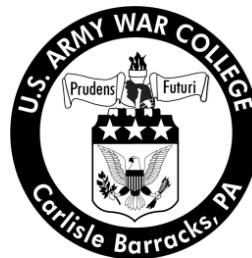


Reposturing the Force: Implications of Budget Reductions and Regional Rebalancing

by

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Class of 06-2013

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The United States is making essential budgetary and military posture decisions in order to retain its global influence and support economic recovery. The Budget Control Act of 2011 and President Obama's guidance to rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region provides clear direction for the Department of Defense (DoD). The increased U.S. focus on the Asia-Pacific region, coupled with diminishing resources, creates potential national security risks and requires DoD to reassess its force projection, prepositioning, and forward stationing strategies. This paper evaluates the trade-offs inherent in force projection, forward stationing and prepositioning strategies and recommends DoD employ a threat-based strategy supported by regional engagement programs to reduce the vulnerability to national security.

Reposturing the Force: Implications of Budget Reductions and Regional Rebalancing

We must put our fiscal house in order here at home and renew our long-term economic strength and indeed, as we end today's wars, we will focus on a broader range of challenges and opportunities, including the security and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific.¹

—Barrack Obama
President of the United States
Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership, January 2012

The strategic rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region, coupled with looming reductions to the defense budget, creates significant questions regarding the U.S. security strategies of force projection, prepositioning, and forward stationing. What are the threats the Department of Defense (DoD) must address as it considers rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region? Do diminishing resources for defense, coupled with rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region, cause potential national security risks? What are the trade-offs associated with the strategies of force projection, prepositioning, and forward stationing and how should DoD address these trade-offs to mitigate potential national security risks? What alternatives could be employed to support accomplishment of the defense strategy?

The increased focus on the Asia-Pacific region, coupled with diminishing resources, creates potential national security risks and requires DoD to reassess its force projection, prepositioning, and forward stationing strategies. This paper evaluates the trade-offs inherent in force projection, prepositioning, and forward stationing strategies and recommends DoD employ a threat-based strategy to reduce the vulnerability to national security and interests. Such a strategy effectively addresses risks and is executable in an environment of diminishing resources. A threat-based

strategy also allows DoD to apply emerging strategies to shape the global security environment.

National Security Interests

The United States' national interests are rooted in history and codified in such documents as the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy. In their basic form, security; prosperity; values; and international order are the principle national interests of the United States.² Each is linked to the others and in its pursuit to support each interest; the U.S. employs a whole of government approach through diplomatic, information, military, and economic power. The U.S. interests are deliberately broad-based and general in nature, providing leeway for leaders to posture military power around the world in various forms and primarily through the strategies of force projection, prepositioning, and forward stationing.

Rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific Region

As the U.S. accomplished many of its objectives in the Middle East, President Obama seized the opportunity to direct a rebalancing of the elements of national power to the Asia-Pacific region. After ten years of applying the predominance of national power to the Mid-East, at times to the neglect of other regions, the U.S. has begun to reduce the volume of military power in the Mid-East. The U.S. disengaged from operations in Iraq in 2011, while continuing to reduce its mission in Afghanistan to advising and training by 2014. Amplifying the United States' national interests are numerous statements from U.S. government and DoD officials over the course of 2012 reinforcing the new direction in which the U.S. government is focusing its near and long term global efforts. Beginning in late 2011 with President Obama's statement of a shift to the Asia-Pacific region, to the Secretary of Defense's statements elaborating on the

President's, the U.S. is apportioning greater military priority to the U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM).

The Middle East, however, remains strategically important to the U.S., its allies, and other world powers such as China and Russia. Accordingly, the U.S. has refined its "pivot to Asia-Pacific" strategy since it was announced. Perhaps more appropriate is what Lieutenant General (RET) Barno calls a "pivot but hedge" approach to global engagement in which the U.S. pivots to the Asia-Pacific region, but hedges against potential threats in the Middle East and elsewhere.³

U.S. economic and security interests remain linked to developments in the Asia-Pacific region, creating challenges and opportunities.⁴ Foremost to the U.S. policies in the region are its mutual defense treaties with several Asia and Pacific nations to include: the Republic of Korea, Japan, Philippines, Thailand, and Australia.⁵ As long-rooted territorial disputes resurface among nations such as China and Japan, the U.S. remains committed to its allies to ensure their security. In addition to working with its allies, the U.S. will also expand its networks of cooperation with emerging partners throughout the region to ensure collective capability and capacity for securing common interests.⁶

