Article

Understanding U.S. Overseas Military Presence after World War II

Takafumi Ohtomo

University of Tsukuba

In this article, I systematically examine how overseas military bases begin, end, or endure by focusing on the United States after World War II. I look at both international and domestic factors and argue that variables such as strategic interests, power of the sending nation (i.e., a superpower stationing its troops overseas), regime shift, and technology tend to show links between presence and withdrawal. In addition to the issues regarding the opening and closing of bases, I discuss several factors that prolong U.S. military presence despite changes in the international strategic environment. Even though the initial rationale for establishing bases has disappeared, the uncertain security environment renders sustained presence. Continued presence is closely related to the reasons alliances endure after the Cold War. Like alliances, U.S. presence acts as a hedge against uncertainties, and hence immediate withdrawals do not occur. America's sphere of influence and the low costs of presence also contribute to continued presence.

Keywords: overseas military presence, U.S.

1. Introduction

Today, the stationing of foreign forces in another country is not necessarily an unusual phenomenon. Although there were several years when the United States was not present, Cuba's Guantanamo Bay has been used by U.S. forces since 1898. Even advanced industrialized countries like Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, South Korea and Italy have hosted U.S. forces for decades. One could, however, easily imagine the peculiarity of such a situation by attempting to visualize an America that, for example, hosted Russian bases. Similarly, it would be quite uneasy for the Chinese to imagine a situation in which Japanese bases were established in Chinese cities, but some Chinese domestic laws were not applicable to Japanese soldiers. Such hypothetical situations may sound too radical, but even if the Russians were replaced by the more friendly British and the Japanese were replaced by North Koreans, the situation could still seem odd.[1]

When thinking about overseas military presence, three puzzles can be identified. First, despite the peculiarity briefly mentioned above, why do many countries agree to host U.S. bases worldwide? Second, the United States provides financial and military assistance in order to set up bases in other countries; however, despite what might be considered exorbitant assistance, why do some host countries decide to close U.S. bases? Third, overseas bases are created to play a certain role such as deterring a particular threat or fighting a war; however, even after their main objectives have been accomplished, why do some bases continue to exist?

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1   Vine also makes a similar point. See his *Island of Shame*, 17.

In spite of the political and military importance, the literature on U.S. military bases around the world is not abundant. Although very informative, many available works are descriptive.[2] Kent Calder's *Embattled Garrisons* is a welcome addition to the literature as it provides more conceptual frameworks for understanding overseas military presence.[3] Some authors, including Calder, touch upon the issue of how bases begin, end, or endure, but not comprehensively.[4] The contribution of this article, therefore, lies in providing systematic answers to the above three questions.

When applied to the study of overseas military presence, balance of power theory might suggest that the rise of a particular threat for the United States could lead to the establishment of American bases abroad. It also suggests that international events such as the end of the Cold War could lead to the end of U.S. military presence. However, even when there are no significant changes in the international structure, some bases disappear. Domestic politics of the host countries seems to account for such phenomena.[5] On the other hand, there are cases where overseas military presence continues even after the decline of a threat. Although the initial rationale for setting up bases has disappeared, an uncertain future security environment and the need to hedge against potential threats render continued presence. In addition, the sphere of influence and the low cost of maintaining bases are important factors in understanding base endurance.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. First, I examine how balance of power theory, as a first cut, predicts where bases would be located. Second, I discuss why overseas military presence begins and show some important processes of base establishment. Third, I lay out some factors that end the presence. Fourth, I explore some reasons why bases endure despite changes in the international security environment. Fifth and finally, I discuss some theoretical and policy implications.

2. Balance of Power and Overseas Military Presence: A First Cut

Is there a relationship between how states align and where bases are located? Balance of power theory tells us that when one state becomes too powerful, others will try to counter that threat.[6] This theory basically is about how states choose friends in the international political arena, and is not a theory about overseas military presence. However, as a first cut, it can give us a general idea about where bases may be located.

