

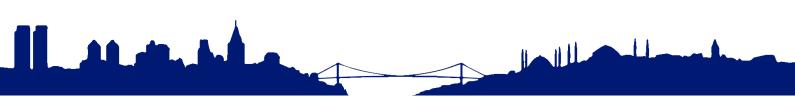
RESEARCH REPORT

ADVISORY PANEL ON THE QUESTION OF THE HORN OF AFRICA

(APQ)

FACILITATING THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF FOREIGN MILITARY BASES

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Basic Overview of the Issue

The Horn of Africa is a loosely defined region in the east of Africa which is home to countries such as Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Especially after the Cold War, the region has seen increased military presence and turmoil, both internally and from foreign nations.

Due in large part to bilateral agreements between some African Union (AU) member states and international powers, Africa is now home to an increasing number of foreign military operations and facilities. This is despite the African Union Peace and Security Council's worries about additional military installations and foreign bases being established on the continent.

This is a result of post-colonial and post-Cold War intense rivalry amongst world powers to oppose one another led to militarization in the Horn of Africa. The goals of the opening of military bases and naval fleets by global and regional countries in the Horn of Africa are to secure trade routes, project military might to win over friendly regimes in the subcontinent, and combat terrorism and piracy.



Figure 1: Foreign military bases in the Horn of Africa.

While on the surface this may seem like an advantageous situation for all parties involved, the presence of foreign military could inhibit the democratic and accountable processes of the host nation, as well as erode their sovereignty.

Explanation of Important Terms

Non-proliferation

Cambridge Dictionary defines the word "non-proliferation" as "the controlling of the spread and/or amount of something". In this context, this phrase refers to controlling

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and stopping the spread of foreign military bases in the Horn of Africa. (Cambridge Dictionary)

Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa is a region located in east Africa which has seen a large amount of turmoil and unrest over the years. Due to its strategic importance, it borders many trade routes going in and out of the Suez Canal, it remains an important location for pirates and foreign powers alike. This has motivated foreign powers to increase their military presence in the region.

Foreign Military Base

For the purposes of this research report, a foreign military base is any facility with foreign personnel and / or equipment stationed in a host country in the Horn of Africa.

Bilateral Relations

The exchanges and relationships between two sovereign states are known as bilateral relations. When two states have a bilateral connection, it indicates that they are directly interacting and conducting business with one another. In the context of the topic at hand, bilateral relations between host countries and regional and global powers have facilitated the growth and establishment of foreign military bases in the region.

Post-colonialism

Post-colonialism in this context refers to the expansionist policies of some regional and global powers. Unlike traditional colonialism, post-colonial expansion is facilitated by the foreign nation increasing its influence over the host nation, which may be facilitated by founding military bases in the host nation.

Sphere of Influence

A sphere of influence refers to a region or country in which another country has major diplomatic, economic, military or social control over the host nation. Many countries seek to expand their sphere of influence to challenge their ideological rivals.

Private Military Company (PMC)

PMCs are private companies which can be hired by private or public entities for security and combat purposes.

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Detailed Background of the Issue

The issue of foreign military bases in Africa is a complicated, multi-faceted and controversial issue. While foreign military bases have existed in the Horn of Africa ever since the colonial period (18th to 20th centuries), for the purposes of this research report only the last two decades will be taken into consideration. During this period, there has been a substantial increase in foreign military presence in the Horn of Africa.

This is largely attributed to the end of the Cold War, or more accurately, a result of the new type of colonialism it spawned. During the Cold War, Western powers such as the US, UK and France fought with the Soviet Union to increase their sphere of influence. This encapsulated the west or the east trying to entice or in most cases coerce other nations to become their allies. The goal of the US (and her allies) and the Soviet Union was to pull as many nations into their sphere of influence. One way of facilitating this was military cooperation or aid.

Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, this state of affairs continued, this time between other rival nations, such as the US, Russia and China. While up until the end of the Cold War this rivalry between nations to pull countries into their own sphere of influence had been largely contained within Eastern Europe and the Middle East, with the dawn of a new millenia it quickly spilled over into different regions, including the Horn of Africa.

There are a plethora of reasons for this, including the strategic importance of the region, the lack of central authority making it easy for foreign nations to assert their influence, terrorist activity and post-colonial powers trying to hold on to their colonies, all of which will be further discussed in the following sections.

Post-Cold War Rivalry and Expansionist Ambitions

While foreign military presence in Africa long predates the Cold War, the Cold War was still an important event relating to this issue. Even though the US and the Soviet Union were primarily focused on Eastern Europe and the Middle East, both parties made an attempt to pull African nations into their sphere of influence. The US in particular would take advantage of this state of affairs, continuing and expanding their military programs in African

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nations following the end of WW2. The Soviet Union would attempt the same, albeit with limited success, never being able to gain a foothold in the continent.

Sino-American Rivalry

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the beginning of a new era would only hasten this process. While the US would lose interest in the region as its policies in Africa had largely been in response to Soviet expansion, a new country would soon find interest in the region: China. Looking to expand its sphere of influence China would make large investments in Africa in the 1990s following discoveries of new oil reserves. Despite making large investments in Africa, China's military presence would remain to a limited degree, limited by United Nations peacekeeping forces and anti-piracy operations. Despite this, China would acquire their first military base in 2017 in Diibouti.

China's increased activity in the region following the end of the Cold War would concern the US, as China and the US were post-Cold War rivals on ideological grounds. The US's response to Chinese expansion in Africa would be military action. In 2002, the first American military base would be founded in Djibouti and five years later on February 6, 2007, United States Africa Command or AFRICOM would be announced, which acted as an extension of the US military located in Africa. It also included a task force specific to the Horn of Africa called the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA).

The two nations continued to increase their military presence in the continent, both to secure their financial interests in the region but to also capture host countries within their sphere of influence. This not only causes unnecessary tension between the two nations in the region but also inhibits the sovereignty of the host nations.

Russo-American Rivalry

The majority of Soviet commitments on the continent came to an end with the fall of the Soviet Union. In the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia struggled to rebuild and reassert itself, and its influence and presence in Africa seemed at best tenuous. Hence, Africa continued to be on the outside of Russian foreign policy. Paralleling the oil discovery of the 2000s in Africa, which drove Russian expansionism, was Russia's renewed interest in Africa. The 2008 conflict between

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Georgia and Russia marked a turning point in diplomacy and signalled the return of Russia determined to regain its dominance.

Africa once again reemerged as a stage and participant in the conflicts between the world's main powers, particularly the United States, China, and Russia, as Russia's competition with the West heated up. Russia has some significant advantages in this new competition, despite being constrained by its own economic shortcomings and its limited capacity to project power internationally. The main advantage Russia possessed was its former connection with African nations during the Cold War.

Especially after the election of Vladimir Putin, following 2005 Russia would invest in Africa and sign new deals with African nations, leveraging their former connection with the Soviet Union. Russia also attempted to strengthen its influence in the continent militarily to compete with rival nations. However, unlike China and the US, Russia employed a more unconventional technique.

Instead of stationing official military personnel in Africa, Russia has opted to sponsor and facilitate the employment of Private Military Companies or PMCs in Africa, including the Horn of Africa. According to the Centre for Strategic & International Studies, RAND has found that "Russian PMCs have a substantial presence in the CAR, Sudan, and South Sudan. They are also found in a number of other African states, including Congo, Gabon, Libya, Mali, and Madagascar". (Droin, Mathieu, and Tina Dolbaia, CSIS) These companies are suspected to have strong ties with the Kremlin and serve to enforce Russia's influence in the region.

Post-Colonialism and the Desire to Hold onto Colonies

Africa has been historically a region in which colonial powers have fought over to expand their empire. Many African nations were either annexed territories of colonial powers, or protectorates and colonies with no sovereignty of their own. Colonial powers utilised these nations for their own gains, usually making use of their natural resources and readily available labour.