Current and Emerging Security Threats in the Asia-Pacific Region

As the U.S. rebalances to the Asia-Pacific region, it must consider the existing and emerging threats in this region. Within the global common sea lanes of the Asia-Pacific region are territorial disputes that have the potential to affect world economic prosperity. China's Economic Exclusion Zone (EEZ) is an area within the South China Sea that covers an expanse of ocean 200 miles beyond its shoreline and includes resource rich waters with fisheries, oil, and gas fields. Along with China, there are

several sovereign nations staking claim to several uninhabited island chains within China's claimed EEZ.

Claims to these disputed territories within China's EEZ have prompted increasingly aggressive Chinese military actions as it seeks to influence its neighbors in the region. These actions, coupled with an increasing Chinese defense budget that is investing heavily in missile, air, and sea power technologies focusing on Anti-Access and Area Denial (A2/AD), has increased regional tensions and requires increasing U.S. and regional allied vigilance. This vigilance also led to the U.S. development of a new air/sea doctrine designed to counter the regional A2/AD threat.

While emerging threats continue to develop, long-standing regional disputes remain a mainstay focus for U.S. forces. The North Korean threat is increasing as they have pursued and successfully tested multiple nuclear weapons. Improvements in their missile technologies also raise considerable concern for the U.S. and its regional allies requiring continued development of anti-A2/AD doctrine and technologies.

Transnational threats such as the Al Qaeda trained Abu Sayyaf Muslim militant group in Mindanao, Philippines also continue as a security challenge for the region. The southern Philippines has long remained an area of instability that has allowed transnational groups such as Al Qaeda to exploit the instability to their advantage. In 2002, the Philippines and the U.S. negotiated a military logistics and support agreement.⁷ This allowed the U.S. to use the Philippines as a supply base to support U.S. forces conducting counter-terrorism operations in the region while advising and training Philippine forces to counter the Islamist threat.

In addition to territorial disputes, piracy in the South China Sea continues as a regional security and global economic concern. Increasingly effective security partnerships have developed within areas such as the Malacca Strait, due in part to increased multinational cooperation in combatting piracy. These successes, however, are counter-balanced by increased piracy incidents in territorial waters of countries like Indonesia that have minimal capacity to effectively counter piracy. Regional anti-piracy efforts require continued partnership capacity building to effectively reduce the threat.

U.S. Economic Realities

One of the key elements of U.S. power is the worldwide influence of its economic strength backed by its number one position among the world economies. This position is threatened however, as China's economy grows and is anticipated to surpass that of the U.S. by 2016.⁸ Not only does China's economy continue to grow at a faster pace than that of the U.S., but American fiscal practices have led to a weakened economy and caused implementation of budgetary reduction measures to hedge future decline. As Admiral Mullen stated, "The most significant threat to our national security is our debt."⁹ As DoD develops strategies to address global threats and rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region, it does so in an environment of diminishing resources.

The U.S. military relies on the strength of the U.S. economy to provide the resources required to execute its strategies of force projection, prepositioning, and forward stationing. Key decisions in the U.S. budget to help maintain its strength were made that include large budgetary cuts, most significantly to the U.S. military. The Budget Control Act of 2011 mandates over \$487 billion in defense spending cuts over the course of a decade beginning in 2013.¹⁰ These reductions will have a direct impact on the ability of the U.S. military to maintain deterrent forward stationed forces, sufficient

force projection platforms to surge forces when required, and robust prepositioned sets of equipment and supplies to reduce force response times.

More daunting than the planned defense budget cuts are the additional cuts that could result from sequestration. Included in the Budget Control Act of 2011 is the sequestration process that automatically makes additional cuts to the budget which would effectively increase the DoD budget cuts from \$487 billion over ten years to \$950 billion over the same period. Unless a political compromise is reached, these cuts will begin after the ninety day extension voted upon in January 2013.

The short term effect on the U.S. military is reduced spending on the acquisition of major platform programs within each of the Services. Equipment to include the Navy's Littoral Combat Ship, the Air Force's F-35 fighter jet, the Marine Corps MV-22 and the Army's Joint Light Tactical Vehicle programs are all at risk of reduced buys.¹¹ The Army has already halted post combat equipment repair and maintenance for 1,300 tactical wheeled vehicles, 14,000 communications devices and 17,000 weapons.¹² All the Services are also planning personnel reductions that will occur over the next five years, and if sequestration occurs, major training exercises will effectively halt. The implications of decreased readiness impact the global engagement strategy by U.S. military forces with partners and allies.

