

## Chapter 2

### Domestic Theory of Foreign Basing

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#### Introduction

What explains basing and deployment outcomes for the US military abroad? In this chapter, I propose a “second image” explanation for the American military presence overseas (Waltz 1979; Moravcsik 1997). The partisan alignment of the Presidency and Congress determine whether the United States will expand its basing apparatus abroad or contract it. Simply put, when the same party controls the Presidency and Congress, the American presence overseas expands. The basing apparatus contracts when these branches of government are divided in their partisan affiliations.

In the previous chapter, I showed that studies of basing do not account for domestic politics within the United States, and many previous scholars have shown that politics does *not* stop at the water’s edge. Instead, these authors argued that the use of American military force is highly vulnerable to partisanship in a number of different ways. For instance, because of the preferences of their domestic coalitions, Republicans are more likely to engage in diversionary uses of force when unemployment is high and Democrats are more likely to engage in diversionary uses of force when inflation is high (Fordham 1998a; 2002). Others have revealed that partisanship matters most greatly as a mechanism for constraining the President’s freedom to use force (Howell and Pevehouse 2005; 2007). Partisanship has been found to influence military spending (Garfinkel 1994), the invocation of the War Powers Resolution (Meernik 1995), the perception of foreign threats (Fordham 1998b), and more.

Additionally, going back at least as far as the 1950s, there has been a recognition that Congress and the President have diverging incentives when it comes to foreign policy (Dahl 1950). Congress has the ability to interject itself into the ability of the President to make war, regardless of partisan affiliation (Deering and Fisher, in Thurber 1991). Congress also has a greater incentives to focus on the distributional aspects of foreign policy than the President does (Rundquest, Barry, Carsey 2002). Even without having an active role beyond the threat to reject treaties, Congress creates a “two level” game in negotiations with foreign powers (Putnam 1998). However, others have argued that these diverging incentives have led Congress to abandon its role in conducting, managing, or overseeing foreign policy and the actions of the President in that sphere (Schhsinger 1972; Peterson 1994; Hinckley 1994).

These previous works make it clear that both partisanship and the division of power in Washington can have a large influence over foreign policy. This is not to say that the authors who posit mostly “demand-based” theories of military deployments have no merit, indeed they do. Strategic considerations still determine a great deal about where American forces deploy and the extent to which strategic necessity can overcome partisan differences (Harkavy 1989; Sandars 2000). Host regimes also have the ability to manipulate the politics of basing in their own countries (Cooley 2008). Conversely, as an outside military force that comes with advanced weaponry, loads of cash, and alliance commitments, an American military presence can have a

profound effect upon the regimes where they are based (Lake 2013). All of these theories are key to our understanding of both the causes and effects of US bases overseas.

However, the current state of theory on basing an American military deployments is incomplete without an examination of domestic American politics. If the military presence overseas is the product, Washington D.C. is where it is manufactured. The White House responds to demand signals from allies and strategic concerns by moving forces around the world, to the extent that it is capable. In the absence of an adequate supply of forces overseas, it must request that Congress increase the supply available, either by expanding the size of the force overall or by allowing the shifting of forces from the Continental United States (CONUS) to the area of high demand. This domestic discussion is missing from the current theoretical framework of American military deployments, and it is the primary contribution of my work here.

Both the political and pecuniary costs of mobilization come into play when examining the domestic political production of military presence. Previous work is again instructive here, as it has shown that the types of mobilization used in any particular instance of conflict or crisis affects public support for war, a particularly salient issue to officials dependent upon public support to maintain their office (Burk 2006). Individual members of Congress may have a desire to mobilize military forces, but they prefer to insulate their own particular district from the consequences as much as possible. In addition, it is nearly impossible to withdraw support for mobilization once Congress gives it to the President, making the decision to mobilize from the congressional viewpoint a profoundly impactful one (Pevehouse 2007).

Alternatively, mobilization gives the President some inherent advantages when conducting foreign policy. Mobilization is a signal of resolve to an adversarial state, and as such can produce a bargaining advantage for the President's foreign policy. Such an advantage makes it more likely (*ceteris paribus*) that the President can extract concessions from the opposing state without having to resort to actual costly war (Lai 2004; Tarar 2013).

Works on global American military strategy often treat the distribution of forces as though it is outside a domestic political context. Given the previously cited works on the function of Congress and partisanship in this arena, that assumption is clearly faulty, and leads studies of basing and global force distributions to false or misleading conclusions. This study incorporates that context in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of base politics.

The first step in doing so is to establish the idea that, while the stakes may be higher in some cases, the normal rules of politics apply.<sup>1</sup> Officials seek to maintain their office. Members of Congress and the President have different constituencies and therefore different incentives as to how to survive in office. We can see the divergence between congressional and presidential preferences when we look at trade policy. For instance, the President is often more friendly toward free trade than Members of Congress. Congress has to primarily protect industries within their districts, whereas the President can look at the pros and cons of trade policy on a national level (Lohmann and O'Halloran 1994; O'Halloran 1994; Rogowski 1990; Rodrik 1995).

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<sup>1</sup> Obviously, war and the deployment of military force can be more high stakes, especially for those involved, than other kinds of spending.

Those diverging incentives create conflict over military policy as well. Political officials not only consider the costs and benefits of weapons programs on strategic and monetary levels, but they also keep in mind the distributional consequences of these policies. For instance, Nincic and Cusack (1979) show that the level of military spending since WWII is largely a function of the preference for certain economic conditions and the electoral value of such spending, rather than being purely a function of military and strategic value. Thus, we see examples of spending patterns that contradict basic strategic intuition and the advice of both defense experts and the Department of Defense itself (Military.com 2014).<sup>2</sup>

The root of this type of behavior is Distributive Politics Theory (Krehbiel 1991). This theory shows that Congress will direct any policy that can be easily subdivided from the general pool of federal funds to particular constituencies for electoral benefit. As we would expect from cases like the continued funding of the M1A1 tank after the military specifically requested that funding halt, scholars have shown that Distributive Politics Theory applies to military procurement (Rundquist and Carsey 2002).

In accordance with this theory, my first contribution is to show that Distributive Politics Theory applies to the whole of the military forces of the United States. In this scenario, all military personnel are the “general pool” of resources that can be drawn from, and Congress can direct it into particular locations as it sees fit for its electoral benefit. My second contribution is to show that all Members of Congress (MCs) have similar motivations in this regard, but that MCs vary over time in their willingness to act on their motivations because of partisan affiliations and incentives. I will go into further details of how this operates in the sections that follow. Third, I contribute to our understanding of military decision making by hypothesizing a hierarchical structure to the process of globally distributing military forces, which shows that the President is far more constrained than is generally acknowledged in the current literature.

In this chapter, we first have to understand the history of how American forces arrived at various locations around the world. Second, I examine the incentives that three main actors (President, Congress, and Department of Defense) have in this process. Third, I hypothesize how these preferences come into contact with each other and how the structure of responsibilities and preferences explain outcomes in the placement of the US military. Lastly, I show remaining passive mechanisms that are in place to reinforce these processes over time. Together, the preferences, processes, and passive mechanisms combine to show that domestic factors, particularly partisan politics, are a consequential factor in the distribution of American military forces around the world.

## **History and Context**

After the Second World War, the United States quickly decided to base military forces overseas on a permanent basis for the first time in its history. It had become increasingly obvious in the dying days of the war that the next struggle would be against the Soviet Union. The Soviets held the same suspicions against the United States, as they began building defensive fortifications

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2014/12/18/congress-again-buys-abrams-tanks-the-army-doesnt-want.html>

across Eastern Europe as they liberated territory from Nazi occupation (Weigley 1973). As the Cold War began, both sides entrenched in their respective “zones” with some on each side calling for invasion of the other. However, both tacitly accepting the status quo, but neither side could be sure of the other’s intentions, so each maintained a large force in both Europe and Asia.