After the end of WW2, many African nations gained their independence. This did not, however, mean the colonial powers who formerly occupied these countries would give up their influence over the regions so easily.

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The main party involved in this regard is France, which formerly held many colonies in Africa, including a royal protectorate in Djibouti. France had already established military bases in Djibouti. Leveraging their former military presence, France would expand their military bases in Djibouti. This military presence came to an all time high in 2011, where France and Djibouti signed a treaty allowing France to station a large military presence in the region. This not only allows France to conserve her influence over the country, but also serves to protect France's interest in the Horn of Africa, particularly anti-piracy missions led by the European Union. German forces are also stationed in French bases in Djibouti.

Strategic Location of the Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa is a strategic location for many nations. For one, the Horn of Africa borders the passage into the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, making it of vital maritime importance for trade routes. Furthermore, the Horn of Africa is rich in important resources such as oil and natural gas, making it appealing for countries which require these resources to maintain their industries. For instance, China has made significant investments in



Figure 2: Map showing the choke points near the Suez Canal.

the Horn of Africa after the discovery of oil in the region.

Hence many nations have established military nations in host nations to protect their interests in the region. This is compounded by the fact that the Horn region of Africa is highly unstable. For example, Somalia has been in turmoil since 1991, when a civil war erupted. This, compounded by the fact that Somalia is home to a large number of piracy operations threatening international maritime trade, it is no wonder why so many nations scramble to establish military bases in the region.

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In addition to European nations's ambitions to establish a military presence in the region, some Middle Eastern countries have also taken interest in the region in order to protect their interests. These countries are primarily Turkey, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, who established a sizable military presence in the region in the mid 2010s. This was largely done as a security measure to enforce the safety of maritime trade passing through the region. The importance of the Suez Canal in international trade cannot be understated, as it accounts for 10% of international maritime trade.

In addition to safety concerns, another reason why regional powers such as Qatar are trying to establish a military presence in the Horn of Africa is to increase their diplomatic influence over the region. These policies of regional powers, including the three aforementioned countries, align with their broader desire to play a more active role in regional diplomacy in Africa and extend their sphere of influence overseas.

The War on Terror

As mentioned before, the Horn of Africa is in a state of constant conflict and turmoil. One of the reasons for this state of affairs is the sheer amount of terrorist activity in the region, such as ISIS-Somalia and Al-Shaabab. This not only jeopardises the security of maritime trade routes passing through the region, but also the influence of third parties of nations in the region.

For this reason, extensive counter terrorist missions have taken place in the Horn of Africa. This has motivated countries such as Italy, Israel and even Japan to send military personnel and equipment to foreign military bases in the region or even establish their own as a broader part of an international effort against terrorism. Thus, in addressing this issue this aspect of the conflict must be noted.

Recent Developments

Especially within the last decade, the issue of foreign military bases in Africa has gained more traction both internationally and within the host countries. This comes partially as a result of growing discontent within the host nations and partially as a result of the international conflict over who can grow their sphere of influence the most continuing to heat up.

One major development which sealed the fate of the continent of Africa as a diplomatic battleground was the inauguration of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, which

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solidified China's ambitions to spread its sphere of influence all across the globe. Since then China has invested in virtually all African nations, which includes military aid and setting uo foreign bases. This has not only caused the proliferation of Chinese foreign military bases in Africa (ex. China established their first foreign military base in Djibouti in 2017) but also encouraged other countries to do the same to combat Chinese influence.

For instance, as recently as 2018 the United States and Ghana signed an agreement called the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), which would allow the US to build yet even more military facilities in the country as well as give any US serviceman significant privileges, such as open carrying weapons while on duty and not being tried in Ghanaian courts in case they commit a crime. This is one example in which the sovereignty of the host country is being eroded, as the servicemen in the host nation are given serious privileges. Furthermore, this agreement gives the US full jurisdiction to open military facilities and use them as they wish without any involvement from the Ghanaian military or government, which can be interpreted as an erosion of sovereignty.

