

University of Alberta High School Model United Nations 2011

GA1: Disarmament and International Security Committee – The Question of Militarization of Borders

Can the international community come to an agreement over whether borders should be militarized?

Scope of the problem

The issue of border control has been commonly framed as an extension of foreign policy objectives over the course of the twentieth century. In times of war or crisis, politicians have portrayed the border as a vulnerable last line of defense against an 'invading enemy.' The militarization of the border may include increasing personnel, joint patrols with the armed forces, the usage of military monitoring technology, and may even include the construction of a border wall. Borders have historically been recognized as sacred (in terms of sovereignty) and disputes can quickly become heated and hostile.

An important place to start is to consider why your nation has a stake in this issue. Certain delegates will feel that militarized borders create undue burdens on international trade and commerce. Others might find them necessary to defend their nation against hostile neighbors. Where militarized borders are concerned, the underlying principle is typically to prevent anything from entering illegally, but certain states also maintain strict border control to prevent escape. Nations with little personal stake might argue on behalf of refugees seeking to flee somewhere they may not be able to due to border militarization.

Delegates should research nations currently possessing borders that are militarized and the impact such militarization has locally and internationally. An example of a heavily militarized border is the border between South and North Korea. A buffer zone called the Demilitarized Zone (or DMZ) winds across the Korean Peninsula, spanning 4 km between North & South Korea. Not only does this have serious implications for both Koreas (especially South Korea, which has artillery from North Korea trained upon its capital city), but also states like China and the US who both have significant economic and military interests in the area. States with longstanding border disputes and hostility, even where borders are not militarized, should consider their security interests and how far they would be willing to go as regards potential demilitarization. Delegates should also consider militarization of borders along international waterways. Gun emplacements on shorelines, such as Iran's placing of missile batteries along the Straights of Hormuz (a vital entrance to the Gulf region), pose a significant threat to shipping and the energy security of many Western and European states. This, however, is seen by Iran (and China, who supplied said missiles) as a way of countering American naval supremacy.

The integration of border control in a nation's security doctrine is sometimes seen as a solution to stem the flow of illegal immigrants, or as part of a multilayered effort to target illicit networks

trafficking in drugs, illegal weapons and money. Increased military presence could be successful in minimizing criminal activity. Additionally, border militarization has been justified by states hoping to prevent subversive military tactics by neighboring states that may be designed to infiltrate and terrorize local populations.

Some see the infusion of national security objectives into the issue of immigration as a way for policy makers to skirt proper immigration reform. It is believed that comprehensive immigration reform is the solution to reducing the flow of people who feel compelled by their homelands' intolerable economic and social conditions to cross borders illegally. Yet there are supporters of both, who believe that a crackdown on the border is a necessary precursor to comprehensive immigration reform.

Another problem associated with border militarization is the increased likelihood of war. Firstly, nations may be more willing to start a war when they already have a respectable number of troops stationed on their frontiers. Secondly, cross border raids and standoffs can lead to an escalation of violence much more easily in a heavily defended border region.

Given that there are militarized borders, what can the UN do to confront them? The reality is that militarized borders are not likely going to be eliminated, so delegates wishing to contest them in an international discussion should think of ways states may be able to achieve their goals without excessive border militarization.

It is worth reflecting on how your HSMUN country defines militarization. Why is militarization a concern or favorable option for your country? How does your country plan to contribute in the implementation of militarization? Which unfortified frontiers of nation-states are in question and why? How will the precedent of national sovereignty be recognized and protected? Will political relations and alliances experience a strain?

Recent Historical Background

In the United States, President Obama has signed into law a \$600 million bill, the Southwest Border Security Bill, to deploy some 1,500 new Border Patrol agents and law enforcement officials along the border; it also provides for Predator pilotless aerial surveillance drones, which would conduct surveillance against immigrants crossing the border. In a rare display of bipartisanship, the bill was quickly passed by Congress. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano praised the proposal, "These assets are critical to bringing additional capabilities to crack down on transnational criminal organizations and reduce the illicit trafficking of people, drugs, currency and weapons," Napolitano said. Under President Obama's watch, a record number of Customs & Border Protection officers are employed in the United States with immigration enforcement spending standing at \$11B for 2010 and a recently requested \$500M for ramped up militarization. A statement issued by the White House said that the legislation would allocate the \$600 million "to enhance technology at the border, share

information and support with state, local and tribal law enforcement, and increase (federal) presence and law enforcement activities at the border.”

Points of Contention

To what extent can the United Nations infringe on the sovereignty of a nation by defining the border it chooses to dictate through militarization?

Is militarization of a border a claim to sovereignty? (Can one nation, motivated by its military presence, secure its rights over a country?)

Is immigration reform a more effective tool in reducing military pressure on the border?

Resources

I would suggest the following links to further your research and gain your country's perspective and stance on this issue.

<http://www.un.org/>

<http://www.un.org/ga/60/first/>

<http://www.economist.com/>

<http://www.hsmun.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>