Although allies[7] do not always keep security commitments, having formal ties often indicates the willingness of the signatories to uphold the agreement. Therefore, it is fair to assume that U.S. bases are more likely to be located in countries that have formal alliance ties with the United States. The tendency may be understood here by what I call the 'ally-base nexus'. We find this pattern when the concerned states share similar strategic interest and when one state agrees to provide the base to the other. For example, Japan and the United States signed a security treaty (showing that the two have more or less

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2   For example, Harkavy, *Bases Abroad*.

3   Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*. For a summary and comments, see Ohtomo, 'Book review of Kent Calder, Embattled Garrisons'.

4   There are works that try to answer at least one of the questions asked here in this article. Cooley's *Base Politics* mainly looks at how domestic politics affects the closure of bases. Calder discusses the life cycle of bases (preparation, establishment, expansion, decline, and closure), but the discussion is very brief. See his *Embattled Garrisons*, 68–69. Harkavy talks about 'how bases have been acquired—and retained.' See his *Strategic Basing and the Great Powers*, 17–19.

5   Cooley, *Base Politics*; Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*.

6   Another method of balancing is to build up its own capabilities. See Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*.

7   Alliance is defined as 'a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states'. See Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 1.

Table 1. International and Domestic Factors explaining How Bases Begin, End, or Endure

How Bases Begin	*End*	*Endure*
International Factors		
(US)	(US)	(US)
Strategic Interest	Changes in the Strategic Interes	Hedge against Future Uncertainties and Potential Threats
	Declining Power of the Sending Nations	Sphere of Influence/Backyard
(US&Host)	(US&Host)	
Common Strategic Interest**a	Disappearance of Common Strategic Interest*a	
[*Processes of base establishment*]		
Outright Conquest		
Defeat and Occupy		
Hand Down		
Remove Original Inhabitants		
Payment		
Domestic Factors		
(US)	(US)	
Expansionist Policy*b	Isolationist Policy**b	
(Host)	(Host)	
Pro-U.S. (or Sending Nation) Regime Shift	Anti-U.S. (or Sending Nation) Regime Shift/Revolution	
	Nationalism	(Host)
		Low Cost of Presence
Other Factors		
(US)	(US)	
Technological Advancement	Further Technological Advancement	

Notes: * Factors *a (Disappearance of Common Strategic Interest) and *b (Expansionist Policy) will not be discussed in an independent section.

　　　** In the section where factors ** a (Common Strategic Interest) and **b (Isolationist Policy) are discussed, factors *a and *b will briefly be mentioned.

similar strategic interest), and Japan provides bases to U.S. forces in Japan.[8] We also find major U.S. bases in Germany and South Korea—both close allies of the United States.

　　Although balance of power theory gives us a general idea as to where bases might be set up, a few cases do not fit in the 'ally-base nexus' category. This is because in some instances, U.S. bases can be found in non-ally countries. In those cases, often coercive measures are used to set up bases. To understand more about such variations, we need to look into international and domestic factors explaining how bases begin, end, and endure (see Table 1).

3. How Bases Begin

International Factors

　　Strategic Interest : Understanding U.S. strategic interest is essential in grasping why bases are set

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8　Article II of the 1951 Treaty ('Security Treaty Between the United States and Japan', signed 8 September 1951) reads, 'Japan will not grant, without the prior consent of the United States of America, any bases or any rights, power, or authority whatsoever, in or relating to bases or the right of garrison or of maneuver or transit of ground, air, or naval forces to any third Power'. Moreover, Article VI of the 1960 Treaty ('Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between the United States and Japan', signed January 19, 1960) reads, 'For the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East, the United States of America is granted the use of its land, air, and naval forces of facilities and areas in Japan'.

up. In general, if there is a need to counter a particular threat, and having a base near the enemy seems helpful in defeating the enemy, then there will be an incentive for the great powers like the United States to set up a base.