This is where the story of overseas basing begins for the United States, as the forces remaining in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East were all historical remnants of the WWII fight. The vast majority of units deployed to these areas were repatriated back to the United States. Those that remained to “fight” the Cold War were simply left behind rather than actively forward deployed from the United States. As will be explained in further detail below, even this permanent stationing of forces around the world represented a compromise between the executive and legislative branches and their respective incentives. The post-WWII period marks the first time in American history that the United States did not fully demobilize in the wake of a war (DoD Stats 1997).<sup>3</sup> In this period, we can see an illustration of the tension between strategy and economy that would come to define American military deployments over the next seventy years.

Many analysts interpreted the permanent force that was left behind as a sea change in American politics, that the United States had finally accepted its responsibility as a global power whose presence was needed in order to ensure stability (Schlisinger 1973; Krauthammer 2002/2003, Zakaria 1998; Ikenberry 2001). These analysts hypothesized that the United States had finally turned its back on its isolationist impulses and engaged with the world. While the WWII experience may have convinced portions of the American population that the United States could be a force for good in the world, the structure of incentives for officeholders in the American political system did not change substantially.

The executive national security apparatus did change dramatically with the adoption of the National Security Act of 1947 (and amendments), which established the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Council, among others. This act endowed the President with more power, and greater ability to use it, than ever before. However, there is a key piece of this puzzle that analysts have given short shrift over the past seventy years, the fact that Congress still maintained substantial powers over the budget for the military and intelligence agencies, along with the ability to dictate how the President can use the forces at his disposal.

A short example is instructive here. Most analysts argue that the post-WWII period was defined by a “Cold War consensus” when it came to foreign policy, where both parties agreed that the Soviet Union needed to be opposed and it was simply a matter of picking the right strategy to do so (Ewald 1986; Reilly 1987; Wolfe 1986). While others have shown that this consensus may have been overblown (WittKopf and McCormick 1990), the extent to which a consensus did exist was due to deliberate efforts to build one. Many in Congress, particularly President Truman’s Republican opposition, wanted to focus the government’s attention on the domestic economy and the threat of labor radicals at home (Fordham 1998). President Truman decided to go over the heads of the congressional opposition and appeal directly to the public and “scare the

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.alternatewars.com/BBOW/Stats/DOD\\_SelectedStats\\_FY97.pdf](http://www.alternatewars.com/BBOW/Stats/DOD_SelectedStats_FY97.pdf)

hell out of the American people” in order to put pressure on these recalcitrant Members of Congress (Patterson 1996).

The strategy worked. By the early 1950s, survey evidence showed that an overwhelming majority of the American people thought that “Communism is a real threat to US security and to our free way of life” (US Department of State 1951). Congress dutifully increased the military budget by three-fold from \$13.5 billion to \$45 billion and approved the shift of more military forces overseas, with bipartisan support. Though the outcome showed a supposed consensus on the issue, these other works show that there was a deliberate strategy to overcome the deeply rooted contradiction in incentives between the President and Congress, and between the President’s party and the opposition. Even during the time that is generally acknowledged to be one of the most bipartisan in terms of foreign policy in the country’s history, there was a clear and profound schism across these dimensions that had to be overcome through the generation of increased “demand” signals for US military forces overseas.

The first five years following the end of WWII showed the struggle for control over military policy taking shape. Congress initially took the reins by demobilizing 90% of the forces sent to fight the war. The President believed that the demand for American forces overseas outstripped what Congress had provided, and he deliberately set about overcoming congressional hesitance to increase the supply. Only when the public had been sufficiently engaged to the point that concern about the Soviet threat overcame more parochial and local economic concerns did Congress acquiesce. While a general consensus existed among the US public for a short time (Wittkopf and McCormick 1990), the structure of incentives within different branches of the US government and across parties did not change. It is that structure, and the ways that incentives across party and branch come into contact, that is the subject of this study.

## **Incentives**

In order to understand how the process of basing leads to particular outcomes, we must understand the nature of incentives faced by the actors with significant power over parts of the basing structure. As always when dealing with political officials (both elected and appointed), the primary assumption is that they operate in a way that maximizes their ability to stay in the position. For elected officials, this boils down to simple electability. For bureaucratic officials, it is perhaps more complicated, but it includes the perceived effectiveness in achieving the goals given by the official’s superiors along with refraining from anything that might be considered politically sensitive or “embarrassing” to elected superiors.

What we see here is that there will be an ongoing struggle for military resources between the executive and the legislative branches of government. The President desires flexibility in conducting his foreign policy for numerous reasons, and he will have an easier time gaining some slack from Congress when his party controls the House and Senate. Members of Congress, on the other hand, see a greater benefit to their individual electoral prospects when the military has a presence within their district. However, their incentives to seek this benefit vary across time as their party waxes and wanes in its power over both Congress and the Presidency. Lastly, within the Department of Defense, there is a fight for resources within Combatant Commands,

with Combatant Commanders fighting for a greater “piece of the pie” so that they have more resources to accomplish the tasks given to them by the President.

### *President*

The two political branches that rely on election have the most power in this realm, and they are therefore the focus of this study. Typically, most analysts have considered the President as indisputably in charge of American foreign policy since the end of WWII and largely responsible for the global distribution of American forces (Schlesinger 1973). He is undoubtedly powerful in this realm. Even where he is constrained, he has enormous influence over the global distribution of forces, and he possesses the power of agenda setting over strategic priorities as we saw in the previous section with President Truman in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Especially in situations that call for rapid response, the President has wide latitude over how to use the forces of the United States military.

When it comes to the placement of those forces, he responds to several key incentives that all boil down to the desire for reelection.<sup>4</sup> As the only elected constitutional officer with a national constituency, the President is in a unique position to act in what he considers the national interest. Scholars have noted that this is the case when it comes to trade (Conconi, Facchini, and Zanardi 2012), the use of force (Howell and Pevehouse 2005, 2007), general diplomacy (Putnam 1988), and governing across all issues (Bond and Fleisher 1990). As such, the driving force behind presidential decision-making when it comes to basing is what he perceives as the broad national security interests of the country, as well as the broad *national* economy.

The national interest, when it comes to basing and military presence, includes a dedication to the military “mission” that is currently under way, aimed at the current adversary of the United States, for the protection of American alliance commitments abroad, and in accordance with the national security strategy that the President puts forth. Over the past 65 years, the mission for the American military has been one of “forward defense.” During the Cold War, forward defense included stationing massive military resources in Central Europe to defend against a potential Soviet invasion of NATO allies. Likewise, large groups of military assets were stationed in East Asia during the Cold War – in South Korea along the Demilitarized Zone, and in Japan, Guam, and the Philippines. Currently, the mission is mostly focused on the Middle East and South Asia, with priority given to assets aimed at prosecuting wars in Iraq/Syria and Afghanistan.

As we can see from this evolving mission over time (first in Europe and East Asia, now in the Middle East), the geographic focus of the American military and the need for American military resources can change relatively quickly in response to world events, especially since the end of the Cold War. Before the attacks of September 11, 2001, few expected a protracted conflict in Central Asia, and prior to the Russian annexation of Crimea, similarly few analysts considered a resurgent Russian threat and, as a corollary, an ensuing reemergence of Eastern Europe as a

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<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this work, I consider a second-term President as acting in the interest of his party's reelection prospects to the White House. While this may be a debatable assumption on several issues, I find little reason to believe that the incentives to behave in the national interest (as opposed to the district-level interest for Members of Congress) changes for a second term President.

strategic focus. Numerous additional examples of the speed of international events abound, from the increasing threat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, to the surprise invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein, and these show that flexibility must be one of the main priorities of the President when he is executing American military policy. An increased ability to flexibly restructure the American overseas presence makes it easier for the President to use force in response to a hot-spot crisis or to deter sudden aggression from an adversary.

Why is flexibility so crucial to the President and his electoral prospects? Politically speaking, the electorate often holds the President accountable for crisis response. As we've seen in numerous cases, from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution in 1979 to the Benghazi attacks in 2012, a crisis situation without a response from the President can be electorally problematic (if not disastrous). Responding to crises in a timely and effective manner can make the President look like a good crisis manager with his finger on the pulse of world events, which can instead lead to a positive electoral effect. In addition, Presidents who can stand up to perceived foreign aggression or win foreign wars have greater electoral prospects in ensuing elections (Bueno de Mesquita et al 1992, 1999, 2003; Russett 1993; Baliga, Lucca, and Sjostrom 2007; Filson and Werner 2004; Jackson and Morelli 2007).