Global Defense Strategies, Posture, and Trade-Offs

The DoD relies on forward stationing, prepositioning, and force projection to advance national security objectives and the U.S. global engagement strategy. Success in combat often will depend on efforts to shape favorable access conditions in advance. The approaches the joint force takes to shape the operational area are through a variety of security engagement activities such as multinational exercises, access and support

agreements, establishment and improvement of overseas bases, prepositioning of materiel and supplies, and forward deployment of forces.¹³ The current posture is a result of risk analysis measured against resources. Each strategy has trade-offs that must be considered to formulate an effective global strategy.

Forward Stationing

The United States has, over the course of the last seventy years, developed and employed a forward stationing strategy that has met the challenges of the Cold War, conflict and adversarial threats in Northeast Asia, and combat within the Middle East. Inherent in a forward stationing strategy is the goal of conflict prevention through the presence of a deterrent force. Spread around the globe are forward stationed units of the armed forces that have played a vital role in meeting the U.S. national security strategy in specific regions.

There are several advantages to the strategy of forward stationing. Forces are positioned closest to the highest security threats and can quickly react to a contingency. Forward stationed forces provide a deterrent to would-be aggressors through visible presence and capability. Forward stationed units are also deployed to regions where the threat is the greatest to U.S. national interests, and though it is the most costly; forward stationing provides the greatest assurance and deterrence factor.

Stationed in South Korea are 28,500 U.S. troops that help meet the security treaty obligations with the South Korean government and hedge against an unstable and isolated North Korea.¹⁴ The U.S. alliance with South Korea remains an enduring relationship between the two governments, but it also has security implications beyond the Korean peninsula. This forward stationed force provides reassurances to other U.S. allies in the region with whom the U.S. also has defense treaties. Both Taiwan and

Japan are beneficiaries of U.S. troops stationed on the Korean peninsula. Capable U.S. military presence in the region provides a hedge for Japan and Taiwan against their historical adversary, China. In addition to U.S. forces in South Korea, the U.S. has an additional 35,000 (approximately) troops, consisting primarily of Marines and Air Force personnel, stationed in Japan.¹⁵ In addition to the troops stationed in Northeast Asia and continuing its regional engagement strategy, the U.S. has also secured a rotational basing and training plan in Darwin, Australia. Planned rotational forces include U.S. B-52's, fighters, and airlift assets along with a contingent of 200 U.S. Marines, programmed for future expansion to 2,500 Marines by 2017.¹⁶

Since the end of the Cold War and beginning in the 1990's, the U.S. has decreased the number of personnel assigned to its forward stationed units in Europe from approximately 250,000 to about 42,000 currently.¹⁷ Most of this reduction is attributed to the peace dividend as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union. On a lesser scale, the reductions over the last ten years are a result of budgetary constraints and U.S. forces support to two contingency operations in the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR). The impetus to U.S. European Command's (USEUCOM) force reductions is Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld's Global Defense Posture Review. Initiated in 2004, the force posture review continues today as the U.S. grapples with right-sizing and positioning its forces to meet its global security, assurance, deterrence and contingency challenges. In January 2012, the U.S. Secretary of Defense announced that the United States would reduce still further the number of Brigade Combat Teams in Europe, continuing the plan to return major units to the Continental United States (CONUS) from areas of lesser strategic risk.¹⁸ Forward

stationed forces in Europe continue to draw down as raw numbers decrease, however; there are initiatives to increase U.S. DoD presence by establishing small units in countries such as Poland, Romania, Turkey and Spain.¹⁹

Since the early 1990's, the Middle East has dominated American security challenges. At the conclusion of OPERATION DESERT STORM in 1991, the U.S. committed forces on a permanent basis to the Persian Gulf. Their presence on the sea, land, and in the air has been vital to achieving U.S. strategic goals within the region. The specific numbers of U.S. personnel forward stationed outside of combat zones in the region has fluctuated over the last twenty years. Current military force numbers total approximately 19,000, focused primarily on support missions for OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM, retrograde operations from OPERATION NEW DAWN, operations in the Horn of Africa, and routine naval Carrier Strike Group (CSG) presence in the Gulf region.²⁰

