2010-11 Policy Topic:
Debating US Foreign Military Presence

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Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially reduce its military and/or police presence in one or more of the following: South Korea, Japan, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iraq, Turkey.

Introduction

This year's Policy resolution introduces two central questions: Should foreign military and/or policy presence generally be reduced and should those reductions occur in one or more of the countries listed? This essay will focus on unpacking arguments that affirmative and negative teams can use to address these central questions.

To make the significance of the discussed arguments clear, I want to focus on some key terms in the resolution. First, military and police presence.

Wikipedia defines the military as "an organization authorized by its country to use force, usually including use of weapons, in defending its country (or by attacking other countries) by combating actual or perceived threats. As an adjective the term "military" is also used to refer to any property or aspect of a military."

This is what most people understand the military to be, but I do want to highlight two important elements of the definition. First, the military includes all of its "weapons," and second, that the military refers to its "property." So, reducing military presence in these countries can mean a reduction solely in *weapons systems or property*. The topic *does not* require that troops/people be reduced.

According to Wikipedia, a "police" force is "a public force empowered to enforce the law and provide security through the legitimized use of force." In relation to foreign military service, police usually refers to "military police," "a military corps that enforces discipline and guards prisoners" (Wordnet), but it can also include training and support of civilian police forces, such as US training of the Iraqi police.

The term "police" was added to the resolution because in some countries, particularly Iraq, many of the individuals that articles refer to as being part of the

US military presence are really "police." This term was largely added to enable affirmatives to topically reduce all of the US presence that could be described as "military," even if it was technically not military. Although the term was added for that reason, it is likely that some affirmatives may find specific policing operations and reduce those.

One case that the term "police" clearly opens the topic up to is reductions in International Military Education Training (IMET) programs. These programs are heavily criticized on human rights grounds because they teach governments how to repress their own citizens.

While the IMET affirmative clearly meets the term "police" in the resolution, it is not clear that it meets "in" since most IMET training for foreign policy forces occurs at Fort Benning in Georgia. Some of the training, however, does occur in the host in the trainee country, and Turkey participates in IMET training.

It is also worth pointing out that the resolution contains the word "its," meaning the military presence that belongs to the US government. One open question is whether or not the use of private military contractors is included in "its" military presence. Intuitively, these contractors are part of the US military presence, so a case can be made in favor of reducing them, but as noted by Dr. Richard Edwards in the most recent issue of the *Forensics Quarterly*, there are interpretations of "its" that render private military contractors affirmatives non-topical. *The Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (1993), defines "its" as "of or belonging to itself as a possessor" (p. 623). Private military contractors clearly don't "belong to" the US.

Although the weapons that are under control of the US military seem to be pretty clearly part of the US military presence in the country, one interesting issue is

whether or not US arms sold to another country are still part of the US military presence. Intuitively they are not since the weapons are now in the possession of another government, but arms sales to other countries are often provided in order to create interoperability between US weapons systems and those of the recipient country. Also, the US military frequently provides substantial training for the use of the weapons system(s). So, a case can be made that restraining at least some particular arms sales is topical.

The term "reduce" generally means to lessen from *existing* levels. Cases that pledge not to increase US presence in a given country in a particular way in the future are arguably not reductions. Also, while affirmative teams are able to argue that reductions in troops in one countery (for example, Iraq) *leads to* troop increases in another country (for example, Afghanistan) if the affirmative plan cannot *mandate* that troops taken from one country go to another country.

"In" generally means "within," so the reduction has to be among military or police forces that are physically present within one of the countries in the resolution. Although different countries make different claims regarding territorial waters, most affirmatives will need to deal with US military and/or police forces that are physically present on the *land* or *ports* of the topic countries. Dealing with US forces at sea will introduce substantial topicality problems. And, even if some US forces are close enough to the country to be considered to be "in" the country, the affirmative can only reduce their use within any waters the country claims to be part of its territory, setting up a simple circumvention argument for the negative—any restricted forces at sea could simply be moved outside of the territorial waters.

What's at Stake in the Resolution Countries

In this section I want to provide some basic background information regarding the current political situation and the status of US military deployments in the countries listed in the resolution.

Afghanistan. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 that destroyed the twin towers of the World Trade Center, the US produced evidence that the Taliban, which controlled Afghanistan at the time, was providing refugee and support to the Al Qaeda terrorist group that attacked and destroyed the towers. In order to prevent the Taliban from continuing to provide a safe haven to Al Qaeda, the US invaded Afghanistan in October of 2001 and forcibly removed the Taliban regime.

Since 2001, the US has sustained this military presence in Afghanistan with substantial assistance from many North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies. Shortly after his election in 2008, Obama pledged to substantially increase the number of US troops in Afghanistan by 30,000 in order to back a troop surge strategy designed by Stanley McCrystal. The plan does establish July 2011 as the anticipated beginning of the end of the surge.

There are now almost 150,000 troops in Afghanistan, with US soldiers making up nearly 100,000 of the deployed soldiers. Most of the remaining troops are from NATO countries.