Also in the political realm, if the President has an increased ability to order an attack on a moment's notice (because he can restructure the force abroad in a way that makes an attack feasible), going to Congress for an Authorization of the Use of Military Force (AUMF) less necessary or practical. If the President can act before seeking congressional approval, he can present Congress with a fait accompli, in which case members of Congress are faced with a decision to withdraw funds for an ongoing operation rather than granting or withholding permission before operations commence. Past cases, such as President Clinton's bombing of Iraq or Kosovo in the late 1990s or President Reagan's invasion of Granada, are good examples of the political benefits of quick response when numerous forces are already in theatre. In both cases, the President had no need to request congressional support beforehand, because prepositioned forces allowed him to strike upon giving the order. The ensuing congressional debates about defunding ongoing operations went nowhere, with individual Members of Congress unwilling to risk looking unsupportive of military forces during ongoing operations.

A further benefit of flexibility in the basing apparatus is the efficiency that it offers in terms of bargaining with basing partners. For instance, after operations in Afghanistan commenced in 2001, it was increasingly obvious that the logistical infrastructure in Central Asia was inadequate for maintaining a large force in Afghanistan indefinitely. In the absence of a strategic focal point, Congress would not have authorized a deployment to Central Asia before the 9/11 attacks, despite the potential future strategic benefits. Such a deployment would have been deemed surplus to requirements without a salient mission. However, countries in the region held the upper hand in their bargaining positions when the United States started seeking bases after American involvement in Central Asia became necessary and obvious. This resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars being spent for basing rights in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, along with a disadvantageous deal with Russia to ship supplies overland via Russian rail links. Negotiated and flexible basing rights in advance of the onset of a crisis would have alleviated such difficult bargaining situations, which cost a significant amount of money and delay operations until the logistical support can be established.

## *Congress*

Members of Congress have plenty of incentives to play a profound role in the making of basing policies and act on their own preferences, which differ from the President's because of the nature of their constituencies. Members of Congress are primarily responsible to the people of their district. As opposed to the President, Members do not have a national constituency and do not necessarily consider policies based on their implications for the country as a whole. Others have shown that this is the case when it comes to pork barrel politics, when it comes to general infrastructure projects, education funding, trade, and other areas (Bailey, Goldstein, and Weingast 1997; Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Rogowski 1987). The Department of Defense (DoD) is the largest portion of the discretionary federal budget, and as such, it is the largest "barrel" of pork available. IR scholars have generally considered the provision of national defense as a public good and therefore not "pork." However, it is simply a large pool of money that is authorized every year, and Congress has the primary role in directing where and how these funds are spent.

The provision of national security comes through the fielding of an armed forces that protect the territorial integrity of the nation. The United States, as a global superpower, has an additional role of protecting the global commons of shipping lanes, freedom of navigation, and general stability (Lake 2009). While these public goods theoretically apply everywhere, the forces that provide the public goods must be based *somewhere*. Others have shown that the provision of public goods also comes with the receipt of private goods for some (Broz 1999; Lichbach 1995; Conybeare and Sandler 1992; Moe 1980). For instance, arms manufacturers receive both the public good of national security but also the private good that comes from orders for their products from the armed forces.

Where they are based has a profound impact upon the local economy and structure of life in that place. Wherever they are based, the military forces not only provide the public good of security to the people in that locality (as they do to all people within the nation, and to some extent, the world) but they also provide specific and concentrated private goods as well. Local businesses can be contracted for hundreds of millions of dollars a year (or more) to provide goods to the base, to build infrastructure in the form of roads, runways, shelter, and offices, and to even provide security for the base itself. Thousands of service members flood into the area to spend money in the local economy. The ways in which local economic prospects can improve from military bases are too numerous to list. Suffice it to say, a military presence provides a massive boon.

Because of this massive infusion of money and opportunity that comes along with a military base, it is an incredibly valuable commodity to a Member of Congress. Others have shown that Members' electoral prospects are highly susceptible to local economic conditions (Mayhew 1974; Owens and Wade 1984; Arnold 1990), and because of the economic benefits previously discussed, local conditions can change dramatically with the addition or loss of a military base within a district. Thousands of new jobs can be gained or lost within the district because of basing decisions. The addition of a military base can sew up reelection for a Member of

Congress, just as previous studies have shown that the loss of a military base amounts to almost certain defeat in the next election (Rocca 2003; Sorenson 1998).

Foreign governments also constantly lobby the United States for military forces, which simply emphasizes the point of how economically valuable they are. Even in nations where the population as a whole opposes the American presence, local businesses are usually the most favorable to the continuation of the basing structure. This occurred in Germany, where local businesses cropped up around American bases that existed for decades during the Cold War and were hit hardest in places where the American presence downsized. Other locations have lobbied the German government to pressure the US government to stay (Washington Post 2012<sup>5</sup>; Reuters 2012<sup>6</sup>). Likewise, when the US establishes a new presence somewhere in the world, it often leaves the precise locations of the forces up to the host nation's government. Leaving it to the host can lead to a mad scramble by local officials to get the base in their district. Thus, within host countries abroad, we can see the same incentives at play surrounding bases that exist within the US.

Because of these benefits to the economic prospects of a locality, and therefore the Member's reelection prospects, many Members of Congress will desire a military presence in their district. However, there is only a finite amount of military resources to go around. Obviously, other Members with bases in their own districts would fight to prevent their base from moving to another district. Since there are also few military missions close to CONUS itself, a Member is unlikely to be able to make a strategic case for the movement of a military base from one part of the United States to another. In general, it would also be incredibly wasteful to simply shift around bases within the United States every few years. There is one key place for Members to look for a pool of basing resources – overseas.

Members' ability to redistribute forces from overseas back to CONUS depends on partisan politics. Not every Member of Congress who wants a military base can obtain or keep one, and not every Member of Congress that fights for a base during one term will do so in another term. Why do these incentives and their ability to act on them change over time? First, not only is the narrow political interest of the Member of Congress important, but so are the electoral prospects of its party and its leader when that party occupies the White House. The converse is also true, as Members of Congress also care about the political prospects of the President when he is from the opposing party. Members' electoral prospects are often at the mercy of their party leader's "coat tails" (Waldman 1967; Brady and Lynn 1973; Ferejohn and Calvert 1984; Campbell 1985; Herrnson and Morris 2006).

Members are likely to support the President's foreign policy agenda when he is from their own party. Senators and Representatives do so for several reasons. First, co-partisans trust each other to do the "right thing" more than they do individuals from the opposing party (Fiorina 1981; Goren 2002; Carlin and Love 2013). Trust makes it so that co-partisans do not see giving the President additional flexibility in the running of his foreign policy as a threat or risk. Rather, they see it as a benefit and allowing the President to react appropriately in a time of crisis. Second,

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/german-town-fears-loss-of-us-army-base/2012/03/23/gIQAoNzzeS\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/german-town-fears-loss-of-us-army-base/2012/03/23/gIQAoNzzeS_story.html)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-us-military-idUSTRE80Q1A620120127>

because of electoral “coat tails,” the President’s electoral prospects run in tandem with his co-partisans in Congress, and so allowing him to appear as an effective and competent manager is good for the party’s electoral prospects in general.

Likewise, when the opposing party’s leader is in the White House, Members are likely to oppose that agenda. How can a Member of Congress oppose the President’s foreign policy agenda when they are from opposing parties? First, a Member is freer to act on their own particular interest in reelection and the prospects of their own district. Since the opposition party’s electoral prospects are divorced from those of the President, it can act on its own narrow district-level interest more than when their fate is tied to that of the President.

Second, members of the opposing party have less loyalty to the President and his agenda, and as others have shown, they have less trust that the opposing party’s President will act in good faith. Constraining his ability to act without congressional approval forces him to air the justifications for his foreign policy in open public debate, which is necessary since the opposition does not implicitly trust the President’s motivations as his co-partisans do.