This issue was attempted to be addressed during one of the African Union's Peace and Security Conferences (PSC). During the meeting many security issues were discussed, including terrorist organisations such as Boko-Haram and the dissolution of the Libyan state. Remarkably, however, the PSC made it clear that the security of the members of the African Union lay within the member states themselves. Through this meeting it can be inferred that many African nations have a desire to ensure their security by their own means and are unhappy with the presence of foreign military within their territory.

Effects on the Host Nation

While there are undoubtedly positives to the presence of foreign military in host countries, there are undeniably downsides as well. The first problem is not directly related to foreign military presence, but rather a symptom of a larger problem. Because one of the main reasons many nations scrambled to establish military bases in these host nations is to protect their economic interests. The biggest stakeholder in this regard is China, who has invested a very significant amount of money into Africa. Hence, the presence of military forces usually serves to protect these types of nation's economic interests. This erodes the financial independence of the host nation due to the large influx of capital drowning out local industry, compounded by the backing of foreign military supporting the foreign investment.

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Another large point of contention is the effect foreign military has on the host nation's sovereignty. A big selling point of having a military in a foreign nation is to incorporate the host country into the foreign country's sphere of influence. This means even though the host country benefits from the military presence of the foreign nation, they are not only dependent on it for security and protection, but also coerced into aligning themselves with the foreign country's diplomatic stances. This erodes the sovereignty of the host nation.

Furthermore, another reason for why so many African governments have been willing to take on foreign investors and allow governments to build foreign military bases in their territory is due to their economies' reliance on raw material exports and weak economies. Due to this state of affairs, many African countries see foreign military aid as a way to supplement or even flat out sustain their economies, as lucrative business deals and rent paid to the host country for the land the military bases are built upon proceed the founding of new foreign military bases. For instance Djibouti, a country with an overwhelming amount of foreign military bases in its territory has a GDP of less than 1 billion USD, which indicates a weak economy. Hence, Djibouti has allowed many countries to open military bases within its territories to supplement its income.

Major Parties Involved

United States of America

During the Cold War, the US and Soviet Union attempted to influence African nations, with the US continuing military programs in African nations after WW2. However, the Soviet Union's attempts were limited, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union led to an end to this rivalry and the US quickly losing interest in the region. However, China, a post-Cold War ideological rival, soon found interest in Africa after the discovery of oil. The US responded to China's expansion by establishing the first American military base in Djibouti in 2002 and establishing United States Africa Command in 2007. This expanded the US military presence in Africa and included a task force for the Horn of Africa called the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA).

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China

China's involvement in the Horn of Africa dates back to the mid 1990s, where she made significant investments into the Horn of Africa after the discovery of oil in the region. In relation to military presence, China has limited their military involvement in the region with only peacekeeping and anti-piracy missions. However, China has started to ramp up their military presence in the region as recent as 2017 with the acquisition of a military base in Djibouti, as the race between the US and China ramp up to expand their sphere of influence into China. Despite their relatively conservative military involvement in Africa, China has substantial economic interest in the region. China has been investing in Africa and has invested in virtually every single African nation since. The Belt and Road Initiative, announced in 2013 only hastened this process. In recent years especially, China has ramped up both economic and military influence over the region. One such example as it relates to military presence is the China-Africa Peace and Security Forum held in 2018, where top officials from China and African nations met up to discuss the further militarisation of their nations. This clearly shows the intentions of China to keep increasing its military presence in the region.

