: This table was created based on the information retrieved from Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)). 1999. "Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs)," http://policy.defense.gov/sections/policy_offices/isa/inra/da/list_of_sofas.html (accessed January 2, 2010).

Note: Information for the years after 1999 has not been updated.

SOFAs normally deal with matters essential for everyday life, "such as entry and exit of forces, entry and exit of personal belongings (i.e. automobiles), labor, claims and contractors, and susceptibility to income and sales taxes" as well as issues surrounding facilities related to postal offices, recreation, and banking, when the U.S. presence will be long-term. Issues also include "the wearing of the uniform, the carrying of arms, and resolving damage claims (GlobalSecurity.org n.d.)." A more significant issue involving SOFAs relates to civil and criminal jurisdiction. One of the central issues is protection against unfair trial and imprisonment of U.S. soldiers stationed abroad. For host countries, this is an area of contention. Some host countries find it unfair when they learn that other host countries have more legal power in handling U.S. personnel involved in crimes.

SOFAs alone do not permit the stationing of U.S. forces on the soil of other countries. Normally, SOFAs constitutes a central part of the overall military bases agreement that permits U.S. forces to stay in the host country.

Generally, SOFAs are bilateral, with the only exception being the case of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which concluded a multilateral SOFA among its members.

SOFAs have exhibited interesting developments since the end of the Cold War. The number of

SOFAs increased dramatically while the threat of the Soviet Union declined. Of 92 SOFAs, 40 were signed during the Cold War, while 52 were signed thereafter. Considering the fact that 40 SOFAs were signed within 54 years (1945-89), 52 within ten years (1989-1999) is an extremely a high number. This means, on average, about 0.7 agreements were signed every year during the Cold War, while 5.2 were signed per year in the post-Cold War era—more than a 7-fold increase.

As can be recognized from Table 1, more countries signed SOFA agreements in 1953 than in any previous year. Most of them were NATO members including Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, and Portugal. In addition to these countries, Japan and Saudi Arabia signed SOFAs in 1953. The largest such figure in the post-Cold War era was for 1996, when 16 countries signed SOFAs. This was a result of preparation for NATO expansion eastward, as candidate countries participated in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. The Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland were to formally join NATO two years later.

Why do we find an increase in the number of SOFAs after the Cold War? First, the end of the Cold War brought anxieties to some of the Asian countries. Although the threat is still potential, some Asian countries watch China carefully. They worry that the United States might retreat from the region and create a power vacuum. Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Brunei, Australia, and the Philippines signed SOFAs with the United States after the Cold War, but the most interesting case is that of the Philippines. The Philippines ended its offer to allow U.S. forces to stay in 1991. However, due to aggressive behavior of China over the disputed Spratly Islands, a resource-rich area where several countries have made claims, the Philippines began to regret the decision they had made about the U.S. withdrawal. In 1998, the Philippines and the United States signed an agreement regarding treatment of United States armed forces visiting the Philippines. The Visiting Forces Agreement, or VFA, is a miniature version of a SOFA. Consequently, occasional visits of U.S. forces made the Philippines feel secure. The Filipino nationalism that drove American forces off their soil was unable to ignore the international environment.

Examining the situation of Europe, it can be noted that former Soviet countries continued to worry about Russia; therefore, they wanted some guarantee against potential risks by moving closer to NATO and the United States. Former Soviet countries have shown interest in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) Status of Forces Agreement, and the United States' ability to station troops has expanded.

There are some cases in which SOFAs have been concluded secretly, away from public scrutiny. The existing information, however, adequately shows the number of countries that signed SOFAs with the United States has increased. This tells us that the form of U.S. predominance in global presence has changed since the end of the Cold War. The overall overseas troop level has declined, but the number of countries in which the U.S. stations its forces has increased. This continues to give the United States the most access to different parts of the world

and allows it to achieve predominance in terms of global military presence.

In addition to SOFAs and the cooperation of host countries, the United States has a command structure that helps maintain its global military presence. The next section looks at such command structure, which virtually spans the entire globe.

IV. U.S. Regional Commands

The military's primary mission is to defend its own homeland. The areas of responsibility for the U.S. military, however, are not limited to its own territory. Of course, the United States is not responsible for solving every military conflict in the world, but it has a global command structure that comes close to encompassing the globe. No other country has such an extensive command structure.