Many critics of the surge and war argue that the presence of US troops simply increases anti-Americanism, creates a breeding ground for terrorism, overstretches the US military, and traps the US in a war that it cannot win. Critiques of specific military operations include criticisms of US drone attacks that often result in civilian casualties and the war on Afghan poppy.

Defenders of the war and the surge argue that targeting military efforts in particular areas of the country can stabilize it and that instability in Afghanistan means a return of the Taliban and the Al Qaeda threat. Further, they argue that a decision to back down now would undermine the credibility of the United States.

There have been recent moves to reach out to the Taliban to integrate them into the Karzai government. Recently, Afghanistan president Hamid Karzai, has reached out to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of Afghanistan's Hezb-e Islami paramilitary group that has provided major support for the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

Iraq. In March of 2003, the United States invaded Iraq largely under the auspices of the claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and that Iraq supported terrorist groups that could use those weapons against the United States. The US military did topple the government of Saddam Hussein and supported his execution for crimes against the Iraqi people on December 30, 2006.

The US military remains substantially deployed in Iraq, largely to prevent a civil war between the Sunnis, Shiites, and the Kurds, the main ethnic groups in Iraq.

To date, most of the conflict has been between the Sunnis and the Shiites. As explained by Dr. Rich Edwards in the most recent issues of the *Forensics Quarterly,* almost 90% of the world's 1.5 billion Muslims are Sunnis with the remaining 10% Shia, but Shiites constitute the majority of Muslims in both Iran and Iraq. The division among Muslims dates from the controversy over who should lead after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Abu Bakr, an adviser to the Prophet Muhammad, became the "first Caliph of the Islamic Nation" in an elective process that is viewed as legitimate by Sunni Muslims. Saddam Hussein was a Sunni Muslim who maintained an iron fist control of the country and its oil resources. Current Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is a Shiite with a Shiite-dominated government that now controls much of the country's wealth.

Although civil and ethnic strife continues to this day, it is not anywhere near the scale it was in 2007 and 2008.

President Obama ran on a campaign of withdrawing the US military from Iraq. When he took office in early 2009, the US had more than 140,000 troops in Iraq. By February 2010, that number was under 100,000 and is expected to decline further under a 2008 Status of Forces (SOFA) agreement with Iraq that calls for US military combat forces to be withdrawn from Iraqi cities by the end of 2011.

Although this signals potential inherency problems for the affirmative, more than 50,000 troops are to be left behind for training and other non-combat missions. The US is currently involved in training the Iraqi Police Services (IPS), the civilian security arm of the government, as well as The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), the military armed forces of Iraq. Also, it is not clear that this agreement covers US contracted private

security forces that will remain in Iraq. Moreover, there is no certainty that the US will follow the SOFA agreement. If violence escalates in Iraq, the US could potentially leave far more than the 50,000 troops it says will remain.

Advocates such as Phyllis Bennis in *Ending the Iraq War* and Tom Englehardt in *Bases of Empire: The Global Structure of US Military Posts* argue for an immediate withdrawal of the entire US military presence in Iraq, contending that the continued presence will magnify anti-American opposition and prolong the civil war. Critics of a quick withdrawal such as James Phillips in *What Role Should the US Play in the Middle East?* argue that a quick withdrawal will unravel the progress produced by the surge and send Iraq into a civil war. It also threatens US credibility because it would abandon existing US commitments under the SOFA.

A large number of private security firms that have been contracted by the US government also operate in Iraq, the largest of which is Blackwater, which has now changed its name to XE.

Nuri Kamal al-Maliki is the current prime minister of Iraq and the head of the Islamic Dawa Party. Al-Malaki was elected in 2006 and his current term extends to mid-2010. The party faces substantial challenges because many consider it to be an installed puppet of the United States and others criticize the Shiite-dominated group for not including the Sunnis.

Kuwait. In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait as a result of disputes over oil rights on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border. Then President George H.W. Bush (Bush I) assembled an international coalition that, led by the US, drove Iraq out of Kuwait. At the height of that war, the US had more than 100,000 troops in Kuwait, though the current number is less than 30,000. Kuwait is primarily used as a staging area for US operations in Iraq and to support the draw-down on US forces from the country.

The main US base in Kuwait is Camp Arjifan. The base is just south of Kuwait city and is home to approximately 15,000 US troops. With the draw-down of the Iraq war, this base serves primarily as a transit point for troops on the way home to the US, though the base still serves as a point for more direct military operations in Iraq.

Although the Kuwait government strongly supports US operations in Iraq and its military base in the country, there

is substantial popular opposition to the US military in Kuwait, fueling radicalism in the country. Critics of the base argue that it increases radical opposition to the government, a radicalism that threatens its survival. Since Kuwait is generally considered to be a well-functioning democratic Muslim state, collapse of the government would send a problematic signal, potentially unraveling the emergence of democratic governance throughout the Middle East.