Relatedly, Members from the opposing party are keen to constrain the President’s flexibility when it comes to foreign policy in general. This has several benefits. It forces the President to seek congressional approval for maneuvering forces or using force when sufficient military resources are not immediately available abroad. Forcing the President to seek congressional approval slows down any presidential ambitions in foreign policy and forces a public debate to justify the use of force, which engages the public more than when the President acts on his own (Pevehouse 2007). Such a public debate lays the groundwork for public disapproval if things go poorly with the President’s foreign policy, which is advantageous to the party opposing his agenda. If forces are being withdrawn from overseas basing for these political reasons, the obvious place to put them is in electorally advantageous positions at home.

### *Department of Defense*

The third actor to play a significant role in basing decisions is the Department of Defense, which has two particular subsets that plays a meaningful part in the domestic struggle over the global distribution of forces. The first is the Pentagon itself and the planners there that have a global portfolio, and the second are the Combatant Commands (COCOMs) that have a regional area of responsibility (AOR). The incentives that each group faces generally align with whether they have a global or regional responsibility.

For instance, the planners in charge of global policy making have general preferences that very closely align with the President of the United States. These planners are responsible for conducting ongoing operations wherever “the mission” is. Since the mission since WWII has largely been far from American shores, the overall Pentagon preference is to push forces outward from the CONUS to where they will be used.

Having them on hand, closer to the global hot spot, has numerous military benefits. First, it allows for a greater element of military surprise. If the President orders military force against an

adversary, there is much less lead time needed to actually carry out the mission. This reduces the likelihood that an adversary can mobilize in defense. Second, forward stationing allows for the training of forces closer to where they may be called to fight, which often permits a more real-world scenario than on American soil. Third, forward stationing allows the building of partnerships with host nations and military-to-military cooperation that strengthens the combined force for occasions when they may be used together. Lastly, the military has more leeway over the ability to close down unused facilities abroad, which allows them to operate more efficiently than in the United States, where the Pentagon is barred from shuttering any facility.

Additionally, as will be further described below, the Pentagon is subject to the budgetary constraints imposed on it by Congress and the President. As such, it can lobby those branches to increase their budget, but once it is passed, the Pentagon must live with the budget that it possesses. Given this constraint, the Pentagon prefers to be able to use the resources at its disposal in what it sees as the most efficient way possible. It would prefer to be able to shutter inefficient, redundant, or superfluous facilities to put those resources where they are needed more urgently.

However, the specific Combatant Commands have a different set of incentives that call it to fight for maintaining resources within its AOR. The President gives each Combatant Commander a set of missions to each every year in the National Security Strategy. In order to accomplish these goals, the Combatant Commanders must be given an appropriate amount of resources. They request military personnel, equipment, and funding from the national military authorities in the Pentagon (who must weight the cost-benefit of shifting forces from elsewhere) and the President (who must do the same), but each are only able to shift forces from *elsewhere abroad* rather than from the United States itself. Of course, if one Combatant Commander requests forces into his AOR from another part of the world, the Combatant Commander from elsewhere will object and seek to maintain his share of the global distribution.

The restrictions that this bureaucratic infighting between COCOMS, as well as the inability of either the Pentagon or the President to permanently shift forces abroad from the United States can severely inhibit the ability of a Combatant Commander to secure the resources that he thinks are necessary to complete his mission. The last resort is to petition Congress for the ability to draw forces from CONUS itself.

In the end, if the Combatant Commander is unable to secure the necessary resources to accomplish his given task, his job may be in jeopardy. Thus, individual Combatant Commanders fight fiercely between them when the President or the Pentagon attempts to shift forces from one COCOM to another, or when resources from one COCOM are used in tasks outside of their AOR.

**Figure 1**  
**Main Actors and Incentives**

<b>President</b>	<b>Congress (general)</b>	<b>Department of Defense</b>
National interest	Local economy and jobs	<i>Pentagon</i>
Flexibility		Push forces outward
Crisis response	<i>President's party</i>	Efficiency
Overseas mission	Support President	
Speed		<i>COCOMs</i>
Bargaining advantages	<i>Opposition party</i>	Gain and protect resources for AOR
	Constraint President	

**Powers**

Each actor's incentives are only as important as their ability to act on them, which depend on their individual powers. These three main components of military-political apparatus are responsible for different parts of the process and give them the ability to constrain the others in certain respects.

*Congress*

Congress has wide powers when it comes to the making of military policy. The most important of these is control over the federal budget. Congress can not only appropriate funds, but it can also prescribe the ways in which those funds can (or cannot) be used. Congress takes this power extremely seriously, especially when it comes to potential distributional issues that could affect their home districts. Annually, Congress creates a National Defense Authorization Act, which authorizes the ways in which the funds it *will* disperse (the authorization for how to use funds comes before the actual appropriation of those funds) can be used by the military. This overarching document is generally hundreds of pages long and creates very detailed instructions for the executive branch to follow in the coming year.

Beyond this general document, there are subcommittees that have additional responsibility over particular parts of the Defense budget, how large it will be, and what the executive branch may use particular funds to do. Of particular importance to this study is the Subcommittee on Military Construction (MilCon). Without specific authorization and appropriation from the Subcommittee, nothing of military substance may be built anywhere in the world. As such, it is one of the most important subcommittees on Capitol Hill, and perhaps the most important component of both the House and Senate Armed Services Committee.

Congress also has significant powers to ensure that the executive branch is using the money that it appropriated in the manner that it authorized. First, Congress has constant "police patrols" in motion in the form of Congressional Delegations (CODELs), Staff Delegations (STAFFDELS), and unofficial trips by both (NODELs) that visit sites throughout the world where the US military is stationed, operating, or building (McCubbins and Schwartz 1984). These patrols are primarily for the purpose of being a leading investigative edge against potential waste, fraud,

abuse, or principal-agent “slippage” between Congress and those who implement Congressional authorizations within the executive branch.

Not only are Members of Congress and their personal and committee staffs constantly in motion around the world, but members of the general national security apparatus, the Pentagon proper, and the COCOMs are routinely summoned before congressional committees to testify as to their ongoing actions and operations. This is yet another way in which Congress constantly checks executive actions, keeps tabs on the amount of money being spent and its purpose, and potentially brings public embarrassment on officials who do not abide by congressional guidance.

### *Department of Defense*

The most important power that the Pentagon has is the ability to set the military agenda. The Pentagon decides what is good military strategy or bad strategy, what capabilities are needed in any particular scenario, and what resources are enough to accomplish those tasks. While there have been a few presidents capable of doing this on their own (and they have staffs that help), presidents are still largely dependent upon the military to give them “unbiased” advice about military matters.

The power to set the military agenda is profoundly important. For instance, when President Obama announced the so-called “pivot” to Asia at the outset of his first term, the military was able to define the amount of resources that were “available” to shift into the Pacific Theatre, given responsibilities elsewhere. The Pentagon defines for the President what can be sacrificed in other theatres without critically compromising missions in those areas. For example, large numbers of ground forces were largely unavailable to shift to the Pacific, as the United States was still engaged in combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Similarly, naval and air resources were tied up in the Persian Gulf due to still-heightened tensions with Iran. In the end, the Pivot to Asia amounted to a single new base for a brigade of US Marines in Darwin, Australia. We can see from this example that the Pentagon has a significant ability to shape general strategy from the President, especially when it cuts across regions of the world defined by Combatant Commands.

The power to set the military agenda also coincides with the second key component of Pentagon power in this arena – the ability to appeal to Congress. While a permanent shift of forces across COCOMs may be unlikely without Pentagon support (including at least tacit support from the Combatant Commander on the losing end of the shift), it is impossible without congressional support. Transitioning forces from one area of the world to another on a permanent basis requires an infusion of money and authorization from Congress in order to shutter one facility and build another. If the President insists on going against military advice on a transfer of resources from one AOR to another, members of the military can make their objections known to Congress during the many times they are called to testify in front of congressional committees. Especially when the President’s opposition controls Congress, members can make political hay out of the idea that the President is ignoring military advice and refuse to authorize the expenditure.

