

THE FIRST COMMITTEE: DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY (DISEC)

The Question of Foreign Military Bases



National Youth Model United Nations

General Assembly 1- (DISEC) – Committee Guide

History

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly (GA) is one of the six principal organs of the UN established by the Charter of the United Nations in 1946, as the only main body with universal membership.

The GA has existed since the creation of the UN and its first session convened in 1946 in London. Post consequences of the Second World War and the shock of the atomic bomb, the desire to build a permanent system of security and peace that initiated with the League of Nations, grew even stronger. In light of this situation, disarmament played a crucial role in the very founding of the UN and has featured as one of the most prominent issues discussed on the international agenda in the last few decades. The first resolution adopted by the GA addressed the issue of atomic energy and its potential threats, and resolution 14/1378 of 20 November 1959 on “General and Complete Disarmament” which was the first resolution co-sponsored by all Member States which considered the question of disarmament, the most important question facing the world at the time. Later on, the GA established the UNDC in 1952 with a general mandate to discuss questions related to disarmament. Furthermore, in its 26th session, the GA declared the 1970s as a Disarmament Decade. During this time additional essential institutions were established; in 1979 the CD was created as the international community’s multilateral negotiation forum on disarmament and in 1980 the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) was created with the purpose of undertaking independent research on questions related to disarmament.

Landmark Documents

- Resolution 1 (I): The very first General Assembly resolution, entitled “Establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy”, was adopted on recommendation by the First Committee on 24 January 1946, in London.
- Resolution 1378 (XIV): The very first General Assembly resolution that was co-sponsored by all Member States at that time.
- Special sessions on disarmament (resolutions and decisions adopted at the 10th, 12th and 15th special sessions of the General Assembly)
 - A/S-10/4 (23 May – 30 June 1978)
 - A/S-12/6 (7 June – 10 July 1982)
 - A/S-15/6 (31 May – 25 June 1988)

Mandate

The GA is divided into six main Committees, and each has a specific purpose. Each of the Main Committees reports their work to the GA Plenary, which as a principal organ, does not report to any other organ but requests and receives reports, including from the Secretary-General. GA First Committee considers all matters related to disarmament and international security. Two bodies report

directly to GA First, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC), and several other disarmament related entities and other organizations report to the General Assembly through the First Committee, such as the regional centers on disarmament and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

Powers

The powers of the General Assembly 1 (DISEC) can essentially be summarized as follows.

A set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, contained in the outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda (resolution 70/1).

According to the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly may:

- Consider and approve the United Nations budget and establish the financial assessments of Member States.
- Elect the non-permanent members of the Security Council and the members of other United Nations councils and organs and, on the recommendation of the Security Council, appoint the Secretary-General;
- Consider and make recommendations on the general principles of cooperation for maintaining international peace and security, including disarmament.
- Discuss any question relating to international peace and security and, except where a dispute or situation is currently being discussed by the Security Council, make recommendations on it.
- Discuss, with the same exception, and make recommendations on any questions within the scope of the Charter or affecting the powers and functions of any organ of the United Nations.
- Initiate studies and make recommendations to promote international political cooperation, the development and codification of international law, the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international collaboration in the economic, social, humanitarian, cultural, educational and health fields.
- Make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation that might impair friendly relations among countries.
- Consider reports from the Security Council and other United Nations organs.

The Assembly may also act in cases of a threat to the peace, breach of peace or act of aggression, when the Security Council has failed to act owing to the negative vote of a permanent member. In such instances, according to its "Uniting for peace" resolution of 3 November 1950, the Assembly may consider the matter immediately and recommend to its Members collective measures to maintain or restore international peace and security. (See "Special sessions" and "Emergency special sessions".)

<https://www.un.org/en/ga/first/index.shtml>

<https://www.un.org/en/ga/about/background.shtml>

General Assembly Topic – The question of foreign military bases

1) Introduction

A military base, by its definition is a facility that is created by the military of a nation to shelter its equipment and personnel as well as to support its operations. Consequently, a foreign military base is one that is established by one nation on the sovereign territory of another. These overseas bases help one understand the sphere of influence exerted by a nation throughout the globe. They have however been an issue of concern within international law as well as global politics for one primary reason: Sovereignty. Other related issues also include the impacts such bases may have on international peace and security as well as their socio-political effects on the resident population of the host nation and the foreign military personnel residing in these bases. Currently there are military bases established in over 100 countries and territories, mostly controlled by the USA and its NATO allies. Owing to the contrast in the pros and cons of the establishment and maintenance of overseas military bases, their presence has become a matter of serious contention.

2) History of the topic

The establishment of foreign military bases is not a modern concept. In fact, the idea can be traced back to the Fifth Century BC back to Ancient Greece and its city states. The aftermath of the two World Wars of the 20th Century had made the presence of military bases on foreign soil more tolerable, especially under the bipolar global order established thereafter. The cold war era saw the increase in military presence of the USA and the USSR through the establishment of overseas bases. However it could be said that much has changed in the 21st century in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. The attacks shifted the attitude of countries, to increase their military presence abroad to combat terrorism. The trend shown by the Western allies in establishing military bases throughout Eastern European regions to hinder the spread of communism is now focused on combating these terrorist threats developing in the Caspian- Caucasus area, including the regions of Central Asia and the Middle East.