Prepositioning

The purpose of prepositioning is to place military units, equipment, or supplies at or near the point of planned use or at a designated location to reduce reaction time, and to ensure timely support of a specific force during initial phases of an operation.²¹ By prepositioning key warfighting equipment and supplies in support of forward presence, global reach, and crisis response, the U.S. significantly reduces the time and strategic lift required to complete force closure of warfighting capabilities for employment by Combatant Commanders.²² For example, an Army Stryker Brigade would only have to transport its assigned Soldiers and minimal individual equipment to a forward location if it drew prepositioned equipment stocks. Prepositioning also reduces employment time

because unit sets are either preloaded on cargo ships or positioned in a theater of operation.

Finally, there is a significant savings in using prepositioned equipment in training vice shipping the equipment to theater. As an example, the U.S. Army routinely deploys its personnel and equipment from CONUS to training and contingency locations. The costs of transportation are increasingly more expensive. To move one Brigade Combat Team (BCT) from Hawaii to the National Training Center in California cost approximately \$14 million in 2000 but costs approximately \$35 million in 2013, due to increased equipment density and fuel costs for air and surface transportation.²³ Illustrating the value of using prepositioned stocks, if a BCT used the prepositioned equipment at the NTC and transported only its Soldiers and minimal equipment, the resulting transportation cost savings would be approximately 92%.²⁴

Prepositioned stocks also present the disadvantage of continuous maintenance and storage costs in overseas locations. Specifically, the Army's fiscal year 2009 supplemental overseas contingency operations budget identified \$319.1 million in operations and maintenance procurement funds and \$987 million in other procurement funds to reset prepositioned stocks.²⁵ These costs include storage in humidity controlled facilities, maintenance, servicing, parts, and contractor support. Prepositioning also requires bases proximate to major transportation nodes to store the equipment.

The U.S. strategy on prepositioned materiel and equipment is rooted in U.S. Code. It states that the Secretary of Defense shall maintain a strategic policy on the DoD programs for the prepositioning of materiel and equipment and that such policy shall take into account national security threats, strategic mobility, Service

requirements, and the requirements of the combatant commands.²⁶ This policy requires continuous analysis of regional threats and likely contingencies in order to provide the basis for prepositioned stocks configurations. The most visible results of this policy are seen in the separate Service's prepositioning programs. The programs are optimized to support each Service's geographic requirements, to include the Army's Title 10 responsibility as the joint force service provider for common logistics.

Army Prepositioned Stocks

The Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, General Lloyd Austin states, "Army Prepositioned Stocks (APS) remain a key strategic source for force projection and have been used successfully several times in the last 10 years to include Iraq in 2003 and will continue to be a strategic asset in the future."²⁷ Resident in APS is more than just combat power, but logistics capabilities as well. Current APS sets are positioned regionally to support the Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCC). Residing in the continental United States (CONUS), APS-1 is distributed across multiple locations and consists of operational project stocks, sustainment stocks and ammunition. Future Department of the Army plans for APS-1 include a Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief (HA/DR) package.²⁸ Positioned in Europe is APS-2 which is now the primary storage site for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles. Combining a heavy brigade unit set and enablers, operational project stocks, sustainment, and ammunition is APS-3 (Afloat). This set is loaded on Military Sealift Command (MSC) ships and is deployable to all theaters in support of operations.²⁹

Supporting U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM), APS-4 is positioned in Northeast Asia and consists of unit sets, operational project stocks, sustainment stocks and Army watercraft.³⁰ This set includes equipment to support a BCT which is critical to

projecting U.S. forces to Korea. The last set of prepositioned stocks, APS-5, is positioned in Kuwait, Qatar and Oman. This set has sustained heavy use over the last ten years in support of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) and OEF and is currently being rebuilt.³¹ This set contains similar stocks as those of APS-4 to include Army watercraft, which are currently employed by USCENTCOM for retrograde operations.

Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force Prepositioning Strategies

The Navy and Marine Corps prepositioning strategy is to maintain sustainment, ammunition and fuel stocks for the Marine Corps aboard ships that accompany the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) globally to meet contingency and exercise requirements. The Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) is divided into two Marine Prepositioned Squadrons (MPS) of seven to eight ships each carrying sustainment stocks primarily for the U.S. Marine Corps.³² Each of the two squadrons has limited capability to support a joint force as well. Each squadron is configured to support a 15,000 person MAGTF with sustainment, ammunition, fuel and equipment. MPF-2 is normally stationed at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean and can quickly support operations in the USCENTCOM AOR or USPACOM AOR. MPS-3 operates primarily in the Asia-Pacific region and is headquartered at Singapore.³³

Just as the other Services maintain an expeditionary posture, so too does the U.S. Air Force. In order to meet their requirement to quickly deploy personnel and essential combat equipment given the constraints of heavily used airlift during contingencies, the Air Force has employed a prepositioning strategy to support airfield expeditionary operations. The Air Force's prepositioning strategy meets its current preplanned requirements by locating thirteen Basic Expeditionary Airfield Resources (BEAR) at Forward Support Locations (FSL) around the globe.³⁴ Five of these sites are

located within the USCENTCOM AOR, five sites are located in Northeast Asia, and three other sites in Guam, Luxembourg, and New Mexico.³⁵

Each Service has planned, established, and resourced its specific prepositioning strategies over the course of many years and continues to refine them to meet current defense strategy. Listed in U.S. Code is a statute requiring the Secretary of Defense to submit an annual report with specific feedback on the status of the propositioned stocks and materiel. Each report also includes an update on the status of efforts to develop a joint strategy, integrate Service requirements, and eliminate redundancies.³⁶ There is no joint prepositioning strategy; however a joint strategy is desired. As the U.S. Congress recognizes, there is an opportunity for cost savings by eliminating redundancy within each Service's prepositioned stocks and materiel. As with most initiatives to make the Armed Services more joint, this statute challenges each Service to consolidate prepositioning programs, despite their diverse roles and responsibilities.

Force Projection

Force projection is the ability to project the military instrument of national power from the United States, or another theater, in response to requirements for military operations.³⁷ Force projection platforms enable projection of combat power capable enough to deter or defeat an adversary on U.S. terms of time and location. The U.S. maintains the largest set of force projection platforms of any country providing a marked advantage over its adversaries. Typical force projection capabilities include airlift and sealift assets, but other forms of U.S. force projection include rotational forces of each Service.

Carrier Strike Group and Marine Air Ground Task Force Rotations

A means of projecting U.S. power is through the Navy's world-wide rotational cruises with its CSG's. The CSG is organized around an aircraft carrier with multiple other strike ships and submarines providing a tremendous offensive capability. When combined with a MAGTF aboard amphibious assault ships, it projects a power that no other country possesses. U.S. naval forces are uniquely suited to projecting U.S. diplomatic strength and military power globally.³⁸ It is a highly visible sign of U.S. military power that can operate in international waters for extended periods without the need for basing rights or airfields to achieve U.S. national objectives.

Airlift

Potential use of robust force projection capabilities to move combat power provides a credible deterrent. The speed and reach of U.S. Air Force strategic lift aircraft enables forces to reach their destination within hours. Maintaining a robust airlift capability comes at a cost, as aircraft are expensive to use and maintain, given their relatively limited carrying capacity compared to sea lift. Although U.S. airlift assets are the best in the world, they are also a limited resource and must sortie multiple times to project sizeable combat power. They can quickly move personnel and essential equipment, but are less suited to moving heavy and outsized cargo.

The U.S. Air Force's Air Mobility Command (AMC) maintains a fleet of heavy lift aircraft comprised of 223 C-17 Globemasters, and 111 C-5 Galaxy's. Another component of the strategic airlift strategy is the availability of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) which is a pool of American flagged aircraft that carriers identify as available to the U.S. government. Fiscal Year 13 allocations from the carriers include 555 cargo and passenger aircraft capable of international long haul and short haul flights.³⁹ This

additional pool of national airlift assets helps relieve the pressure on the U.S. Air Force's heavy lift fleet, while providing additional passenger carrying capacity when required.

Sealift

U.S. sealift assets conversely offer a tremendous advantage in that they can transport large amounts of cargo and forces that upon discharge, can provide extensive deterrent and defeat capabilities. Well suited for moving large forces, sealift however, requires significantly greater movement times as compared to airlift. Once loaded and underway, it takes approximately twenty days to reach halfway around the world, a critical planning factor when considering engagement in the Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, three to six days are required for loading and unloading, thereby further extending the deployment timeline.