As discussed, bases could be located on the soil of friendly states or even in hostile states (e.g., Afghanistan and Iraq), but why would having a base contribute to achieving U.S. interests? This evokes the question of the roles bases play. Among many, the roles would include deterring threats, fighting wars, collecting intelligence, exercises, and transit.[9]

When the United States alone is interested in establishing bases, forcible means tend to be applied to secure a base, especially in the early years of base establishment. I return to this point later in this section. There are also cases where both the United States and the host countries share a common strategic interest in establishing bases to counter a common threat. In such cases, less forcible means are applied.

Common Strategic Interest : The relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom is a good example. U.S. bases in the United Kingdom began during World War II, and U.S. soldiers have been stationed there since.[10] Having fought with the United States in the Korean War (1950–1953), South Korea hosts U.S. forces. Occasionally, there are protests among the Korean citizens, and some have called for the withdrawal of U.S. forces. However, the basic consensus among the veterans has been to maintain U.S. presence in South Korea.[11] The North Korean threat still binds the two countries, and because of the common interest, U.S. bases remain in South Korea.

Although countries like Germany and Japan were enemies during World War II, they shared common strategic interests with the United States during the Cold War.[12] Today, the United States continues to station its forces in Japan, as both agree that the rise of China and the North Korean threat are a common security concern. Germany also hosts many U.S. soldiers although the need for U.S. presence in the region is declining. In general, the disappearance of common strategic interest, on the other hand, would be an adverse factor, weakening the rationale to set up bases.

Processes of Base Establishment

In addition to the reasons bases are set up, it is essential to explore the *processes* of base establishment, because an agreement among concerned states is not the only way to start a presence. Such processes include (1) outright conquest, (2) defeat and occupy, (3) hand down, (4) forceful removal of the original inhabitants, and (5) payment. These are ideal classifications and not mutually exclusive, but let us examine each in turn.

Outright conquest :[13] In this case, a powerful country forcefully occupies the land of a weaker country and sets up bases. For great powers, outright conquest is perhaps the most direct way to acquire bases overseas, although the purpose of conquest often goes beyond the establishment of bases. 'Receiving' countries (i.e., 'host' countries) become a target of great powers because of their strategic value or because of their mere weakness or both.

An important point is that conquered countries did not necessarily declare war on the United States

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9   Ohtomo, 'Reisengo no doumei', 63–71.

10   Duke, *U.S. Defence Bases in the United Kingdom*.

11   Fisher, 'Thousands rally for, against U.S. Presence in South Korea'.

12   To be sure, it is rare for two or more countries to have harmonious strategic interest. It is just that those states' shared interests are strong enough to bring them together. Another point is that the interest at the state level and at the individual (citizen's) level tend to be different. While the Japanese government prefers to have U.S. forces in Japan, citizens living near U.S. bases may have different preferences.

13   The term 'outright conquest' is used in Harkavy, *Strategic Basing and the Great Powers*, 17.

nor did they pose serious security threats. In other words, the U.S. military presence was a result of the U.S. imperialistic expansions, and not necessarily to counter threats.[14] Hence, how this type of presence started has relatively less to do with the balance of power logic.[15] This clearly reflects simple power relations between the United States and the conquered.

The Cuban case is a good example.[16] Located south of the United States, this Spanish-controlled island was attacked by the United States in 1898. The attack was a result of Spain's sinking a U.S. ship. However, whether Spain actually sank the ship is not clear; it is likely that the United States falsely accused Spain to justify attacking Cuba. In this Spanish-American War of 1898, the United States also attacked other Spanish colonies, including the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico, and set up bases.

Defeat and occupy: This usually occurs when a war is fought between a great power and its enemy, and after the defeat of the enemy, the victor (the great power) occupies the land and sets up bases. This might sound similar to outright conquest, as both involve fighting. The difference, however, is that the relationship between the sending country and the host country is initially characterized as one of enmity.

Japan and Germany after World War II are a good example. After some years of occupation, U.S. forces remained in these countries to deter a possible Soviet attack. U.S. presence also showed America's willingness to defend these countries through conventional and nuclear weapons. Once targets of destruction, Germany and Japan became allies of the United States. They provided U.S. forces with useful bases that were needed to counter a new threat—the Soviet Union. Japan and Germany on their part saw the presence of the U.S. forces necessary for maintaining their security.

