



**General Assembly 4th
Committee
Chair Report**

“Establishing Guidelines for the Operation
of Military Bases abroad”

Chair: Sofia Li

Deputy Chair: Zita Justus

Personal Statements

Head Chair – Sofia Li



Dear Delegates,

My name is Sofia Li and I will be your head chair for GA4 in MUNISS 2024. I am going to be chairing alongside my fellow deputy chair Zita Justus.

I'm currently in the 10th grade at Frankfurt International School. So far I've been to five conferences, and this is my second as a student officer. It's my first time at MUNISS, but I'm sure it'll be a great experience!

As a committee, we will be discussing the issues of "Ensuring International

Cooperation in Strategic and Military Operations in Space", "Establishing Guidelines for the Operation of Military Bases Abroad", and "Promoting Sustainable Economic Recovery and Social Reintegration for Former Child Soldiers in the DRC".

And so, as delegates in GA4 (also called the 'Special Political and Decolonization Committee'), we will be tackling these problems with an aim to find solutions to the generational and historically derived impacts of colonialism around the world.

While these can be challenging topics, I am sure that all delegates will be able to produce versatile and impactful clauses in order to combat the aforementioned issues. If you have any questions about the topics, this research report, or even any general questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at xi_li@fis.edu.

See you all soon! Looking forward to meeting each and every one of you :)

Deputy Chair – Zita Justus



Dear Delegates,

My name is Zita Justus, I'm 17 years old, and I'm currently in 11th grade at the International School of Hamburg. I have participated twice at the THIMUN conferences. In 2023 I was in the SDC 2 committee, representing the Syrian Arab Republic, and in 2024 I was in the HRC 2 committee representing Belarus. This will be my first time at MUNISS conference, but I'm excited to meet new people, and I'm sure it will be a amazing experience.

MUNISS is a student-run, small-scale Model UN (MUN) conference that provides a forum for global problem debate and diplomatic exercises. Participants (delegates) work together to solve challenges in the real world while representing various nations. MUNISS seeks to improve communication, negotiating, and critical thinking abilities.

GA4, also known as the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly, is a non-advanced committee in Model United Nations (MUN).

Participating in the GA4 committee can be an excellent first experience for delegates in Model United Nations (MUN). It is imperative that delegates learn everything there is to know about the issues at hand and the position of the nation that they are representing. Become familiar with the procedures and take an active part in committee deliberations by negotiating and giving well-prepared statements. Forging alliances and engaging with other delegates, networking and diplomatic abilities are crucial. In addition, concentrate on drafting resolutions that address the agenda issues and collaborating effectively. Accept the learning process, improve your public speaking abilities, and obtain understanding of the complexities of global diplomacy.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the research report, or in fact any topic in general. you can reach me at zjustus@ishamburg.org.

I'm excited to meet each and every one of you. See you soon.

Introduction

The establishment of overseas military bases and the pursuit of access to strategic areas beyond a state's borders have been common practices throughout history, dating back to the earliest historical periods. Today, long-term deployments of foreign military bases have become a key aspect of geopolitics. Despite the normality of such practices of interstate cooperation having been relatively clearly established, these deployments are still problematic, when regarding international law (Manukyan).

Such deployments abroad are often received with negative attitudes, especially because of dissatisfaction among civil society representatives of the host country. Such arguments of dissatisfaction can vary, in where, for example: some host nations may view the presence of foreign military bases as an infringement upon their sovereignty, while others may express concerns about the potential for environmental degradation, noise pollution, or the risk of accidents. Additionally, the presence of foreign military personnel can sometimes lead to social tensions or conflicts with the local population, particularly if there are cultural differences or disagreements over issues such as crime and justice. In some cases, civil society representatives may also argue that the resources allocated to support the operation of military bases could be better used for other purposes, such as education, healthcare, or infrastructure development (Manukyan).

Despite such contentions above, there is still no general system of international law that regulates the immunity of foreign military forces, at an international level (Manukyan). Instead, the legal framework governing the immunity of foreign military forces is only derived from international treaties, bilateral agreements, and various types of customary international law. However, it is important to note that these sources do not form a cohesive, universal system of law that regulates the immunity of foreign military forces. Such examples include: the NATO Partnership for Peace Status of Forces Agreement (PfP SOFA) and the International Committee of the Red Cross' (ICRC) Handbook on International Rules Governing Military Operations (HIRMO); both of these establish rules for military personnel on foreign ground.