**Figure 2**  
**Actors and Powers**

<b>President</b>	<b>Congress (general)</b>	<b>Department of Defense</b>
Political agenda setting Public appeals Fait accomplis Small-scale uses of force	Budget Investigatory power Police patrols	Military agenda setting Implementation Appeals to Congress

*President*

The President maintains most of the power that is not specifically in the hands of the Pentagon and Congress. This is an incredible amount of power. Perhaps the most important of these powers is the ability to set the political agenda. The President can largely determine national security priorities that undergo discussion within Congress and the Pentagon, as we saw in the previous example of President Obama’s pivot to Asia. While the other actors have significant abilities when it comes to blocking Presidential priorities, the President generally has first mover advantage. Since the President is a single individual with a staff all his own, he can move more swiftly than the Pentagon and Congress, which are made up of far more actors that are often in competition with each other.

In addition, when the President sets the political agenda in terms of national security, the national media take notice. As a clear titular subordinate to the President, the Pentagon has little ability to shape this agenda, but much of congressional debate that follows ends up as a referendum of the President’s priority and whether Congress will approve or block it (Pevehouse 2007). As the national media largely only take note when the President engages it, he has the ability to escalate an issue to national attention if he so chooses. While Congress has the ability to engage the local media (where a large percentage of Americans still get their news), it is only in response to something that the President put on the national agenda.

As we saw in the example of President Truman above, this power is a significant one. By “scaring the hell out of the American people,” President Truman defined the terms of the debate on a national scale and put Members of Congress in a tough position. It could choose to address what its constituents saw as an existential threat, look asleep at the switch, or appear parochial by fighting against the distribution of forces overseas to deter the Communist threat. The power to engage the public directly, when used effectively and combined with a threat that the public acknowledges, has the ability to overcome the opposition’s inherent desire to constrain the President if the public cares more about the distant national security threat than the infusion of money and jobs that a base can provide.

The President can also set the agenda by simply engaging in the use of force without asking Congress. This presents Congress with a fait accompli and refusing to allow the shifting of forces overseas to support ongoing operations risks looking “unpatriotic” during a time of war or potentially responsible for losses during the conflict. President Clinton did this in Kosovo in 1999, as did President Obama when intervening in Libya. While Congress has the power to cut

off funding for ongoing operations, it has never done so, and only once did Congress actually start the War Powers “clock” during operations in Lebanon in the early 1980s. Most recently, rather than formally starting the “clock” or withdrawing funds for ongoing operations, the House of Representatives rebuked the President for failing to seek congressional authorization for operations in Libya (NYTimes 2011).<sup>7</sup> These congressional actions had little impact on actual military policy or the distribution of forces, because the President executed them via a *fait accompli*.

Congressional inaction in the wake of small-scale uses of force (those that generally do not involve large ground forces) is almost a given at this point, which makes the *fait accompli* one of the President’s most potent powers. The way Congress reacts to these situations gives the President enormous leeway when he sees a pressing national security issue. The attitude of Congress in these situations is best described by a White House spokesman in the wake of congressional debate over ongoing operations in Kosovo when he said the House had “voted no on going forward, no on going back, and . . . tied on standing still.”<sup>8</sup>

However, presenting a *fait accompli* requires the use of force, and in situations where he is unwilling or unable to do so, he still needs Congress and the Pentagon. Even in instances where he does engage in the small-scale use of force, it has little ability to alter the overall distribution of forces around the world on a permanent basis. For that, he still needs to engage in the complicated bargaining with the two other main actors.

## **Base Decisions**

When we put all of these incentives and powers together, it shows that basing, personnel, and deployment decisions are strategic interactions between different parts of the US government. The President cannot simply act as he sees fit in all situations. Congress has different preferences depending on its makeup, and the Pentagon and subcomponents each have its own preferences as to the dispersion of American forces. Given the powers explained above, those two actors can prevent the President from pursuing basing policies that counter their fundamental interests in some way. The result is a kind of hierarchy of decision making, in which the President has more flexibility to move forces as the scale gets smaller, as the presence gets less permanent, and as the geographic transition is smaller.

As with kinds of power, simply possessing them is often enough to change the calculation of the other actors in a strategic game. Rather than making proposals that the Pentagon or Congress will reject outright, the President will anticipate the preferences of the others. Likewise, Congress and the Pentagon will do the same if proposals may conflict with Presidential priorities on their face. Thus, many of the powers never have to be used at all, but they structure the decision making process in the way that I theorize here. As one former Pentagon planner said, “most of these negotiations take place informally in the halls of Congress and in the corridors of the Pentagon before any public display of interbranch conflict is made. Members of Congress make known to

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<sup>7</sup>[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/04/world/africa/04policy.html?\\_r=2&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/04/world/africa/04policy.html?_r=2&pagewanted=all)

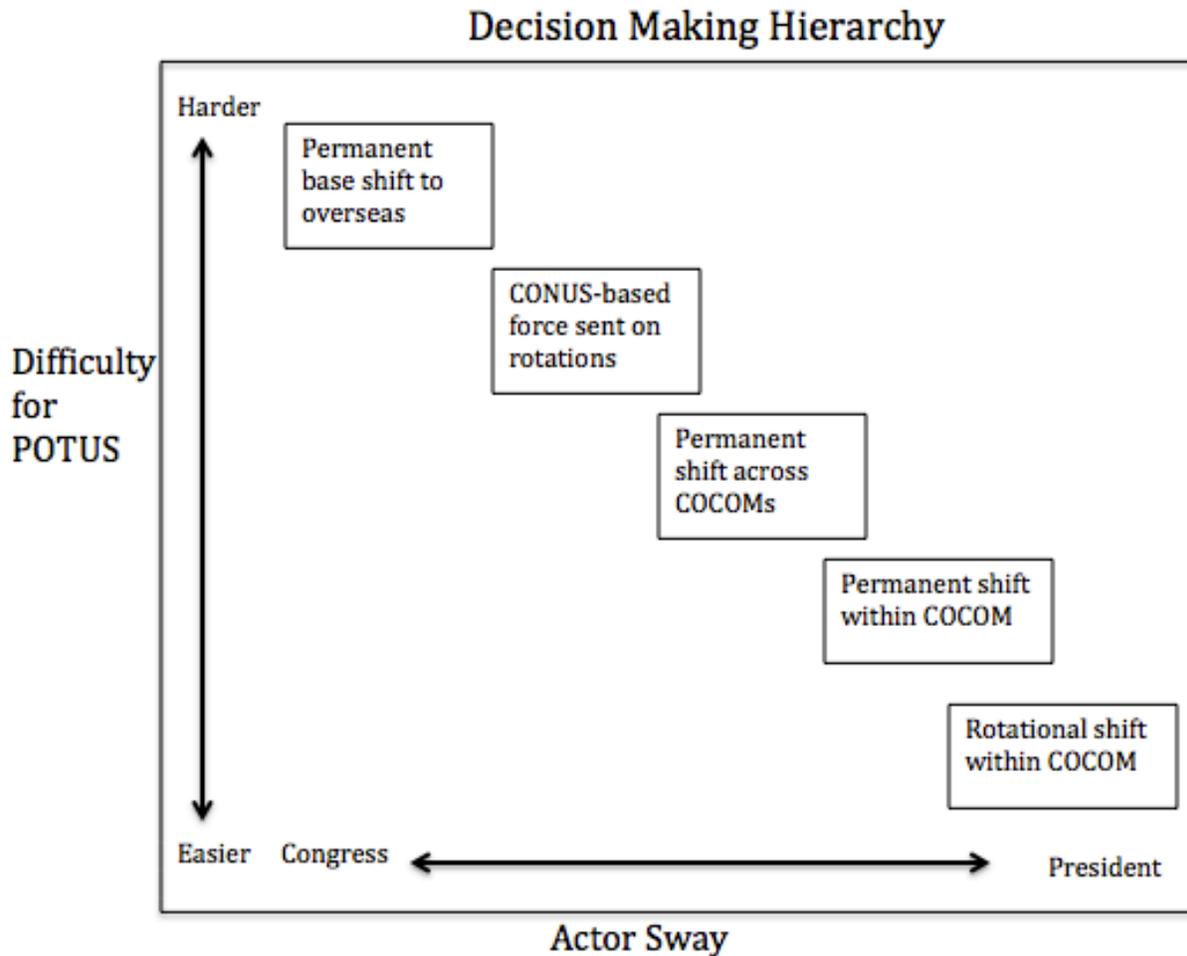
<sup>8</sup> [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1999-05-03/news/9905030159\\_1\\_voted-balkans-kosovo-without-congressional-approval](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1999-05-03/news/9905030159_1_voted-balkans-kosovo-without-congressional-approval)

the President's staff what is a non-starter, and so it never makes its way into most official documents" (interview materials McNerney).