Regardless of the deployment timelines, U.S. sealift provides an effective ability to project the force and thereby support the GCC's. Beginning in the late 1990's, a sealift acquisition program was initiated to address a sealift shortfall and called for nineteen Large, Medium-Speed, Roll-on, Roll-off (LMSR) to fill the gap.⁴⁰ The procurement of all nineteen vessels is complete. Initial costs of force projection platforms are expensive; however, planned procurement of the Navy's LMSR fleet is complete.⁴¹ Along with twenty-nine other government owned heavy lift ships, the LMSR's round out the Navy's vessel surge fleet.

Sealift provides the U.S. the greatest power projection capability with over 90 percent of military equipment and supplies travelling by sea.⁴² For large scale deployment of forces, the Navy's power projection fleet is the preferred and most capable mode of movement. For quick and light forces, the U.S. Air Force's C-17 and C-5 fleet is the preferred mode of movement in order to quickly project combat power.

Regionally Aligned Units and Partnerships

The ability to project military power provides the U.S. tremendous advantages, but it is more than hard power that influences friends and adversaries. As Dr. Joseph Nye explains, “military resources can sometimes contribute to soft power.”⁴³ Military-to-military cooperation and training programs are an integral part of the U.S.’s force projection and enhance its soft power.⁴⁴ Humanitarian assistance to regions affected by natural disasters also provides the U.S. opportunities to exert soft power.

Historically, forward stationed units, prepositioned stocks, and force projection platforms formed the basis of the U.S. National Security Strategy. These remain extremely viable, but there are other complementing strategies that the DoD employs to help shape the security environment. Two programs, still in their infancy, that the Army uses to support national security policy are the State Sponsorship Program (SSP) and the Regionally Aligned Forces program. The SSP aligns State’s National Guard units with specific nations to act as goodwill ambassadors and foster enduring military relationships. Forty-six States and territories are currently aligned with fifty-six nations.⁴⁵

The Regionally Aligned Forces program aligns active duty units with specific geographic regions and allocates them to GCC’s for rotational use.⁴⁶ Still in development, this program provides the GCC flexibility for planning and allows units to build a knowledge base of the region and peoples they will engage with during training and exercises. Learning about the culture and country through engagement helps U.S. forces better understand the critical human domain in which they operate.

Annually, the U.S. provides essential support to requesting nations during natural disasters. By providing either funds or visible relief efforts through its military, the U.S. asserts a capability to its partners and adversaries that is unmatched. The benefits of

providing such global disaster relief are immeasurable as a strategy. Aimed at relieving human suffering, it also demonstrates U.S. power.

Whereas the Navy's CSG rotations are hard, highly visible forms of force projection, the Army's Regionally Aligned Forces program, SSP, and humanitarian assistance are softer forms of force projection. These programs rely on prepositioned stocks that can support the rotational schedules of supporting forces and disaster relief efforts. As part of the U.S.'s engagement strategy, these forces will save significant transportation costs by using the regionally prepositioned stocks for their multinational exercises, while forward prepositioned humanitarian stocks will reduce response times to natural disasters.

Potential National Security Risks

"I have directed my national security team to make our presence and mission in the Asia-Pacific a top priority. As a result, reductions in U.S. defense spending will not – I repeat, will not – come at the expense of the Asia-Pacific."⁴⁷ This statement by President Obama provides clear guidance to the DoD on where its regional and budget focus is. Given a resource constrained environment and pivot to the Asia-Pacific region, the U.S. faces potential national security risks in the form of reduced military capacity forward stationed in other regions to support maintaining Mid-East engagement and growth in Asia-Pacific; increased U.S. military response time to threats globally; and diminished influence in areas with less forward stationing.

Reduced Military Capacity in Forward Regions

Forward stationing is the most resource intensive strategy and any increase in forward stationing in the Asia-Pacific region will require a commensurate decrease in spending elsewhere. This decrease could cause potential national security risks. The

Middle East is programmed for a large reduction in military capacity with a budgetary windfall gained from the U.S. exit from Iraq and reduced operations in Afghanistan. Although many U.S. security objectives were met, there remain other regional security threats requiring diplomatic and military attention.

Other regional security threats such as Iran and transnational terrorists are destabilizing factors that remain significant regional security concerns. The current Syrian civil war provides an example of diplomatic and military challenges to U.S. interests in the region. As the U.S. rebalances military power to the Asia-Pacific region, there is the potential that it miscalculates the right balance of forces to meet the engagement strategy of the Asia-Pacific while hedging against threats in the Middle East. Moving military assets out of the Middle East to support a rebalancing strategy could significantly reduce U.S. military capacity in the region to address current and emerging military threats.