Hand down: Hand down takes place when a sending nation can no longer afford to maintain its current overseas base system. The declining great power either simply leaves the host nation or hands its bases down to another country. The new powerful country inherits them and uses the bases to serve its own needs. For the new sending nation, it is a cheaper way to start a presence, because the initial start-up costs are paid by the former occupant.[17]

Newfoundland, Bermuda, the Bahamas, Jamaica, St Lucia, Trinidad, Antigua, and British Guiana provide good examples. These were originally British territories, but due to financial as well as security problems it faced during World War II, the United Kingdom asked the United States to provide 50 old destroyers 'in exchange for the use of naval and air bases in eight British possessions on the Avalon Peninsula, the coast of Newfoundland and on the Great Bay of Bermuda'.[18] The so-called Destroyers-for-bases Agreement was signed between the United States and the United Kingdom in 1940. U.S. access to bases was further extended to other locations during the negotiation, including the Bahamas, Jamaica, St Lucia, Trinidad, Antigua, and British Guiana. The lease was guaranteed free for 99 years.

*Remove original inhabitant*s: This is another instance that involves securing a base not by employing

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14   Zakaria argues that the United States expanded at the turn of the twentieth century, not because it faced external threat. See his *From Wealth to Power*. In it, he challenges Walt's balance of threat theory, but Lynn-Jones criticizes Zakaria for deducing a wrong hypothesis from the theory and applying it to the discussion of U.S. expansion. See Lynn-Jones, 'Realism and America's Rise: A Review Essay'.

15   Of course, the attempts to occupy foreign lands may have been caused by the fear of other rival countries trying to occupy the same land; hence, the balance of power logic may be in effect. However, here we are interested in whether the conquered (targeted) state itself poses direct security threats to the United States.

16   However, Cuba during the Cold War was considered as a threat, but initially it was not necessarily seen as a threat.

17   America's global base structure was created in a matter of years, while the United Kingdom's took much longer. The latecomer, the U.S., had an advantage. For the original argument explaining how the latecomers have the advantage in the economic development, see Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*.

18   'WW2 People's War', BBC.

direct military force, but rather by the use of coercive measures against local citizens of a weak country or group. This is particularly possible on small islands where the number of inhabitants is not extremely large and when alternative land where they can live after relocation is available.[19]

The case in point is Diego Garcia, an island located 1,000 miles south of India.[20] In recent years, Diego Garcia has attracted global attention, as it was used for operations to attack the Taliban in Afghanistan after 9/11. Here, the original inhabitants were forced to move to the western Indian Ocean islands of Mauritius and the Seychelles during the Cold War, and they have not been allowed to return to their homes since.

Some people in Okinawa were also removed from their homes so that the U.S. could build bases. Although the Japanese government compensated for the losses, the Okinawan case does not differ much from that of Diego Garcia in the loss of land and homes. In 2006, people in South Korea were also forcefully removed to make space for the expansion of the U.S. base in Pyongtaek.[21]

Payment (economic and military): Great power presence can be permitted when the sending nation and the host nation agree on the terms of compensation paid to the host country.[22] The host country may not necessarily share the same level of strategic interest as the basing nation, but it may nonetheless agree to offer base sites because of the benefit gained in economic and military assistance.[23] The Philippines, Turkey, and Spain have been the main recipients of U.S. aid. (Often such payments went to dictators.) Moreover, Russia has naval bases in Ukraine, and the two countries agreed to extend the lease for additional 25 years on 21 April 2010. In return, Russia agreed to cut the price of natural gas by about 30 percent.[24]

Domestic Factors

Pro-U.S. (or sending nation) Regime Shift: Bases can be available to the sending nation when there is a change of government in the host country. This occurs when a pro-sending nation government defeats the previous government that opposed the use of the base by foreign powers. The previous policy is reversed and the use of the base is now allowed. For example, President Viktor A Yushchenko initially decided that Ukraine's bases would not be leased to Russia after 2017 when the term was scheduled to expire. However, after the new president Viktor F. Yanukovich came into power, the new government extended the lease beyond 2017.[25]

Other Factors

Technological Advancement: Technological advancement can be another reason for establishing bases.