Russian Federation

The fall of the Soviet Union led to Russia's struggle to rebuild and reassert itself in Africa, leaving Africa on the outside of its foreign policy. However, with the oil discovery of the 2000s in Africa, Russia's renewed interest in Africa reemerged, driven by the 2008 conflict between Georgia and Russia. As Russia's competition with the West intensified, Russia had significant advantages, including its former connection with African nations during the Cold War. After the election of Vladimir Putin in 2005, Russia invested in Africa and signed new deals with African nations, leveraging their former connection with the Soviet Union. Russia also attempted to strengthen its influence militarily by sponsoring and facilitating the employment of Private Military Companies (PMCs) in Africa, including the Horn of Africa, which are suspected to have strong ties with the Kremlin and serve to enforce Russia's influence in the region.

France

France, with its pre-existing colonial presence in Africa, expanded its military presence in Djibouti in 2011, reaching an all-time high. This move allowed France to conserve its

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influence over the country and protect its interest in the Horn of Africa, particularly in anti-piracy missions led by the European Union. The treaty allowed France to station a large military presence in the region. The French parliament has debated increasing military presence in the region as recently as 2018.

Djibouti

Djibouti, despite being the second smallest country in all of Africa, has by far the greatest concentration of foreign military bases, including countries such as the US, France, Italy, China and even Japan. The reason for this is Djibouti's vital strategic location. Djibouti is of vital importance to global trade, as it is situated next to a chokehold which flows into the Suez Canal. The Suez Canal is extremely important for global trade and especially for oil and and natural gas exports into Europe from the Middle East, meaning the blockade of the Suez Canal or the choke point would have disastrous consequences for world trade. This is one reason why many countries have military bases in Djibouti, to protect the Suez Canal and its chokepoints from any military blockage. Furthermore, the location in which Djibouti is located is notoriously unstable and piracy is rampant, especially in Djibouti's neighbour Somalia and the nation across it, Yemen. For example, as recently as November 20, 2023, Houthi rebels in Yemen have hijacked a ship on its way to the Suez Canal. Therefore, it is understandable why foreign nations would like to set up military bases in Djibouti to protect their maritime vessels and trade.

Niger

Niger has had significant foreign military presence in their territory, including significant US and French troops stationed within the nation along with other nations such as Germany and Italy committing soldiers to the region. The airbases and military facilities located within Nigeria are reportedly of crucial importance to the US and the EU for their anti-terrorism and other military missions. However, after the recent coup which occurred in the country, the military organisation which took over the government made a statement on television condemning the presence of foreign military. With Italy already having pulled out its troops, the prospects of foreign military presence in Nigeria remains uncertain.

Somalia

Somalia is a fractured state in a state of constant chaos due to the ongoing civil war. This has led to increasing piracy activities in the region, which puts international trade,

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particularly maritime trade flowing into and out of the Suez Canal into serious jeopardy. Hence nations such as Turkey and some other African nations have set up military bases in Somalia to combat the ongoing piracy problem. However due to the chaotic and violent nature of the nation, most countries prefer Djibouti as a base of operations over Somalia.

Chronology of Important Events

Date	Description of Event
June 27, 1977	Djibouti gained independence from France. Despite this, France conserves its military presence in Djibouti.
June, 1991	The Somali civil war starts.
Late 1990s - Early 2000s	Large oil reserves are discovered in the Horn of Africa, rekindling an interest in the region.
2002	First US foreign military base is established in Djibouti.
February 6, 2007	United States Africa Command or AFRICOM would be announced, which acted as an extension of the US military located in Africa.
2013	China inaugurates the Belt and Road Initiative

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2015	The UAE establishes a military base in Assab, Eritrea.
May 30, 2016	The African Union's Peace and Security Council decides the primary responsibility for the protection of the member states lay within the member states.
2017	China establishes their first foreign military base in the Horn of Africa, in Djibouti.
2018	The French parliament considers increasing military presence in the region.
2018	First China-Africa Peace and Security Forum is held.
May, 2018	The United States and Ghana sign the Status of Forces Agreement.
July 26, 2023	Coup occurs in Nigeria, foreign military forces are forced to pull out.
Nov 20, 2023	Houthi rebels hijack a ship on its way to the Suez Canal.