Although the Middle East remains a significant security concern, other regions pose threats for consideration for a balanced and effective U.S. military strategy. Africa and to a lesser extent, South America have long been neglected as part of a broader national security strategy, with minimal U.S. military forward presence. As internal challenges to the newly elected Egyptian government arise and transnational threats in countries such as Mali manifest themselves, the U.S. must develop strategic approaches to address potential threats arising from Africa.

Increased Response Time

Force projection generates savings in stationing costs; however, it increases response time in many situations. As U.S. forward presence through basing and forward stationed units is reduced, a time advantage is lost when regional hostilities threaten

allies, partners, and national security. Lack of forward presence entails a greater reliance on force projection and prepositioning. Limitations on available quantities of ships and aircraft can drastically reduce the ability to close a sufficiently sized force to counter a threat. Assuming risk in terms of response time requires a prudent calculation of the regional threats and how much time the U.S. is willing to cede an adversary before it can respond with credible power.

Response time is an important calculus for the U.S. just as it is for its adversaries. Whether the U.S. shifts its forces or reduces them overall, the U.S. must plan for the emboldening of its adversaries. U.S. regional absence creates advantages and opportunities that adversaries may capitalize upon and the U.S. must consider. Reducing U.S. forces and reliance on force projection may create a military vacuum in which adversaries exploit. Using Iran as an example, foreseeing an opportunity to increase their influence in the region, they may take harder stances on regional issues or attempt to expand their military influence in the region in the absence of any credible deterrent.

Diminished Influence in Areas with Less Forward Stationing

U.S. forward presence shows its allies and partners that it is serious about defending the interests of all partner nations and can respond quickly while dissuading their adversaries from seriously considering action against any partner state. The U.S. has enjoyed the benefits of its partnerships and allies throughout the course of its history. U.S. presence in host allied countries has enabled provisions for mutual defense. As the U.S. considers the reduction or complete withdrawal of forces from allied countries, it must consider the potential security risk of losing political capital with

its allies. The greatest potential for lost political capital exists when the U.S. makes unilateral decisions in forward stationed presence without the concurrence of its allies.

Any indicators of reducing U.S. presence in Korea or Japan consistently draws bilateral talks to ensure the regional threats are addressed. As an example, the bilateral plan, Strategic Alliance 2015, between the U.S. and the Republic of Korea allows for consolidation of U.S. forces and transfer of wartime operational control to the Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff by 2015.⁴⁸ Any significant amount of reductions, much less withdrawal, requires significant negotiations with these two Asian allies. Complete withdrawal of U.S. forces would make future reintroduction of U.S. forces a more difficult task should the need arise.

Serious consideration of removal of U.S. forces from the Asia-Pacific region is no longer a viable option given the stated pivot to the region and increasing threats. Conversely, force reductions in Europe have steadily increased over the last two decades with debate about the remaining ground forces forward stationed in Germany and Italy. Originally stationed to counter Soviet threat, U.S. force presence in Europe continues its downward spiral as the regional threat has dwindled. The U.S. faces important decisions about military positioning that affect its political relationships with European allies. Whether complete U.S. withdrawal or minimal presence remains in Europe, the U.S. may expend political capital as military threats to Europe decline and European capacity increases, to include increased partnership capacity of the former Soviet Bloc countries.

Recommendations

The DoD should implement a threat-based strategy to address the potential national security trade-offs caused by a rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region, coupled

with looming budget reductions. Informed by the trade-offs inherent in forward stationing, force projection, and prepositioning, this threat-based strategy will reduce national security risk by ensuring U.S. military power remains relevant and responsive.

In high threat regions, DoD should maintain its forward stationing stances tailored to meet changing regional threats, rebuild and modify the Services prepositioning strategies, and continue to rely on naval and air power projection capabilities, while maintaining those assets required to support increased reliance on power projection. In moderate threat regions, DoD should rely on its soft power projection through unit rotations supported by prepositioned stocks, increase access agreements to support increased reliance on force projection, and fully develop the joint prepositioning strategy to include establishing HA/DR prepositioned stocks. In low threat regions, DoD should maintain minimal forward stationing, capitalize on soft power projection, create HA/DR prepositioned stocks, and increase access agreements with partner nations.