Given these other actors in play, we can see that the President has *some* flexibility in how he can maneuver and deploy personnel without congressional authorization. In general, his flexibility is much more constrained than has been assumed under the idea of the "imperial presidency." As others have shown, the President has the ability to conduct limited uses of force without congressional support, but large scale action in terms of using *or* repositioning forces requires at least tacit support from Congress (Howell and Pevehouse 2008). So, it is already acknowledged that the President is constrained in his ability to act on his preferences in the foreign policy realm, as large scale actions will require congressional approval on some level. In this section, I hypothesize that the preferences of each aspect of the US government interact to form a hierarchy of decision making, with the President responsible for tactical changes to the alignment of American forces. As the decisions move upward toward the operational and strategic levels, the preferences of both the Pentagon and Congress must be taken more into account as their consent is necessary to proceed.

The President will enjoy the most flexibility within the areas defined by the regional Combatant Commands (COCOMS). These commands divide the world into six regions: North America (NORTHCOM), South America (SOUTHCOM), Africa (AFRICOM), Europe and Russia (EUCOM), the Asia/Pacific (PACOM), and the Middle East (CENTCOM). Every year, Congress authorizes a particular subset of the total force for each of the COCOMS after hearing testimony (the yearly COCOM "posture statement") from the generals in charge of each region about what personnel and material they require to achieve the mission for which they are responsible.

Figure 3



Once Congress authorizes the forces to be disbursed within each COCOM, the combatant commander has primary responsibility over how those forces are used to achieve the mission that the President charged him with in the National Security Strategy. However, the President will largely be able to do with those forces as he likes on a temporary basis by changing the combatant commander's orders and mission. He will be able to authorize their use for military exercises, for military-to-military cooperation with allies in the region, for shows of force, and even for the occasional limited use of force if it is required and the cost is within the COCOM's previously allotted budget. As will be described in greater detail in the case studies chapter, this type of movement of forces is what we have seen recently in the US response to Russian aggression in Eastern Europe. It is the step with the least possible influence from Congress or the Pentagon.

Despite the relative ease of moving forces on a rotational level, the President still has checks on his power from both Congress and the Pentagon. First, while the DoD might favor such rotations in order to keep their soldiers highly trained and connected to allied militaries, the additional rotations without a concomitant increase in the forces available in the region increases the demand on the military. This leads to a situation of heightened "operational tempo" (op tempo) that can stress the ability of both the Pentagon proper and the Combatant Commander to fulfill

all of its obligations in a region. For instance, the EUCOM region has heavy responsibilities in operations in Syria, especially when it comes to the Navy and Air Force. Fighter jets and naval ships sent on rotations through the Baltics to reassure American allies cannot be used to fight against the Islamic State. The resources at planners' disposals are necessarily finite in this manner, and the President ordering increased rotations can put stress on the ability to accomplish other crucial missions. Thus, if they go beyond the scope of what military officers think is reasonable, they can define the military agenda to the President in terms of what is available or make their objections known to Congress.

Such objections can carry a lot of weight in Congress, which still must authorize funds for rotational missions as well. In general, rotations do not require the construction of additional military facilities (though they *can* if the location of the rotation cannot support the forces there), and so the powerful MILCON committee does not have to authorize it. However, just as forces are a finite resources, so are the budgets available to the individual COCOMs. Any money that DoD and the President must draw from another "pot" at their disposal to accomplish the rotation must be authorized by Congress through the annual NDAA.

If the President thinks there may be congressional objections or if time is of the essence, he can present Congress with a *fait accompli* as he did in Warsaw in 2014. He announced the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) *before* going to Congress for authorization. Congress generally supported the rotational nature of the ERI, and it gave the President post hoc approval in the following NDAA. However, if Congress had opposed it, it could have cut off funding for the rotations in the following years, called members of the executive branch for testimony and investigation, or exact budgetary retribution if the *fait accompli* was overly unacceptable.

A shift of forces within a COCOM on a permanent basis will require more input from Congress, as it changes the overall distribution of American forces globally. It also calls into question the amount of resources required to achieve the COCOM's mission. If a particular set of forces is no longer needed on a permanent basis where they were previously stationed, it likely means that there are some resources that the COCOM can do without where they are presently situated. Members of Congress can take these requests to mean that some percentage of the force within the COCOM might be repatriated back to the United States. For example, if a percentage of the PACOM force can be shifted from South Korea to the Philippines to deal with the Chinese threat in the South China Sea, a member of Congress might inquire as to how much of the force in South Korea is truly necessary. Since they are able to be sacrificed for other missions within the AOR, might they simply be brought back to the United States and redistributed to hot spots around the world in the event of a crisis?

Permanent shifts within a COCOM also potentially change fundamental aspects of American alliances abroad. Many foreign states actually lobby the US government for a permanent American military presence, and states with large US bases are often the most hesitant to remove them. These states not only receive the security benefits that the American security umbrella provides, but thousands of American soldiers provide a boost to the local economy, in addition to any boon to the construction industry provided by the building of new infrastructure. As such, the structure of American alliances can change with either the removal or infusion of US forces,

and it would therefore be within the purview of the Foreign Relations committees on Capitol Hill.

Shifting forces is also an expensive enterprise, and Congress has perhaps its most expansive powers in the context of the federal budget. The President must go to Congress (and first the MILCON committee) with budgetary requests to provide the infrastructure necessary at the new home of the units previously housed elsewhere. As an example, Congress authorized over \$450 million between 2003 and 2011 to build new facilities in Qatar to house the new regional CENTCOM HQ at Al Udeid Air Base, which had previously resided in Saudi Arabia. With the prospect of new money being spent on constructing bases, members of Congress will ask whether money can be saved in any way by bringing some forces home, by accomplishing the mission within the existing basing structure, and whether the new host country is willing to participate in cost sharing. All of this makes the permanent shifting of forces within a COCOM difficult in itself. Such a move simply does not happen without authorization from the MILCON committee, the HASC and SASC, and Congress as a whole. As before, there can be an investigation if any of these bodies feel that funds have been misused or if the President or DoD subverted their budgetary authority in any way. As discussed before, the opposition party has a greater incentive to investigate if it feels congressional authority has been undermined in a bid to embarrass the President that they oppose.

Up the chain of difficulty for the President is the ability to redistribute forces across COCOMs. In other words, shifting military units from Europe to Asia, for instance, is even more difficult than moving forces permanently within a COCOM itself. The process within Congress is mostly the same as shifting forces within a COCOM, as Congress needs to authorize the expenditure of funds in the same way. However, more difficulty arises if members of Congress have a particular attachment to a region, see one region as more strategically crucial than the proposed new location, or see the new location as more difficult to “sell” politically as the previous.

There are several reasons why an individual MC would prioritize a certain region of the world. The most direct is that the Member has a large constituency that shares an ethnic identity with the base location abroad. We can see a clear example of this in the fight over Lajes Air Base in the Portuguese Azores. The military has informed Congress that it would prefer to shutter the base entirely, as its previous purposes as an air depot on the way to Europe and as a base for Soviet sub hunters is not longer required (interview material). However, Republican Congressman Devin Nunes of California insists on repurposing the base as an intelligence complex, even though the Pentagon prefers the site to be built in Britain and will cost an estimated \$1.2 billion more to build in Lajes (interview material and NR).<sup>9</sup>

The Pentagon has made it quite clear that it sees Rep. Nunes’ opposition as a result of his Azorean ancestry, the size of the Azorean community in his district, and his ties with the Portuguese government (**interview material**). He and other Members with Portuguese ancestry have made repeated statements that indicate they are far more worried about the local economic impact of shuttering the base than MCs are in other cases of foreign bases (Portuguese American

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/421842/devin-nunes-pentagon-fight-lajes-air-force-base>

Journal 2013).<sup>10</sup> These kinds of statements are unheard of in many other parts of the world when there is a discussion of the closing of a base.