Defenders of the base argue that it is essential to US military operations in Iraq and to provide general logistical support to our Middle East military presence. US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced in February 2008 that they are establishing a permanent platform for "full spectrum operations" in 27 countries in the region in Kuwait. Negatives can take advantage of this to read links to general power projection arguments, but affirmatives can also take advantage of it to argue that the plan leads to a more systemic reduction in US military presence in the Middle East.

Turkey. Just over 3,000 US troops are stationed in Turkey, most of which are at the Incirlik Air Base. Although the number of troops is small, the deployment is significant for a number of reasons.

First, Incirlik is home to one of the largest remaining stockpiles of US tactical nuclear weapons, otherwise known as B61 gravity bombs. Some countries see these weapons as essential deterrents against Russian aggression in the region. Critics argue that the weapons are vulnerable to theft and that they undermine US credibility on non-proliferation initiatives.

Second, Turkey's secular democratic government is being challenged by growing movements within the country that support an Islamic state and want to overturn the country's Kemalism, which is equivalent to the separation of church and state in the US. In 2007, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) won 47 percent of the vote in a national election – more than double what any other party won. The AKP, lead by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has been accused by the military and others of leading efforts to replace Kemalism with an Islamic government, and the military threatened a coup against the government. Abdullah Gul, a conservative Muslim, is the current president.

Third, Turkey is an important member of the NATO alliance. Any changes related to US security policy regarding Turkey will likely have an impact on this important alliance.

Fourth, there is a strong intersection between the US occupation in Iraq and US relations with Turkey. When the US launched the invasion of Iraq in March of 2003, Turkey would not let the US attack from its territory or fly over the country. The reason Turkey prohibited this is that Turkey was opposed to the war because it feared that the US would support an independent Kurdish state in Iraq and Turkey had been the victim of a number of cross-border attacks by the Partiya Karkern Kurdistan (PKK) party out of northern Iraq. Turkey claims the PKK is a terrorist group and it is the PKK who would have made up at least a large part of an independent Turkish state.

Japan. After Japan surrendered to the US at the end of World War II, Japan became bound by a US-written constitution that prohibited the development of land and sea military forces. In exchange, the US pledged to protect the security of Japan.

This pledge to protect Japan's security takes many forms, including a commitment to defend Japan with US conventional forces. Currently, nearly 50,000 US troops are present in Japan, with more than 75% on 38 bases on the Island of Okinawa. Japan contributes almost $5 billion a year toward the cost of supporting these military operations.

Most of the troops are located in Okinawa because the island is located close to Taiwan and the South China Sea. Since most think that the greatest threat to Japan comes from China and the spill-over resulting from a conflict in that region that could spread to the region to Japan, many think that this is the prime location for the majority of the troops.

Although the Japanese government has historically been supportive of the US military presence in Japan, the fact that the bases consume more than 20% of the total land area of Okinawa, generate a considerable amount of noise and traffic, and that the behavior of US soldiers in the area has been less than noble has generated substantial popular opposition. Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, who won an election in August 2009, campaigned on a commitment to reduce the number of bases. This election meant the triumph of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) over the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) for the first time in nearly 50 years.

In order to reduce the opposition to the bases and strengthen the alliance, the US concluded a basing realignment agreement with Japan in 2006 to move more than 8,000 US soldiers to Guam, a US territory located in the Pacific, by 2014 and to relocate many of the marines in Okinawa to Henoko on the Northeast corner of the island.

This agreement has recently been threatened by Prime Minister Hatoyama who has suggested that Japan will not uphold the agreement to move the troops to Henoko. President Obama has aggressively pushed Yatoma to uphold the agreement, though nothing has been resolved as of the time of this writing (March 2010). Publicly, Hotoyama has committed to not relocating the entire base to Guam, but it remains to be seen if he will come out strongly in favor of a substantial relocation.

Critics of the Okinawa bases (including Henoko) argue that the bases are no longer necessary given the end of the Cold War, that the Western security structure in Asia leads to militarism in China, that any security concerns can be fulfilled by relocating US bases to Guam and US naval forces in the region, and that Japan should assume a greater burden for its own defense. Defenders of the bases argue that they are essential to deter Chinese aggression against Taiwan and adventurism in the South China Sea, to prevent Japan from developing nuclear weapons, and to promote a stabilizing US presence in the region.

There is a debate related to the value of Japanese conventional and nuclear rearmament. Most scholars contend that such rearmament would be undesirable because it could set-off a destabilizing arms race in Asia, and others argue that it would boost deterrence and enhance stability in the region.

While most critics of US deployments in Japan argue that a significant withdrawal will undermine a problematic alliance, others argue a US draw-down in Okinawa will resolve the most important issue between the US and Japan related to the future of the alliance and that a withdrawal will therefore strengthen it. Given the strength of this evidence, it will likely be a popular affirmative this year.

Another significant issue related to the US military presence in Japan has been US efforts to develop various missile defense systems with Japan and to station them in the country as a means to help Japan defend