As delegates in GA4, you are all tasked with engaging in debates, negotiations, and collaborative problem-solving to develop resolutions on this issue.

Thus to navigate the different complexities of this topic, all delegates should really seek to consider: the current state of international cooperation and affairs, the challenges and barriers to cooperation, and the best practices and lessons learned from successful solutions.

Glossary

Military base: A military base is a facility used by the armed forces of a country to station troops, store equipment, and conduct operations.

Foreign military base: A military base located outside the borders of the principal occupants' country.

Host nation: The country that permits foreign military forces to establish and operate a base within its territory.

Bilateral agreement: A legally binding agreement between two countries outlining their rights, responsibilities, and obligations regarding specific matters (Hayes). It is the most common kind of agreement between two parties. Typically, most negotiations under bilateral agreements vouch for an equal consideration or obligation from both parties, but this is not always the case (Hayes).

Jurisdiction: The authority of a legal body to interpret and apply the law in a given area or over a particular group.

Extraterritorial jurisdiction: The legal authority of a state to exercise its jurisdiction beyond its territorial boundaries ("Extraterritorial Jurisdiction").

Customary law: Rules that have been derived from the consistent practice of states, which exist independent of treaty law, but are still considered legally binding. Despite that, customary law is still of extreme importance, as it strengthens the protection provided to victims, in the context of armed conflicts ("Customary Law").

Immunity: An exemption from legal jurisdiction or prosecution, granted to foreign military personnel under specific agreements or treaties.

Diplomatic immunity: Immunity granted to diplomatic personnel - which exempts them from the jurisdiction of the host country's courts and laws ("Explainer: What").

Sovereignty: The supreme authority of a state over its territory and people. This includes the power to make and enforce laws without external interference.

Force protection: Certain measures taken to safeguard the lives, property, and the well-being of military personnel and their families ("Force Protection").

Issue Explanation

The presence of foreign military bases has been a common practice throughout history, with many countries establishing bases abroad to protect their interests, project power, and support their allies.

It is a known fact that the world's biggest superpowers own the biggest share in foreign countries, in terms of land for foreign military bases. For example, the United States has "more than 750 military bases across 80 countries, and has deployed nearly 175,000 soldiers in 159 countries of the world" (Jawad).

However, the operation of these bases can often lead to various issues, such as environmental concerns, legal disputes, and geopolitical tensions.

One of the biggest concerns about overseas military bases as of late constitutes whether or not they are environmentally friendly. In fact, many seem to express dissent about how there is a lack of a central "comprehensive program for responding to environmental contamination at foreign military bases", particularly on behalf of the U.S. government (Lindsay-Poland and Morgan).

In terms of legal disputes, for the most part, the ones raised between the host nations and sending nations include: land use and property rights, labor laws and regulations, taxation laws, and human rights laws.

In regards to geopolitical tensions, the presence of foreign military bases can lead to regional conflicts - and may even escalate them. This is particularly the case if the host nation's neighbors perceive the bases as a threat to their security. Additionally, the absence of clear international norms can fuel disputes over jurisdiction, immunity, and the application of international law (Gök and Sakman 325, 326).

As aforementioned, the absence of universally accepted guidelines for the operation of military bases abroad detrimentally exacerbates these issues - as it leaves room for misinterpretation and exploitation of legal loopholes, which can lead to further conflict.

At its core, the issue can all be traced back to a lack of a clear and united set of guidelines for operating military bases abroad. In essence, this results in a series of humanitarian, economic and environmental problems.

Humanitarian:

- The presence of foreign military bases can sometimes lead to human rights violations, displacement of local populations, and social tensions between military personnel and the host community. In some cases, military operations may inadvertently cause civilian casualties or damage civilian infrastructure ("Human Rights").

Economic:

- While military bases can contribute to local economies through job creation and infrastructure development, they may also lead to economic dependence and exploitation. In some cases, disputes over compensation for land use or damage caused by military activities can strain relations between the host nation and the foreign military (Manukyan).

Environmental:

- As aforementioned, military activities can cause significant environmental damage, including pollution, the destruction of habitats, and the depletion of resources. The lack of clear guidelines on environmental stewardship can result in unsustainable practices that harm local ecosystems and public health (Lindsay-Poland and Morgan).

A complete failure to establish comprehensive, united guidelines for the operation of overseas military bases would definitely have far-reaching consequences for global peace and stability. This means that conflicts would have the possibility to escalate - unresolved issues could turn into full-blown conflicts between countries. In turn, this would almost cause a 'domino-effect' of events, including significant human suffering, including loss of life, displacement, and economic hardship.

