

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Base Maneuvers

"Base Maneuvers" by Dick Arney, in *Policy Review* (Winter 1988), Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Ave. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

Located in an inhospitable corner of northern Maine, Loring Air Force Base averages 105 inches of snow a year. It was built during the late 1940s to ensure that limited-range B-47 bombers could reach the Soviet Union from a base in the continental United States. As B-47s were replaced with longer range B-52 and B-1 bombers, Loring's far-northern site was no longer a strategic factor. For the past 10 years, the Air Force has considered the base obsolete.

Yet Loring remains the home of the Strategic Air Command's 42nd Bomber Wing, even though it costs twice as much to operate as comparable bases in warmer parts of the United States. Why does Loring remain open? Because the clout of Maine's congressional delegation has blocked its closure.

Loring Air Force Base, says Arney, a Republican U.S. representative from Texas, is not an isolated example. Fort Douglas, Utah, was built to protect stagecoach routes. Fort Monroe, Virginia, was originally meant to protect Virginia during the War of 1812. Although these and other bases have long lost their rationale for existence, they survive because pork-barrel politics keeps them in operation.

Between 1961 and 1978, the Pentagon closed or consolidated 3,600 installations, saving taxpayers \$5.6 billion annually. But a law passed by Congress in 1977, sponsored by Representative (now Senator) William Cohen (R.-Maine) and Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill (D.-Mass.), mandated that the Defense Department must prepare an environmental impact statement before a base can be closed. Because environmental impact statements are complex and can be challenged in the courts by any congressman or citizens' group, no military base has been closed since the Cohen-O'Neill bill became law.

Yet closing a military base and removing troops, an airfield, and weapons generally *helps*, not *hurts*, the environment. Moreover, abandoned bases provide "ready-made" sites for schools, airports, and industrial parks. The Pentagon's Office of Economic Adjustment surveyed 100 former bases and found that 42 had become airports, 12 had become four-year colleges, and the 93,424 military jobs on the former bases had been replaced by 138,138 civilian jobs.

"Which is better for the economy," Arney asks, "a dead-end investment in an obsolete military base or schools and new industry?"

Lessons from Korea

"Korea, the Never-Again Club, and Indochina" by Maj. David H. Petraeus, in *Parameters* (Dec. 1987), U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa. 17013.

Since the Vietnam debacle, much of the American military has developed what political scientist Samuel Huntington calls a "pacifist attitude" toward war. Today's senior military officers are not eager to send American

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forces overseas into combat. They have argued that U.S. troops should not be committed to a conflict unless Congress and the public support their mission and the president gives commanders the authority and manpower needed to gain a decisive victory.

Petraeus, an assistant to NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, argues that this conservative approach is not new. Many military officers held similar views after the 1950-1953 Korean War.

Like their Vietnam counterparts, Korean War generals were ordered by their civilian superiors to keep the conflict within strict limits. For example, American aircraft could only bomb the southern half of bridges on the Yalu River (the border between North Korea and China), and were forbidden to pursue enemy aircraft across the Chinese frontier. Public support for the war fell steadily over time; President Harry Truman's approval rating dropped to 23 percent by 1951, and a major reason for Dwight D. Eisenhower's victory in the 1952 presidential election was the popular belief that he could bring the Korean stalemate to a swift end.

After Korea, U.S. senior officers formed what journalists called the "Never-Again Club," named after Gen. Mark Clark's warning that the U.S. should "never again . . . be mousetrapped into fighting another defensive war." Thus many military leaders (notably Army Chief of Staff Matthew Ridgway) vigorously opposed *limited* intervention to rescue the French garrison at Dienbienphu in North Vietnam during the spring of 1954. When Adm. Arthur Radford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, proposed a massive American airstrike to relieve Dienbienphu, Ridgway



South Korea, February 1951: Lt. General Matthew B. Ridgway (fourth from left), new commander of U.S. Eighth Army, visits G.I.'s near Anyang-Ni.

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called Radford's proposal an "old delusive idea" because success could not be won through air and naval action alone.

Petraeus sees the generation of commanders trained in Vietnam as harboring old frustrations similar to those of their Korean War predecessors. Their "circumspect approach to the use of force," he contends, may play a key role in the shaping of future American foreign policy. As columnist Joseph Kraft once noted, "The skepticism of the military about applying force weighs far more on the president than does the sniping of the political opposition."

Tocqueville Today

"Tocqueville's Challenge" by David Clinton, in *The Washington Quarterly* (Winter 1988), 55
Hayward St., Cambridge, Mass. 02142.

In *Democracy in America* (1835-40), French political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) argued that U.S. democracy could not pursue long-term foreign policy interests. "A democracy," Tocqueville wrote, "finds it difficult to . . . fix on some plan and carry it through with determination." Any president, trying to distinguish himself from his predecessor, lacks political incentives to continue existing diplomatic strategies.

Tocqueville's challenge—how to preserve stability in foreign policy *and* be flexible enough to satisfy democratic demands—is one each American president must resolve anew, writes Clinton, a Union College political scientist. For the "trade-off between democracy and effective diplomacy" is one of the perennially unresolved questions of American governance.

Tocqueville believed that American isolation meant that the United States could remain democratic *and* free to pursue limited foreign interests without being enmeshed in international politics. Until the Second World War, American foreign policy analysts continued to stress the importance of U.S. isolation. British politician James Bryce (1838-1922), Tocqueville's successor as a sympathetic foreign critic of America, argued in *The American Commonwealth* (1888) that senatorial checks on presidential power kept the U.S. from "being entangled" with "responsibilities of all sorts beyond its own frontiers." American historian Charles Beard (1874-1948) recommended that the U.S. pursue "continentalism," withdrawing from international power politics in favor of "domestic prosperity within its own broad territory."

Today, some foreign policy analysts continue to insist that isolation is the best solution to the dilemma Tocqueville posed. George Kennan, for example, believes that the U.S. cannot pursue complex or secretive foreign policies, and should not act like a "Czar of Russia" in imposing its will on the world. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., suggests that pursuit of a "messianic foreign policy" might spell the return of "the imperial presidency."

But Clinton concludes that U.S. isolation is not possible because "there is no alternative candidate" to replace America on the world stage. To solve Tocqueville's dilemma, the president and Congress should work out "a public consensus" on such long-term foreign policy questions as arms control. Without such a consensus, he warns, America might well have to "abridge political freedoms" when decisive action is needed in a crisis.