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19 This of course does not mean that such relocation is cost-free for the original inhabitants.

20 For an excellent study, see Vine, *Island of Shame*.

21 'U.S. Move Is Spurring Evictions in S. Korea', *The Washington Post*, Associated Press.

22 See Clarke, O'Connor, and Ellis, *Send Guns and Money*, 149–168.

23 Financial and other incentives contribute to the willingness on the part of the receiving countries to host the United States, but at the same time, bargaining involving payment sometimes could fail, and it seems to be failing more so, especially after the end of the Cold War. What seems to be happening is that potential host nations are bargaining too hard, hoping to get the most out of the deal, but they do not adequately grasp that the United States is no longer operating under the Cold War zero-sum environment. There is not enough pressure for the United States to reluctantly accept host nation's extravagant demands as the United States now has relatively wider choices for potential host nations, including countries that were previously in the Soviet camp. In other words, America could enjoy an added luxury to choose from other nearby candidates if the current negotiation seems to be failing. Negotiations involving the United States, Russia, and Kirgizstan are instructive. See Cooley, 'The Price of Access'.

24 'Ukraine President Extends Lease on Russian Naval Base', *International Herald Tribune*.

25 Levy, 'Ukraine Woos Russia with Lease Deal'; Harding, 'Ukraine Extends Lease for Russian's Black Sea Fleet'.

The need for coal stations for naval ships was one of the first rationales for setting up bases overseas. The advancement of aero craft technology required airfields in various parts of the world. The post-World War II plan devised by the United States is a good example. U.S. military leaders were keen on acquiring overseas air bases for the purpose of long-distance force projection. In addition to the military use, commercial purposes were important in developing airfields overseas in the post-war era.[26]

Advancement in intelligence technologies also called for the establishment of bases around the globe. Intelligence facilities were built in English-speaking countries to track communications.[27] Some bases were established to detect nuclear testing.

4. How Bases End

I now turn to factors that contribute to the closure of U.S. bases overseas.

The factors include (1) changes in the strategic interest, (2) declining power of the sending nations, (3) disappearance of common strategic interest, (4) isolationist policy of the United States, (5) anti-U.S. regime shift/revolution, (6) nationalism, and (7) further technological advancement.

International Factors

Changes in the strategic interest: Once the strategic significance of a base disappears, the basing nation may decide to withdraw. The decline in the strategic significance is most likely to be caused by shifts in the international structure such as the end of the Cold War. Iceland is one country that has been affected by such a change. Initially, the Nazis occupied Iceland during World War II, but the British pushed them out. Later, U.S. forces landed on Iceland and remained until 2006. During the Cold War, Iceland was an important naval base for U.S. submarines for carrying out submarine warfare against the Soviet Union.

The bases in Iceland have become less relevant in the present security environment. According to Rear Admiral Noel Preston, a European regional commander of the Navy, "'Now the world has changed, and we are facing a war on terrorism. We are changing how we plan and prepare for this war'".[28] Also according to Stratfor, an American global intelligence company, '[i]n terms of sheer volume, the threat has almost completely evaporated'".[29] In March 2006, the United States announced its decision to close down the bases in Iceland, and U.S. service members left on September 30, 2006.