History of the Topic

The issue of establishing guidelines for the operation of military bases abroad has its roots in the historical practice of colonialism and the expansion of empires. As early as the 18th and 19th centuries, powerful nations established military bases overseas to protect their colonies, control trade routes, and project power. These early bases often operated with little regard for local laws, customs, or sovereignty (Manukyan).

The problem became more pronounced in the 20th century, particularly during the Cold War era (1947-1991), when the United States and the Soviet Union established numerous military bases around the world to support their respective allies and maintain their geopolitical influence. But, due to the absence of comprehensive international guidelines for the operation of these bases, this often led to legal disputes and much local discontent (Stevenson).

Key countries involved ("13 Countries"):

- **United States:** The US maintains a vast network of military bases around the world, with approximately 800 bases in more than 70 countries. These bases are often established through bilateral agreements, but their presence has sometimes caused local opposition and raised concerns about US influence on host countries' domestic and foreign policies.
- **Russia (formerly Soviet Union):** During the Cold War, the Soviet Union established military bases in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and other regions to support its allies and counterbalance US influence. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia has maintained several bases abroad, particularly in former Soviet states, which has occasionally led to tensions with host countries and neighboring states.
- **United Kingdom:** The UK has maintained military bases in various regions, including the Middle East and Asia, often as a legacy of its colonial past. British military bases have sometimes faced opposition from local populations, particularly in cases where the UK's military presence was perceived as a violation of national sovereignty.
- **France:** France has also maintained military bases abroad, primarily in its former colonies in Africa and the Middle East. These bases have been the source of tensions with host countries, particularly when French military operations have led to civilian casualties or political interference.
- **China:** China has recently begun to establish military bases abroad, notably in Djibouti and the South China Sea, to protect its growing economic and strategic interests. Because of this, significant concerns have been raised among other countries about China's expanding influence - and potential disregard for international norms.

Any Previous Attempts

Bilateral agreements (Gök and Sakman 324):

Countries have often attempted to address the issue of military bases abroad through bilateral agreements, such as Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) or Visiting Forces Agreements (VFAs). These agreements establish the legal framework for the presence and operation of foreign military bases, including the rights, privileges, and immunities of military personnel, as well as the scope of the host nation's jurisdiction. While these agreements can help clarify the legal status of military bases, they can also lead to disputes when the terms are ambiguous or when one party fails to comply with them.

International treaties and conventions (Manukyan):

Some international treaties and conventions touch upon the issue of military bases abroad. For example, the NATO Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and the UN Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations establish rules for military personnel operating under the auspices of these organizations. However, these treaties are rather limited in scope and do not provide a comprehensive framework for all military bases abroad.

UN Security Council resolutions (S/RES/2149 (2014)):

In some cases, the UN Security Council has adopted resolutions to address specific issues related to military bases abroad, such as the protection of civilians or the promotion of human rights. For instance, Resolution 2149 (2014) called on all parties involved in the conflict in Iraq to respect international humanitarian law and human rights, including in areas where foreign military bases were present.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society groups, and academic institutions have also sought to address the issue of military bases abroad by conducting research, raising awareness, and advocating for stronger regulations. For example, the International Network for the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases has campaigned for the closure of foreign military bases and the adoption of a legally binding international treaty to regulate their operations (“International Network”).

Media Contribution

General support for the issue includes (Manukyan):

Some members of the public, along with certain academics and policy experts, argue that establishing clear international guidelines for the operation of military bases abroad is essential for maintaining global stability and security. They contend that such guidelines could help prevent disputes between host nations and foreign militaries, ensure respect for local laws and customs, and protect the rights of local populations.

General opposition to the issue includes (Manukyan):

Others argue that implementing international guidelines could infringe upon the sovereignty of nations that host military bases. They maintain that bilateral agreements between host nations and foreign militaries are sufficient for regulating the operation of military bases abroad. Some also argue that strict guidelines could hinder the flexibility of military operations and undermine national security interests.

Neutral or ambivalent stances include (Manukyan):

A portion of the general public may not have strong opinions on the issue or may feel that it is primarily a matter for governments and military experts to address. These individuals may be more concerned with the direct impact of military bases on their local communities, such as economic benefits or potential negative externalities like noise pollution and environmental degradation.

As the issue of military bases abroad continues to be debated in the media and among the general public, it is likely that these common beliefs will influence the development of any future international guidelines for their operation.

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