Research Report

Model United Nations Oud-Beijerland

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Developing international guidelines for the establishment and operation of foreign military bases

Introduction

Foreign military bases are military facilities operated by a foreign military within a nation. There are various reasons for a country to operate or host a foreign military presence; Strengthening ties between countries, enhancing security in an unstable region or favourable conditions deals/treaties. While generally the agreement between the operating and the hosting nation are mutually beneficial, there are various concerns regarding foreign military bases that can be addressed by the UN.

General Overview

As stated above there is a plethora of reasons for a nation to wish to operate a military base in a foreign nation, and likewise there are many reasons as well for a nation to want to host such a facility. The most important ones are generally accepted to be strengthening regional security, the ability for the operating country to project power in a particular region, and establishing or strengthening relations between the operating and the hosting nation.

Various regions of our world are notably politically tumultuous. Oftentimes this results in external militaries intervening in an attempt to stabilise an area. Generally it helps for such a foreign power to have a military facility locally; it is considerably easier to send troops, aircraft and missiles from a base 50km away from an engagement zone or area of operations, than it is to do so from a ship 200km offshore, after all. Therefore many nations that tend to perform such stabilisation or peacekeeping missions (notably NATO, and thereof the U.S. in particular) like to keep a semi-permanent military presence regionally.

Furthermore our modern world operates on a global and highly interconnected economy. This means that a region such as the Strait of Hormuz can be of profound economic importance, and therefore strategic interest, while being located perhaps thousands of kilometres away from a particular country. Consequently a country may wish to easily be able to project military power over a region like that, as opposed to having to first mobilise troops and equipment on a home front and organise logistics to transport all that manpower and machinery over vast expanses of ocean or land. To achieve this it is often preferable for a nation to have military bases in a foreign area, so they may easily perform military operations in a strategically important area of the world, even if their own country is at a great distance from it.

Nations hosting a military base naturally should also stand something to gain from the arrangement. Oftentimes this is ensured either through necessity, or through favourable economic conditions. Sometimes a nation wants to have foreign military presence within their territories, because they struggle to maintain regional stability themselves. However in other cases, in return for allowing a foreign power to establish a facility, a hosting nation can negotiate economic aid such as investments, or favourable trade deals. Overall it strengthens diplomatic ties between countries, which can be of significant importance to LEDC's (Lesser Economically Developed Countries).

From all the information above it can be hastily concluded that these bases mostly have positive impact, however this is not always the case. A state that operates military bases abroad, that has relatively a larger economy and more capable military, when compared to the nation that hosts their facilities, can produce a situation where the operating state can easily demand things of the host, because they can very easily deploy their more capable army in high value areas, swiftly. Furthermore military bases can incite civil unrest, not only due to the very high amounts of noise jet engines, missile tests and tank tracks produce, but also because it can set the image for the population that their government is overly compliant with external parties. Lastly, but very much not unimportantly, there is a conceivable risk of cultural clashes or grievances between the soldiers and the local communities. A noteworthy example of such a grievance is the 1995 'Okinawa Rape Incident' where 3 american service members stationed at a military base on the island of Okinawa, japan, abducted and raped a 12 year old local girl. This controversy sparked widespread outrage and global debate surrounding American military presence in Japan, and it highlights a significant concern regarding foreign military bases.

Major Parties Involved

1. United States of America

The United States has military bases in several countries around the world, including Japan and Germany. These bases help the US work with its allies and support its military operations. The United States is an important country in this debate because international guidelines could affect how it uses its overseas bases. It may support rules that improve cooperation but could disagree with restrictions that make it harder to protect its allies.

2. Japan

Japan hosts many US military facilities, particularly on the island of Okinawa. These bases are part of the security agreement between Japan and the United States. Although the bases provide military support, they have also caused concerns among local residents about noise, land use and the behaviour of military personnel. Japan is therefore an important example of why local communities should be considered when countries make agreements about foreign military bases.

3. Germany

Germany hosts US military facilities that support cooperation between the United States and its European allies. These bases play a role in military planning, training and transporting equipment. Germany is relevant to this issue because it shows how foreign bases can be part of long-term defence partnerships. It could support guidelines that improve communication and responsibility while allowing countries to continue working together on security.

4. Russian Federation

Russia has military bases and troops in other countries as part of its security and foreign policy. Its military presence abroad is an important part of international discussions about defence, sovereignty and relations between states. Russia may argue that every country should be able to make its own defence agreements. However, the debate also raises questions about what should happen when foreign military activities create concerns about another country's independence or security.

5. China

China has increased its international military cooperation and established a military support base in Djibouti, in East Africa. This base supports China's activities and helps it maintain a presence in an important area for international shipping. China is relevant because its overseas military role has grown in recent years. It may support guidelines that focus on national sovereignty and agreements between countries. At the same time, the international community will need to consider how the same rules should apply to all countries.

6. United Nations

The United Nations was established in 1945 to promote peace, security and cooperation between countries. It provides a place where governments can discuss international problems and work towards solutions. In this debate, the General Assembly could recommend guidelines for foreign military bases. These could cover issues such as host-country permission, legal responsibility, environmental protection and communication between countries.

Possible Solutions

1. Create international guidelines

The United Nations could develop a set of guidelines explaining how foreign military bases should be established and operated. These guidelines could cover security, human rights, environmental protection and the responsibilities of both countries. The rules could be recommendations rather than strict laws at first. This would make it easier for countries to agree on common standards while keeping control over their own defence decisions.

2. Make agreements clear

Countries should make clear agreements before allowing foreign military bases to be established. These agreements should explain why the base is needed, what activities are allowed and how long the agreement will last. They should also explain how either country can review or end the agreement. This would help prevent misunderstandings and protect the independence of the host country.

3. Improve communication

Countries operating foreign military bases should share basic information about their activities with the host country and, where appropriate, neighbouring states. Sensitive military information could remain private when necessary for security reasons. Regular meetings could help countries discuss problems before they become serious disagreements. This would also make it easier to build trust between countries.

4. Make sure people are held responsible

International guidelines should encourage clear rules about how crimes or other forms of misconduct involving foreign military personnel are investigated. Both countries should understand which authorities are responsible and how they should cooperate. This would help protect local people and make sure that foreign military personnel are treated fairly under the relevant legal agreements.

5. Protect local communities and the environment

Countries operating foreign military bases should take steps to prevent pollution and reduce the impact on people living nearby. Environmental checks should take place before and during the operation of a base. Local communities should also have opportunities to share their concerns with the authorities. Agreements should explain who is responsible for cleaning up environmental damage when a base closes.

6. Solve disagreements peacefully

If countries disagree about a military base, they should first try to solve the problem through discussions and negotiations. The United Nations could help by providing a place for countries to communicate and look for solutions. Countries could also review their agreements regularly to make sure that the bases are still needed and that both sides are following the rules. This could help prevent disagreements from turning into larger conflicts.