Second, a variety of characteristics of the host state make permanent basing more tenable, such as democratic institutions, livability for soldiers and their families, and ability to compensate the United States for the costs of basing. The first two prevent the bases from becoming a political problem, because both the ideals and interests of the US and the host nation align. In addition, Cooley showed that consolidated democracies have the ability to “de-politicize” a base, which makes it less likely that it will become a political issue for the United States at some point. When there are human rights abuses or other kinds of autocratic governance, there is a potential that American politicians look callous to their constituents. Especially in the presence of this kind of ideological schism, the host nation often needs to smooth things over with American politicians by offering generous financial support, or what one Pentagon planner refers to as the “buckets of cash” approach (interview materials). This approach eases the fiscal burden on Congress and makes it more likely that MCs will support a permanent presence.

This approach from the host nation can also ease the burden for Pentagon planners, who constantly protect the resources at their disposal. The US military is not only divided by function but also by area of responsibility (AOR), and bureaucratic infighting takes place along these lines. Each COCOM sees its mission as vital to American security, oftentimes more so than the other AORs. Since the individual Combatant Commanders are judged on their ability to accomplish the mission within their COCOM, they must prioritize their own COCOM in order to stay in their office and potentially be promoted. Taking resources from one COCOM to give to another can create problems within the defense establishment, as Combatant Commanders fight against having the resources at their disposal diminished. Thus, the movement of forces across the delineated lines of the Combatant Command structure can be quite difficult for the President to accomplish.

The most difficult kind of realignment for the President to undertake is to shift forces from CONUS itself. The easiest way for the President to accomplish such a move is to establish rotations, where the unit stays based in the United States permanently but spend several months performing exercises or promoting military-to-military cooperation with allies on location. Oftentimes, this transfer is achieved by having a portion of the unit (say one of three battalions within a brigade) rotate at a given time with the rest of the unit. Dividing units this way protects at least a portion of the jobs and infrastructure of the US base from complete realignment or closure, but at least a segment of the unit is gone. Since the local basing economy relies on the permanent placement of thousands of individuals who spend their money at surrounding establishments, even a partial hit to the number of personnel can have a negative effect on local business. Members of Congress will therefore resist even this kind of rotational movement of military forces based in their districts.

Lastly, when it comes to basing, the most difficult thing for the President to do is *permanently* shift a unit from basing in the CONUS to basing overseas. Members of Congress are loath to approve the shuttering of a base within their district. Not only do thousands of people often work

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<sup>10</sup> <http://portuguese-american-journal.com/terceira-us-congress-voted-against-limiting-military-presence-in-lajes-washington-dc/>

on the base, service the base, and supply it with material, but the surrounding areas are often filled with restaurants, bars, clubs, and other types of establishments that cater to service men and women. As has been shown elsewhere, a Member of Congress who loses a military base within their district faces diminished electoral prospects because of the economic hit the district takes. Not only does the district take an economic hit, but the Member of Congress looks ineffectual and without influence within Washington, as the base was closed despite their objections. The electoral concerns over base closures within the CONUS that Congress has annually reapproved a blanket prohibition on any changes to CONUS bases every year since 2005.

As described above in the section on each branch's powers, Congress has a number of ways to inhibit the President when it comes to shifting forces from the United States. However, these powers are generally only used when the *opposition is in control of Congress*. As the majority, the opposition controls the office of the Speaker of the House and the Majority Leader in the Senate, which each control what bills come to the floor for vote. When the President's party is in charge of Congress, it can simply refrain from calling votes on matters that challenge the President. Likewise, the opposition can call votes simply for the purpose of undermining the President's popularity or agenda.

Perhaps most importantly when it comes to the distribution of American forces, when the opposition controls Congress, it controls the committees. Most of the work that establishes the foundation of the American presence overseas is done on the House and Senate Armed Services Committees (HASC and SASC). These committees can put a total freeze on military construction abroad and a complete ban on the restructuring of any base or facility in the United States. Even in the absence of these drastic measures, the committees can write NDDAs that are extremely constraining in terms of how the President can use appropriated funds. This contrasts with the ability to write extremely loose NDAs for a co-partisan President.

Overall, the President has significant powers to use and restructure forces that are based abroad within a given Combatant Command. However, the broader the restructuring (in terms of amount of forces being restructured, the permanence of the changes, and the geographic extent of the shifts) the less the President can do unilaterally. The more forces he wants to shift, the farther he wants to move them, and the more expensive the move, the more likely he is to run into both congressional and bureaucratic opposition from combatant commanders that feel they are on the "losing end" of the changes. All of this points to the idea that the distribution of military forces is a highly political issue between the President and Congress, with both sides fighting for both power over the distribution of military resources but also their perceived "cut" of existing resources.

### **Passive Mechanisms**

While there is an active struggle between these two branches of government, a passive set of mechanisms is also in place. These mechanisms produce a general trend to bring forces back to the United States over time, and Congress put them in place to support its aim of providing electorally beneficial basing opportunities to its members over time.

The first is an amendment that Congress annually adopts that specifically prohibits any change to American bases without explicit authorization from Congress (NDAA 2015; NDAA 2014). Congress, as we saw above, is loathe to authorize any changes, as alterations to bases within one of its member's districts could be electorally disastrous. Even small changes can have profound effects upon local economies, make a legislator seem weak and ineffective, and potentially call the member's reelection into question.

The Pentagon calls for a new round of Basing Realignment and Closure (BRAC) in almost every testimony to Congress, because of the excess capacity that it sees in the basing apparatus, especially within CONUS. Recent estimates from the Pentagon itself state that at least 20 percent of the DoD's domestic real estate is no longer necessary. Testimony on the Hill also indicates that, as of 2014, the DoD's installations were worth over \$850 billion, which implies that close to \$170 billion or more worth of basing installations were unnecessary, inefficient, and superfluous (NYTimes 2015; I&E deputy secdef testimony). As with Pentagon attempts to stop production of certain weapons systems, Congress refused because of the economic impact these decisions would have upon their home districts.

Thus, despite having tens (perhaps hundreds) of billions of dollars in excess capacity within the United States, Congress statutorily prevents the Pentagon from shuttering these facilities or transferring them abroad, closer to the mission. Not only does Congress prevent the Pentagon from downsizing these unused facilities, but it has mandated that the Pentagon be prevented from even *planning* for a new BRAC round, which fundamentally halts progress in one of the DoD's main goals – efficiency in the use of the resources it has been given.

In the past, when Congress has actually agreed to a BRAC round, they have done so as part of a “deal” with the Pentagon and the executive branch. This deal entails that the Pentagon must make deep cuts to overseas bases before Congress will even consider making changes to the domestic basing apparatus. This is currently the state of affairs, with Congress asserting that the Pentagon must find efficiencies in Europe before it will let the Department of Defense even start planning for a new BRAC round, despite heightened tensions and strategic necessity in Europe after Russia's invasion of Ukraine (cite)<sup>11</sup>. This dynamic increases the general draw of forces back to the United States, as any closures in the US are “purchased” at the price of overseas closures that are not even fully guaranteed to amount to any changes in the domestic structure.

Lastly, the DoD is required to provide Congress with precise justifications for the use of all funds and facilities outside of the United States. This requirement mandates that American military bases abroad are quite efficient, as Congress will almost certainly require the shuttering of any facilities that go unused, and they will withdraw from the COCOM any funds that remain unused as well. As such, the Secretary of Defense has attempted to preempt Congress by realigning unused portions of the overseas apparatus himself, before Congress can get ahold of them and mandate their usage. The ongoing mandate for justification in the use of all funds and facilities (a mandate that does not apply within the United States itself, where DoD is, by statute, unable to shutter facilities without express congressional approval) creates a situation in which

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2014/06/04/more-us-base-consolidations-on-the-way-in-europe.html>

the force structure outside the United States is a lean and efficient one. It also generates a tendency to draw forces back to CONUS if precise justification is lacking. Within CONUS, the DoD can hold forces in reserve for a time when it *might* need them, which is a luxury the military does not have abroad.