As of today, the USA controls the largest number of foreign military bases in the world, which according to a study by the Swiss Institute for Peace and Energy Research (SIPER) is 587 bases in 42 countries. This is followed by the UK and France with bases in 11 countries and the Russian Federation in 9. China controls one overseas base in Djibouti, apart from the military bases it had established in the disputed South China Sea.

Accordingly, one might ask is the establishment of foreign military a form of modern day imperialism by those who hold the reins of power. Or are they an integral aspect of maintaining international peace and security where UN actions are limited? Delegates may find it useful to tackle the topic at hand by raising these historical issues on foreign military bases

3. Key recent developments

The discussion that is featured in this guide will act as pointers to what may constitute a rich debate. This in means that delegates are either boxed or stretched rather guided in its truest sense. So let's firstly breakdown the strides that global politics has taken on this rather sensitive matter.

Donald Trump, the current moderator of the largest foreign military establishment in the world, approved a budgetary allocation of 1.3 trillion dollars for the fiscal year of 2019. This encompasses the sanctioning of the military bases (close to 800) that are placed in over 70 countries. This falls on stark contrast with the recent policy decisions by the Trump administration, which didn't look to foreign military bases as a very sustainable position.

The valuation here is important to contextualize the situation the world is in now, and the constant proliferation of foreign military bases. This leads to the fact that if we pool the number of foreign military bases owned by every other nation (apart from USA) it total's to a value close to 30. Hence, the reach of the USA is a very important development.

Chinese military presence in the Southern and Central Asian regions have taken a more elaborated stance, given that even the recent acquisition of land in Sri Lanka has been interpreted in different ways. A similar feature was witnessed in Djibouti last year when, China made its first military advancement of substantial nature in foreign soil.

Moving onto the nation of Russia were status quo dictates it to have military bases in about 9 countries ranging from Syria in the Middle East and Belarus within Eastern Europe(primarily the only 2 continents with Russian military bases).

The polarization between these states provide the best approach for a delegate to realize the direction they should take, in breaking down the public policy of all states in discussion.

4. Discussion of topic

Primary discussion on the topic is based on 2 folds of debate. Firstly, the cohesion of foreign military bases in a state with its people would be in question and secondly the origin of a foreign military base and its continuance. It is not difficult to witness that the origin is usually of an imperialistic nature.

A delegate would be expected to understand the legal impediments that may arise with regards to 'Status of Forces Agreements' that exists between host nations and foreign countries, merely on the fact that most agreements don't hold sufficient capacity to provide concrete operational frameworks. The head table views this as important, but not to the extent that the mandate of the DISEC should be abused but rather to preamble the discussion.

When moving to the body of discussion, delegates are asked to be careful with regards to the "hotspots" of heightened activity with regards to military influence and foreign military bases. This can

be met quite easily if cross sections of the geo-political regions are examined. This includes regions such as the Horn of Africa, regions in Djibouti and Sahel regions when considering Africa. Central Asian regions, such as Pakistan and Afghanistan become flagship states in discussion of this topic (in relations to Asia). In moving to the Middle East, the general 'umbrella' strategy followed by the USA around countries such as Iran is a particularly interesting position for delegates to venture upon.

The USA has deployed over 350,000 soldiers around the globe on various operations, which serves as the best standpoint for a delegate to proceed with debate. The US Central Command (CENTCOM) provides the intelligence that is quoted out in most news pieces and would inherently be a very valuable source for delegates, given its involvement in the coordination of foreign military bases. The role of the CENTCOM is a subject worthy of discussion on a R&D capacity.

On a more conclusive note, the territorial integrity is also a point of contention in a debate such as this, which goes to show that delegates would have to employ more specialized organs. The fourth general assembly would take a more leading role in assessing peace keeping operations, but the mandate is extended to the grasp of the GA1, which is where assessing the role of the UNPKO's is an important talking point in the debate.

5. Past UN Actions/ Resolutions

The UN had taken several notable actions to resolve the issues regarding foreign military bases, primarily to replace the Status of Force Agreement (SOFA) with a more acceptable international framework.

Notable actions and resolutions by the UN over the years include,

- Oslo Guidelines were formulated in 1994 and were intended to outline the main principles and standards of military bases and civil defenses.
- In 2003, the UN Security Council established the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to secure Kabul and the surrounding areas from foreign threat. NATO assumed the control of the ISAF in 2003.

6. Conclusion

The question of foreign military bases has vexed much of the UN since its inception. There is clear evidence that an increase in these overseas bases will be seen over the coming years, especially since developing Nations are attempting to increase their military footprint across the world. Delegates would find it particularly helpful to tackle this topic by taking the perspective of the host nation and the impact the base may have on its citizens together with the impact it may have on the nation establishing the base. An outlook on the bases' effects on the region should also be taken.

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