Declining power of the sending nations: Sending nations might have been quite powerful and wealthy when they first established bases around the globe. However, once their national power declines to the point that maintaining overseas bases becomes impossible, they decide to let them go. The British Empire is a case in point. As discussed in the previous section, no longer able to maintain its own bases around the world, the United Kingdom shifted base management to the United States. It was a beginning for the U.S. control of worldwide overseas bases, but at the same time, it was an end for the British base system. The term 'imperial overstretch' coined by Paul Kennedy provides a useful concept in thinking about this issue.[30]

Domestic Factors

Isolationist Policy of the United States: Domestic politics of host nations have been the focus of

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26   Converse, III, 'United States Plans for a Postwar Overseas Military Bases System'.
27   Richelson, *The US Intelligence Community*.
28   'US Military Set to Quit Iceland', BBC.
29   Strategic Forecasting, 'The End of an Era'.
30   Kennedy, *The Rise and the Fall of Great Powers*.

study,[31] but domestic politics of the United States are also important in understanding overseas military presence.

First, different types of strategic thinking in the United States affect U.S. global military presence. While there are those who advocate more presence abroad (expansionists/maximalists), some call for minimal engagement (isolationists/minimalists). Liberals who seek to spread democracy and the rules of law are more willing to engage in foreign missions than minimalists, while realists do not advocate total withdrawal but call for engagement when a regional hegemon is likely to be on the rise.[32] The power balance among the key policymakers will influence whether an expansionist or an isolationist policy is adopted. If the power balance tips toward those who prefer an isolationist (minimalist) policy, the likelihood of U.S. troops withdrawing from the world will rise. America's financial problems could also strengthen isolationist views, as overseas military activities are costly.

Moreover, the sense of uneven burden sharing in security affairs affects U.S. overseas military presence. Some in the United States are dissatisfied that U.S. soldiers are asked to defend, for example, Japan, while the reverse is not necessarily the case. A typical reasoning is that the United States should not help Japan when Japan is simply free-riding on U.S. protection. These opinions are expressed from time to time and are used as a rationale for withdrawing U.S. troops from Japan, or to pressure Japan to contribute more militarily and financially.

Anti-U.S. regime shift/revolution: When the previous government that was backed by the United States is replaced by a new government that tries to distance itself from U.S. influence, American military presence will be negatively affected. This type of regime shift in a host nation often leads to the end of U.S. military presence.

Revolution can also change the strategic environment dramatically as was witnessed in the case of the Iranian Revolution.[33] In this case, a pro-American regime was replaced by a strong anti-American government. Friendly relations were suddenly over and the prospects for continued U.S. presence ended quickly.

Nationalism: Nationalism also works against continued U.S. presence. Having another country's military base in a sovereign country is an unusual circumstance. As such, it has the potential to easily ignite nationalism. An accident that killed Korean schoolgirls in 2002 set off a massive demonstration calling for the withdrawal of U.S. forces. The rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl also caused a massive demonstration and led to the agreement in 1996 between the two governments to shut down Futenma air base, although that has not yet happened.

Other Factors

Further technological advancement: Technology could reduce the need for bases overseas. As discussed above, the advancement of the aerospace technology required many airfields for stopover, but *further* technological improvements enabled planes to travel longer distances. For instance in 1991, 'the U.S. B-52 bombers, with the aide of tankers, conducted bombing raids over Iraq all the way from a base in Louisiana'.[34] Similarly, nuclear-powered submarines can spend more time under the sea than conventional submarines can, thereby needing fewer bases.

The above factors do not always lead to the instant end of military presence, but they surely contribute to the decision to withdraw U.S. troops.

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31   See Cooley, *Base Politics*; Calder, *Embattled Garrison*.
32   Art, *Grand Strategy for America*.
33   For the argument that revolution quickly changes the security environment, as well as the relationship between revolution and the likelihood of war, see Walt, *Revolution and War*.
34   Harkavy, *Strategic Basing and the Great Powers*, 26.

5. Why Some Overseas Bases Continue

When the factors that created the bases in the first place disappear, bases lose their *raison d'être*. In some instances, bases disappear, but not in other cases. Despite the shift in international structure, some bases continue. Three factors seem important: (1) hedge against uncertainties and potential threats, (2) sphere of influence/backyard, and (3) the low cost of presence. The underlying assumption of these arguments is that the purposes of bases could change over time, and that the United States would use the bases to advance its power/influence even when there is no immediate threat.[35]

International Factors

Hedge against future uncertainties and potential threats: Although a change in strategic environment would make some bases seem obsolete, it does not necessarily lead to the immediate and complete withdrawal, particularly when the effects of a change in the international structure are expected to create many uncertainties.