Some have been merged over time and some have been newly created, but as of January 2010, there were six regional commands: the Northern Command, the Pacific Command, the European Command, the Southern Command, the Central Command, and the African Command. The Pacific Command is the oldest, and the African Command is the most recent addition. Along with these regional unified combatant commands, there are four functional commands: the Joint Forces Command, the Special Operations Command, the Strategic Command, and the Transportation Command. These commands deal with specific functional aspects of the military. Although those commands are important, the focus here is on regional commands, as they pertain to the geographical areas that the United States covers worldwide. For each command structure, I will examine a brief history, areas of responsibility, and some characteristics.

1. The United States Pacific Command

The United States Pacific Command (USPACOM) is the oldest unified command. It was established on January 1, 1947. Currently, "it encompasses about half the earth's surface, stretching from the west coast of the U.S. to the western border of India, and from Antarctica to the North Pole (United States Pacific Command n.d.)," USPACOM covers the largest area of all of the regional combatant commands.

Its area of responsibility (AOR) includes 36 countries: China, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam, Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu (United States Pacific Command 2009). As one can easily imagine, the AOR of USPACOM is quite diverse in many respects. It constitutes more than half of the world population, and three thousand different languages are spoken in this area. Some major military powers as well as major economies are within this AOR. Important

American allies (Japan, South Korea, and Australia) are included within USPACOM's AOR. At the same time, it includes North Korea (an unfriendly nation), China (a potential rival and the world's most populous country), Indonesia (the largest Muslim nation), and India (the largest democracy) (United States Pacific Command n.d.).

Because of the vast area it covers, approximately one-fifth of the overall U.S. military strength serve in this area. The number includes not only those that are stationed in particular countries, but also those on board vessels (or "afloat"). As such, the Navy and the Marines account for the largest percentage of the military presence in USPACOM (United States Pacific Command n.d.).

One of the basic assumptions held by USPACOM regarding its presence in the region is that it will retain "at least the current level of force presence and posture (United States Pacific Command 2009:6)." This suggests that it does not intend to leave the region any time soon, and considers maintaining such force presence and posture to be essential in creating stability. Also, in order to achieve its strategic objectives (e.g., protecting the homeland through maintaining a strong military capabilities and strengthening security arrangements with allies and partners, among others), USPACOM values "[b]i-lateral and multilateral alliance agreements, including mutual defense treaties governing access to and interoperability with AOR nations (United States Pacific Command 2009:9)." Alliance agreements that allow U.S. access are crucial for the achievement of U.S. national interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

2. The United States Africa Command

The United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) is the newest of all the regional commands. President George W. Bush and Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense, announced the creation of AFRICOM in February 2007, and it was formally established in October 2007. AFRICOM's activities in its first year, however, were managed by the U.S. European Command, which previously shared some responsibilities for Africa with other regional commands (United States Africa Command n.d.a). On October 1, 2008, AFRICOM gained independent status, using existing facilities in Germany's Kelley Barracks, Stuttgart. AFRICOM is now searching for candidate locations in Africa to set up its headquarters (United States Africa Command n.d.b).

AFRICOM's area of responsibility includes all countries in the African continent except Egypt: Mauritania, Western Sahara, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Senegal, the Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Republic of the Cape Verde, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Cote D' Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire), Angola, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, Malawi, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, Mozambique, Swaziland, Lesotho, South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe.

The need to create a separate command focused on Africa had been discussed in the

Department of Defense (DoD) since the end of the Cold War. The peace and stability of Africa had been considered important by the United States, but there had never been a single regional command that took sole responsibility for this region. In fact, America's relations with African countries were maintained by "three different U.S. military headquarters (United States Africa Command n.d.a)." With the creation of AFRICOM, the DoD can now devise a more comprehensive strategy and focus its resources on a single headquarter site. As for African countries, AFRICOM acts as an "integrated DoD coordination point that helps achieve security and related needs (United States Africa Command n.d.a)."

There have been some discussions about the reasons why the United States decided to set up a command in Africa. One reason may be China's increased activities in Africa. Some argue that China's growing demand for energy is the driving force behind such activism. The United States, too, is interested in oil produced in Africa, and thus the need to become involved in the region has inevitably increased. Theresa Whelan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs, stated in a February 2007 briefing, "This is not about a scramble for the continent (Hanson 2007)." However, it is estimated that by the next decade, "the continent will account for 20 to 25 percent of U.S. energy imports (Northam 2007)."