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Relevant International Documents

- Elimination of foreign military bases in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, 1967-12-19, (A/RES/2344(XXII))
- Resolution 2628, 2022-3-31, (S/RES/2628)
- Report of the Security Council mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea, 2002-2-17
- Military activities and arrangements by colonial Powers in Territories under their administration, 1997-01-20, (A/DEC/51/427)
- Implementation on the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security, 1976, (A/RES/3389(XXX)

Past Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Attempts to solve this issue have been limited in scope and capability. While the UN has not devoted any resources on the non-proliferation of foreign military bases in the Horn of Africa, the UN has passed resolutions which outline the limits and scope of foreign "military activities and arrangements by colonial powers in territories under their administration".(United Nations, 1997) However, this has had limited success in deterring France to cease military action in the region. On the contrary, France has in recent years deliberated on whether or not to increase their presence in the Horn of Africa.

Another UN initiative on this issue was the "Elimination of foreign military bases in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America", which was adopted in 1967 and has seen many revisions since. Despite this, this resolution has failed to make a dent in the current state of affairs, seeing as especially in the past two decades the amount of foreign military bases in the region has increased substantially.

Apart from the UN, the African Union or AU in short has attempted to combat this issue indirectly. While not directly condemning or making an overt statement on the establishment of foreign military bases in not only the Horn of Africa but on the continent in general, the AU has encouraged cooperation between African nations in all aspects, including militarily, facilitated by the African Union Non-Aggression and Common Defense Pact. This military cooperation would not only make African nations less dependent on foreign nations for security, but may also bring more stability and peace to the region. This

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would certainly help with their economies and potentially ease foreign states enough to station less forces to protect important maritime trade routes. Therefore, this treaty is an important step in addressing the root issues of this problem.

Finally, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) signed the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping and Security in 1999. Everything mentioned above also applies to this treaty, as continuous cooperation between African states and increased stability in the region will surely help with the non-proliferation of foreign military bases in the Horn of Africa.

Solution Alternatives

First and foremost, experts must approach the topic from a holistic and multifaceted perspective. Experts may be inclined to flat-out refuse the presence of foreign military in African nations, however this may be an unproductive approach for multiple reasons. For one, experts must recognise that most host nations benefit in some form or another from the presence of foreign military in their nations, be it for security reasons or because they get other benefits, such as financial incentives or diplomatic endorsements. However, the host nations suffer a result of eroded sovereignty, as foreign military presence diminishes the host nation's military and economic independence.

Therefore, the root causes of foreign military presence must be addressed to tackle this issue. For example, security of important maritime routes must be established in order to reassure foreign nations enough to withdraw their military forces to protect the routes in question. This may be facilitated in two ways. Firstly, an international organisation or committee may be founded to secure and protect important maritime routes from piracy. This organisation would obviously have to be accountable and operate with the consent and participation of African nations. Alternatively, African nations's defence may be developed, which would allow them to protect themselves and the maritime routes. However, due to the prevalent presence of terrorists this would have to be facilitated carefully.

The unstable nature of the region must also be addressed. A more stable Horn of Africa would mean that fewer countries would feel the need to strengthen their military presence in the region as a part of their anti-terrorism and anti-piracy operations. This may

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be facilitated through pre-existing organisations such as the AU or the ECOWAS which promote cooperation between African states, or alternatively an entirely new organisation or body may be founded to tackle the issue. This is a multifaceted and highly complex issue in itself, so experts are encouraged to do their own research and come up with further ideas.

In relation to diplomatic rivalry, post-colonial ambitions and the race between nations to incorporate countries into their own spheres of influence and project soft power, the problem goes even deeper. Due to the highly complex and difficult nature of this issue, experts may need to be more creative when tackling this issue. A good starting point may be to further facilitate bilateral relations between host nations and foreign powers to renegotiate terms in relation to foreign military bases.

Useful Links

- African Union Official Website
- ECOWAS Official Website
- Institute for Security Studies
- United Nations Peacekeeping
- RAND Africa

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