The resurgence of Russia was one of the initial concerns for the post-Cold War United States and its allies; thus a hedge against such possibilities was essential. While the overall number of U.S. forces stationed overseas indeed dropped notably, Europe and Asia each maintained about 10,000 U.S. troops for some time in order to deal with future uncertainties.[36]

NATO and the U.S.-Japan alliance have not disappeared, as they are considered useful even today.[37] Like alliances created during the Cold War, bases are considered valuable in dealing with the post-Cold-War strategic environment, and thus they remain. To be sure, there are close links between alliances and bases since many alliance agreements allow U.S. forces to use the bases located in the allies' territories. As alliances continue, U.S. presence overseas also continues.[38]

Sphere of influence/Backyard: Some bases seem unaffected by changes in the international strategic environment. This is especially true when the bases are located near a great power or in its sphere of influence. The U.S. base in Cuba is a case in point. Despite changes in the international security environment in the past hundred years or so, U.S. troops continue to be stationed at Guantanamo Bay. This phenomenon is the result of the significant power imbalances between the two countries. The global shift in balance of power seems not to influence presence patterns in this case.

Domestic Factors

Low cost: Financial support by the host nation contributes to the continued use of bases. Host nation

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35   Labs, 'Beyond Victory'.

36   U.S. Department of Defense, *East Asia Strategy Report*.

37   For the discussions of why the Cold War alliances endure in the post-Cold War era, see Hellmann and Wolf, 'Neorealism, Neoliberal Institutionalism and the Future of NATO'; Wallander, 'Institutional Assets and Adaptability'; Walt, 'Why Alliances Endure or Collapse'; Glaser, 'Why NATO is Still Best' ; Medeiros, 'Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability'; Ohtomo, 'Bandwagoning to Dampen Suspicion'.

38   At the same time, if U.S. commitment becomes less certain than it was during the Cold War, U.S. forces could decide to withdraw from Japan. In that case, Japan would be without U.S. physical protection and therefore would be vulnerable. In such a circumstance, Japan cannot help but to strengthen its own military. Japan, however, acknowledges that doing so would be costly both politically and economically. If Japan were to enhance its military, neighboring states would find Japan's move to be a sign of aggressiveness, igniting security competition among major states in the region. Moreover, if Japan indeed built up its own military to compensate for the loss of U.S. presence, more money would be spent when Japan is financially in trouble. Due to such political and economic disadvantages, Japan would prefer to have the United States stay. For a discussion as to the ideal way to create a stable Europe after the Cold War, see Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future'.

support in Japan is a good example. For instance, in 2002, the Japanese government provided about $4,400 million to support U.S. presence, offsetting about 75 percent of the total stationing cost.[39] This amount is about half the total support provided by the rest of the host nations combined. The larger the amount the host country is willing to shoulder, the more likely the bases will remain. It should be noted, however, that although low cost could be a contributing factor, it is not necessarily a deciding factor.

If the United States really needs a particular base, it will pay a good deal of money. It is difficult to find cases in which the United States failed to secure an overseas base because they lacked funding. Rather, what prevented the host countries from extending U.S. presence was the host countries' domestic pressures to end U.S. presence. Here is one example from the Philippines. The United States considered their bases in the Philippines one of their most important and agreed to pay $200 million per annum[40] in the August 1991 agreement. However, after the downfall of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, the new reformist government headed by Corazón Aquino was 'heavily cross-pressured by activist, antibase NGOs and populist politicians who had been its principal backers in the anti-Marcos struggle'.[41] Consequently, the extension of U.S. presence became increasingly difficult and eventually ended.