## Hypotheses

While it is important to outline the key players in the global distribution of US military forces, there is one key variable that makes the most difference – partisanship between Congress and the President. The Pentagon, though it is a key actor, has relatively constant preferences across presidents and thus is less than ripe for statistical tests. However, Presidential priorities in terms of shifting forces run into the need for congressional approval as soon as they move above the rotational level within a Combatant Command, and even then the President may need congressional authorization for funding if infrastructure is needed, it lies outside the bounds of the purposes for which funds have already been authorized, or if new funds are required.

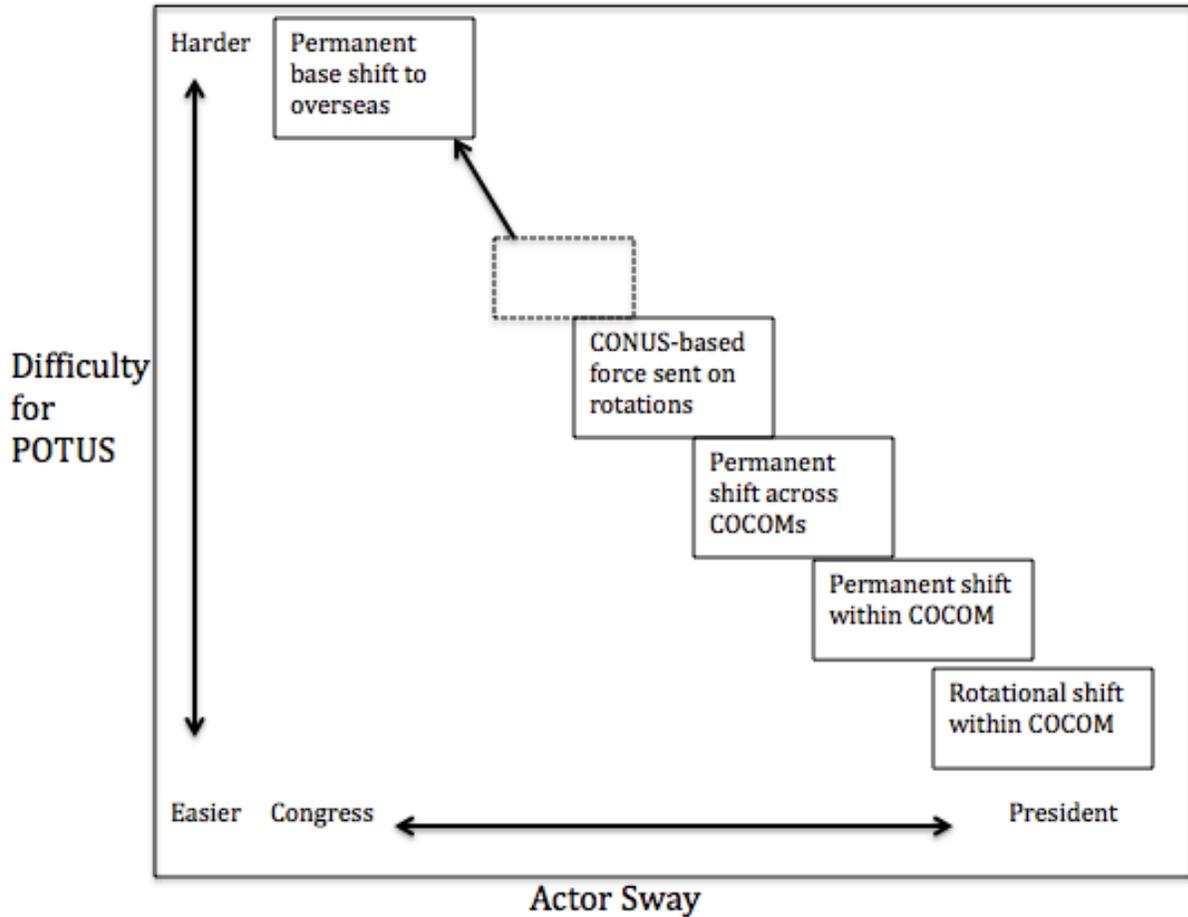
Thus, the key to the movement of forces between the CONUS and overseas deployments is the partisan distribution between the President and Congress. As said before, the opposition party has numerous incentives to constrain the President’s wishes when it comes to foreign policy and to repatriate American forces back to the United States for the economic benefit they provide to their own districts. When Congress is controlled by the President’s co-partisans, they support the President’s foreign policy agenda. This produces the following hypothesis when it comes to the distribution of American military forces.

**H1:** Fewer American forces will be based abroad when the president and Congress are from opposing parties.

When Congress is controlled by the opposition party, the hierarchy of decision making looks more like the Figure 4, with basing decisions available to Congress being invoked more often by the opposition party and with additional constraints being put on the President. When the President’s party controls Congress, the hierarchy of decision making looks more like Figure 3, with congressional approval still needed for large shifts (which inherently is still more difficult than doing it unilaterally), but with the ability to garner congressional approval more easily through partisan networks of trust and the invocation of presidential coat tails.

## Figure 4

## Decision Making Hierarchy



While the Department of Defense can be a key player in the distribution of military forces around the world, the Pentagon itself aligns quite closely with the views of the President. However, the Department of Defense’s COCOMs often have diverging incentives from the executives. Each COCOM will fight to maintain the resources within its AOR, even in the absence of a strategic threat there or when there are more profound strategic considerations elsewhere.

**H2:** Combatant Commands retain military resources that are surplus to requirements given the strategic circumstances and look to increase them in the absence of a change in strategic threat.

Since these incentives and their makeup are constant over time, statistical testing would be inappropriate, but looking at particular cases of force shifts finds evidence for this hypothesis as well.

### Conclusion

This chapter has provided the first framework for understanding the preferences, motivations, powers, and responsibilities of peacetime military deployments around the world. Previous studies have focused primarily upon the President and the idea of the “Imperial Presidency” and the free hand that he is given in military matters, but we have seen here that a focus solely on the President ignores important facets of the decision making process.

To fully understand the outcomes that we actually observe in the world, we need to understand that the American system of government is a multi-layered one with overlapping areas of responsibility, diverging incentives, and different constituencies. To be sure, the President has many advantages due to his national constituency, the fact that he is a single person rather than a body of hundreds or thousands of individuals, and possesses a large executive apparatus that he can employ to accomplish his goals.

However, these advantages do not make him omnipotent in the area of military policy. Because of the structure of the Department of Defense, it has built-in rivalries between both service branch and, more importantly for this study, Combatant Command zones, which create ingrained bureaucratic roadblocks to presidential preferences for speed, efficiency, and flexibility.

Most crucially, Congress has much more power than other scholars acknowledge. It still possesses the power of the purse, and it takes this power very seriously. Congress does not simply distribute hundreds of billions of dollars to the executive branch and then let the President and DoD do with it as it chooses. Rather, Congress prescribes specific ways in which the funds must be used and demands high levels of accountability both before *and* after funds are disbursed through its use of investigatory power and through the constant monitoring of spending through the delegation process.

The parties play a huge role in determining whether these powers will be used. When the President’s opposition controls Congress, it can actively choose to use some of these powers in order to constrain the President in making foreign policy while simultaneously bringing home large amounts of military forces that act as an economic infusion into congressional districts. Alternatively, the President’s party can refrain from using these congressional powers in order to support his foreign policy, enhance his flexibility, and ride his political coat tails to reelection rather than pursuing it through increased basing at home.

As I show in the statistical and case studies chapters that follow, there is plentiful evidence to support this framework and theory, and this finding has plentiful implications for the study of foreign policy. The most obvious implication is that scholars and voters should pay more attention to Congress when it comes to foreign policy making. The legislative branch has significant power to carry out its own foreign policy as well as to constrain or support the President’s diplomatic and military agenda. This idea has the potential to balance the idea of the “Imperial Presidency” that has been pervasive for almost a half century.

Further implications and a discussion of them will be left for the concluding chapter, but they are numerous and apply to areas of research as diverse as the study of alliances, investment in military technology, public opinion, military spending, and more. For now, I turn to toward the empirical evidence to test and illustrate the theory just presented here.