Deterring terrorist activities is perhaps the most important reason behind the move. As the posture statement indicates, the strategic objective is to "[d]efeate the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization and its associated networks (United States Africa Command 2009:11)." Whatever the specific reason may be, with a formalized new command focusing on Africa, the United States intends to expand even further the area to be covered by its military and to strengthen its presence.

3. The United States Central Command

Established on January 1, 1983, the United States Central Command (USCENTROM) covers the areas located between the European Command and the Pacific Command. The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the U.S. Embassy hostage crisis in Iran in 1980 called for further U.S. interest in the region. In March 1980, President Jimmy Carter created the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) in response to these crises, and Ronald Reagan transformed RDJTF into the more permanent USCENTCOM in 1983.

CENTCOM's area of responsibility (AOR) includes: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Yemen (United States Central Command n.d.a). Geographically speaking, Egypt may be within the area of responsibility of the Africa Command, but because of Egypt's relationship with other countries in CENTCOM's AOR, Egypt has been included.

USCENTCOM's importance has risen since the end of the Cold War. After Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, the United States and coalition forces launched Operation Desert Storm on January 17, 1991. It began with an overwhelming air interdiction campaign, which set the stage for a ground assault. The U.S. and coalition forces liberated Kuwait on February 27—just one hundred hours after the ground campaign had started. The United States was able to respond quickly because USCENTCOM Commander-in-Chief General H. Norman Schwarzkopf had shifted the focus of USCENTCOM's primary planning event, the Internal Look exercise, from a potential Soviet invasion of Iran to a new regional threat—Saddam Hussein's Iraq. In fact, there were striking similarities between the scenario of this command exercise and the actual movement of Iraqi forces that resulted in the invasion of Kuwait in the last days of the Internal Look exercise (United States Central Command n.d.b).

Since the end of Gulf War of 1991, USCENTCOM's activities have been affected by a series of terrorist attacks. USCENTCOM commenced Operation Desert Focus to relocate American installations in Saudi Arabia to safer locations within the country after 19 Americans were killed in the bombing of Khobar Towers (where U.S. military personnel were housed) in Saudi Arabia in 1996. U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were also attacked by terrorists in 1998, and the USS Cole was attacked in October 2000, killing 12 and 17 Americans, respectively. Moreover, in response to 9/11, Operation Enduring Freedom was launched by USCENTCOM to drive out the Taliban government in Afghanistan, and Operation Iraqi Freedom to invade Iraq. USCENTCOM continues operations in these two countries (United States Central Command 2009).

With regard to U.S. access to Afghanistan, Central Asian countries, which fall within USCENTCOM's AOR, play a pivotal role. Supply lines, in the form of the Northern Distribution Network, have been established in this region to transport supplies to support U.S., NATO, and Afghan security operations (United States Central Command 2009). There were thorny negotiations between some of the Central Asian countries and the United States with regard to access agreements. Uzbekistan, which allowed the United States to use an airport shortly after 9/11, asked the U.S. to leave in July 2005 (Wright and Tyson 2005). Kyrgyzstan announced that it would close its base to the United States in February 2009 after 2 billion dollars in aid and credit was promised by Russia. However, renewed negotiations in which the United States agreed to pay 180 million dollars resulted in an extension of the U.S. use of the airport (Reuters 2009).

4. The United States European Command

The U.S. European Command was established on August 1, 1952. During the Cold War, this command was the leading command to deal with the Soviet threat. Today, EUCOM's area of responsibility includes Europe, Russia, Iceland, Greenland, and Israel. The headquarters are located in Stuttgart, Germany (United States European Command n.d.).

As WWII ended, rapid demobilization accompanied by the end of the occupation of Germany in 1949 raised questions regarding the commitment to the defense of Western Europe. The North Korean attack of South Korea in June 1950 shocked the United States and its allies. Fearing that the Soviet Union might engage in a similar attack, U.S. military personnel in Europe grew between 1950 and 1953 from 120,000 to more than 400,000. In the 1970s, there was again growing concern in Europe as the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968. However, the troop levels did not increase, as the United States was tied down in the Vietnam War. The U.S. also had balance of payment problems. Consequently, the troop level decreased to 265,000 by 1970 (United States European Command n.d.)