One could also think of a different case in which the strategic value of a base is low, but because of the low cost of stationing troops, the United States decides to stay nonetheless. What might happen in this case is that if the host country stopped providing host nation support, the United States would leave. Some argue that Japan fits into this category.[42] However, the strategic value of Japan perhaps is not that low. China needs to be watched closely as its economic and military strengths are growing. Japan provides the only homeport outside the United States for an aircraft carrier, and it also has the technologies to repair sophisticated weapons, etc. Added to that, Japan is a staunch ally of the United States, and has one of the most stable societies in the world. As such, the likelihood of the Japanese government forcefully retaking U.S. bases is almost negligible. All in all, as long as the United States finds Japan strategically important *and* the cost of stationing low, they have good reason to remain.

At the same time, the growing military capabilities of China should cause some worries. Japan is too close to China and U.S. forces stationed in Japan could be susceptible to a first strike. If the United States eventually decides that remaining in Japan would be dangerous, no matter how much Japan pays for the costs of U.S. presence, American soldiers may leave.

6. Conclusion

This article attempts to provide a systematic analysis of how U.S. overseas military presence begins, ends, and endures. There seems to be differing logic as to how bases are established and end.

In the establishment of overseas bases, great power logic, among other factors, almost always prevails. This is dominated by the structure of the international system in which powerful countries have the initiative. Strategic interests of the United States, as well as shared strategic interests between the United States and the host countries, render base establishment. The ways in which foreign presence end, however, involve different factors. In some instances, termination could be dictated by domestic politics of host nations. Host countries sometimes reject U.S. presence despite huge financial support. And if nationalism, noise pollution, and accidents are severe enough, monetary compensation will

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39   U.S. Department of Defense, *2004 Statistical Compendium to the Allied Contributions*, E–4.
40   Sanders, *America's Overseas Garrisons*, 125.
41   Calder, *Base Politics*, 147.
42   Calder argues, '[s]ome analysts suggests that "if the U.S. ever leaves Japan, it will be because Japan 'turns out the lights'" —cuts support payments rather than directly requests withdrawal—and there is potential truth in this statement'. See his *Base Politics*, 189.

never be enough, whatever the amount. The question of why bases persist is relevant to the issue of why alliances endure and the more general need to hedge against uncertainties in the future security environment. In addition, the sphere of influence and the low cost of stationing U.S. troops affect base endurance.

Some may argue that the logic of U.S. presence can be explained by the balance of power of the international system alone. Others suggest the importance of host countries' domestic politics in explaining U.S. withdrawal. I do not disagree with these views. I argue, however, that focusing either on international system or domestic politics alone is insufficient. As such, unlike neorealism that relies only on one level of analysis (i.e., the international level), I look at both international and domestic interests of the United States and host nations, which proves to be better for understanding the base issue.

Closely related to the topic discussed here, in November 2011, the United States announced that it would deploy 2,500 troops in Australia as a way to check China's rise.[43] This leads us to ask additional questions such as: Where should the United States station troops? How many troops should the United States maintain abroad?

In this article, I do not discuss where and how many U.S. troops *should* be stationed. But I present the argument called 'off-shore balancing'.[44] Both in theory and practice, it argues that America should basically retreat from the world. But only when there is a need to prevent the rise of a regional hegemon should the United States return to intervene. This differs from isolationist thinking.

One could interpret the recent U.S. decision to station troops in Australia as evidence that opposes offshore balancing thinking. This is because offshore balancing emphasizes leaner U.S. commitment abroad to make a good use of limited American resources. To be sure, it would be cheaper for the United States to have China's neighboring countries deal with China's growth, and only if hostilities escalate would the United States enhance its presence in the region. Of course there might be other compelling rationales for the recent American decision. In any event, exploring the validity of offshore balancing would be an interesting area for future investigation as it closely relates to U.S. overseas military presence both in theory and practice.

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43　We're Back', *The Economist*.
44　Layne, *The Peace of Illusions*; Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*; Walt, *Taming American Power*.

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Acknowledgement

Assistant Professor
Doctoral Program in International and Advanced Japanese Studies
Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tsukuba