

Chapter 1 – Introduction, definitions and scope

The Defence and security of a state is a sacred responsibility of its Government. The maintenance of credible defences is as fundamental a function of the state as the provision of healthcare, education or social services. Indeed the armed forces of a state are often a visible symbol of a state's sovereignty. Heads of state are regularly styled as the Commander-in-Chief of their armed forces as is the case in the United States. Foreign leaders are welcomed with military guards of honour and gun salutes having themselves arrived on a military aircraft accompanied by uniformed aides de camp. How then, in a world where military power and symbolism is entrenched in statecraft and concepts of sovereignty, can a state not have armed forces? How can a state defend its sovereignty without armed men and women and complex and expensive weapon systems poised along its frontiers? How can sovereignty be established and maintained without the means to physically use force to defend it?

In short, how do states without defence forces defend themselves? This is the question this paper will examine. In examining this question this paper will take a relatively purist approach in defining a state and a defence force.

In defining a state this paper will only be looking at states that are sovereign and members of the United Nations (UN). This removes semi-sovereign entities such as British overseas territories like Bermuda or the Cayman Islands. It also excludes states with many elements of sovereignty or whose sovereignty is disputed and have not joined the United Nations like the Cook Islands or the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Defining a defence force is slightly more difficult but for the purposes of this paper if a state calls its armed forces a military, whether that military is a credible and capable of defending national sovereignty or not, then it will be excluded from the scope of this paper. This includes states with token forces like San Marino¹, Antigua and Barbuda² and Tonga³. It does not exclude those states that have a provision for armed forces in their constitutions or those states that possess highly capable police or coastguard capabilities if the state declares that they are only for law enforcement or internal security.

This leaves a small but not insignificant list of states from around the world that do not possess an armed instrument of national power with which to defend themselves. These states are:

¹ San Marino Military, <http://www.sanmarino.sm/on-line/en/home/institutions/military-and-police-corps.html>

² Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force, <http://abdf.gov.ag>

³ His Majesty's Armed Forces of Tonga, <http://www.mic.gov.to/ministrydepartment/338-defence>