High Threat Strategy

The United States faces its greatest current security threats in the Middle East and Northeast Asia. To address these threats, the U.S. should maintain credibly sized forward stationed forces in the Republic of Korea and Japan to deter any North Korean aggression. The DoD must also maintain basing and access agreements with key Mideast regional partners such as Kuwait and Qatar, while building new partnerships with regional states with similar security interests such as Yemen. Middle East agreements allow U.S. access while increasing partnership capacity and assist in deterring Iran and transnational actors.

The DoD must rebuild and maintain a robust prepositioned equipment stockage in the Middle East by rebuilding APS-5 and BEAR sites. It should build APS-4 in

Northeast Asia to support Asia-Pacific HA/DR operations and ensure APS-4 is prioritized for modernization. Given the annual loss of life to humanitarian disasters in the region, the HA/DR stocks increase the speed at which the U.S. could respond to regional requests for assistance in the aftermath of a natural disaster. The U.S. should maintain its naval presence in the Middle East and Asia-Pacific as reassurances to its allies and as a signal to its adversaries that it has not abandoned the Middle East while maintaining and building closer ties with Asia-Pacific partners.

Moderate Threat Strategy

In moderate threat regions such as Southeast Asia, the U.S. should increase its soft power projection. It should expand its partnership building capacity by implementing the Regionally Aligned Forces program and increase exercise rotations with Southeast Asia partners. Regionally Aligned Force rotations increase unit knowledge of the region while building capacity and relations. The DoD should expand regional basing agreements to increase prepositioned stocks sites tailored to support Regionally Aligned Force rotations in the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, and Australia. These prepositioned stocks sites should be joint-use and minimally manned and positioned throughout the region to support increased unit rotations while decreasing costs.

The DoD should also fully develop a joint prepositioning stock strategy in moderate threat regions. The joint-use, prepositioned sites should capitalize provision of common use Service materiel and classes of supply while positioning them in areas for multi-Service rotational support. Consolidation of Service prepositioned stocks reduces costs and correct positioning supports regional engagement rotations and exercises. The joint prepositioning strategy should also support a regional HA/DR package to increase U.S. soft power through responsive humanitarian assistance missions.

Low Threat Strategy

The DoD should maintain current forward stationed units in Europe to continue interoperability development with NATO allies while supporting Article 5 of NATO's mutual defense requirements. They should also support NATO partner operations as demonstrated by U.S. support to France during their anti-terrorist operations in Mali. These units should support partnership building and interoperability with Eastern European countries to capitalize on former Soviet Bloc country willingness to partner with the U.S. The DoD should also continue basing consolidation in Germany to reduce operational budgets while maintaining air and sea basing rights in Spain, Italy and Turkey.

The DoD should also capitalize on its soft power projection through force rotations in Africa, Eastern Europe, and South America. Regionally Aligned Force rotations should begin and the SPP should continue. The U.S. should forge new partnerships in Africa to build partnership capacity, hedge against transnational threats and support humanitarian relief efforts when requested.

Just as in the Asia-Pacific region, the DoD should create a regional HA/DR prepositioned stocks site to support disaster relief efforts in the USAFRICOM and U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) AOR's. In order to reduce costs, the DoD should collocate the USAFRICOM HA/DR package with APS-2 in Europe to allow for quick transport to the affected area. APS-1 should include the USSOUTHCOM HA/DR package located close to the Gulf of Mexico to quickly support the Caribbean and Central America.

The DoD should also expand regional access agreements with African partners. Access agreements should provide capacity for Regionally Aligned Force rotations and

the SPP in support of DoD military engagement strategies. Determination of access agreements should also include analysis of likely disaster relief areas and provide adequate air and sea capacity.

Conclusion

The United States military faces a series of significant budget cuts over the next several years that will impact force posture. These cuts, coupled with the increased importance of the Asia-Pacific region and the continued importance of the Middle East causes potential national security risks and requires DoD to reassess its force projection, prepositioning, and forward stationing strategies. Each strategy has unique trade-offs which DoD must consider when formulating its global security strategy.

By considering the current and emerging threats, DoD should develop and employ a threat-based strategy which leverages the unique benefits of each supporting strategy. Such a global strategy will be affordable and ensure the U.S. continues to be able to apply military power to support advancement of its national interests.

Endnotes

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