With the end of the Cold War and the decline of the Soviet threat, the troop level in the region fell dramatically. However, the United States maintained a stable presence with 100,000 troops, or roughly the same number as in Asia. Although the relative importance of bases located in Europe has declined, the value of bases located in countries such as Germany continues to be felt. Established democracies do not ask the United States for exorbitant rent. This is also the case with countries like the United Kingdom and Italy (United States European Command n.d.)

5. The United States Southern Command

The Area of Focus of the U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) includes 31 countries and 10 territories, and this region represents "about one-sixth of the landmass of the world assigned to regional unified commands (United States Southern Command 2009)." More specifically, countries and territories in this area include: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, the Cayman Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

The origin of USSOUTHCOM goes back in the early 20th century, when the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt established the U.S. Caribbean Defense Command in order to defend the Panama Canal and the surrounding area. Located in Panama, SOUTHCOM was engaged in regional defense, including antisubmarine warfare and counter-espionage activities. Military training was another primary activity. These wartime headquarters were then transformed into the U.S. Caribbean Command, with expanded responsibilities including security cooperation in Central and South America. However, during the 1950s, the Caribbean Basin was removed from the area of focus. The Caribbean Basin would have been essential to hemispheric anti-submarine operations in the event of war with the Soviet Union, and the U.S. Atlantic Command, based in Norfolk, Virginia, would have conducted the operations. On June 6, 1963, during the Kennedy Administration, the name was changed to the U.S. Southern Command to reflect the actual area of

focus. In the 1960s, the U.S. Southern Command was in charge of a military assistance program for Central and South America. After the Vietnam War, the U.S. Southern Command's roles were significantly reduced. However, in the 1980s, as internal conflicts intensified in countries like Nicaragua and El Salvador, the Reagan administration renewed U.S. interest in the region and revitalized the Southern Command. After the end of the Cold War, the U.S. Southern Command's objective focused on counter-narcotics operations and again included the Caribbean within its area of focus. In 1997, the command was moved to Miami, Florida from Panama, two years prior to the return of the Panama Canal to Panama in 1999 (Coleman 2009). There are no countries covered in this command structure that seriously attempt to threaten America's national security today. However, the United States continues to watch the region through SOUTHCOM.

6. The United States Northern Command

In response to the attacks of September 11, 2001, USNORTHCOM was created on October 1, 2002, to protect the United States homeland and to coordinate defense support of civil authorities. Such activities include domestic relief operations in times of hurricanes, fires, floods, and earthquakes. USNORTHCOM's Area of Responsibility (AOR) includes: "air, land and sea approaches and encompasses the continental United States, Alaska, Canada, Mexico and the surrounding water out to approximately 500 nautical miles. It also includes the Gulf of Mexico, the Straits of Florida, portions of the Caribbean region to include The Bahamas, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The commander of USNORTHCOM is responsible for theater security cooperation with Canada, Mexico, and The Bahamas (The United States North America Command n.d.)."

It is interesting to note that the Northern Command was one of the last regional commands to be created. This does not mean that homeland defense was ignored in the past, but it perhaps shows how the United States was more concerned about what was happening beyond its own borders. The very existence of the global command structure attests to such thinking. In addition, the fact that the United States continues to maintain its global command structure or create new commands partially illustrates America's willingness to sustain its predominant position in the world.

V. Conclusion

The analysis here shows the dominance of U.S. military presence abroad. Although overall numbers have declined since the end of the Cold War, the United States remains the largest sender of troops abroad. The number of SOFAs also shows that America expanded its access even after the end of the Cold War. Moreover, no other country has a command structure that goes beyond its own borders and one that encircles almost the entire globe. The predominance

of U.S. power is reflected in the existence of such a command structure, and the newly created commands further attest that the United States is not willing to retreat from various regions of the world any time soon. As such, this paper suggests that the United States seems to be trying to maintain the unipolar international structure in which it is the only superpower.

Because this paper provides only a general overview of the U.S. global presence, case studies are still needed to look further into the relationships between the United States and host countries. Moreover, possible theoretical research could include examining whether or not great powers like the United States are off-shore balancers (Layne 1997, Mearsheimer 2001, Walt 2006). An off-shore balancer is a great power that retreats from a particular region when threats decline, but comes back to counter a potential regional hegemon only when such a state arises. Whether the United States is in fact an off-shore balancer, or a nation pursuing global hegemony, will be an important question as U.S. presence or non-presence can greatly influence the calculation of regional players, which in turn affect the security environment around the world.

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