

Excision of Cantonments in India: Legal Framework, Administrative Challenges, And Policy Recommendations

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Abstract.

Cantonments in India were developed by the British to accommodate the military and its installations. Initially located outside cities, rapid urbanization has led to cities expanding around them, integrating cantonments into the urban fabric. This has resulted in a governance mismatch between cities and cantonments. Overlapping jurisdictions of municipalities and cantonment boards cause inefficient infrastructure development and service delivery. This also poses risks to the environment and security of the cantonments. Hence, policy guidelines are needed to manage the interface between cantonments and surrounding urban areas. One proposed solution is to excise cantonments into separate civil and military zones. However, this process is complex, involving legal, administrative, and socioeconomic factors. This paper examines the legal framework for cantonment excision, focusing on the Cantonments Act, 2006, constitutional provisions, and municipal laws. It analyzes administrative challenges such as stakeholder resistance, jurisdictional ambiguities, and procedural inefficiencies. Through case studies of select international military bases and Indian cantonments, the study identifies common obstacles and best practices. The paper concludes with policy recommendations to streamline excision, facilitate smooth governance transitions, and balance national security with urban development needs.

Keywords: Cantonment excision, urban governance, military land, decentralization, municipal integration, defense land management

Introduction

Cantonment is a military quarter^[1]. The word cantonment, derived from the French word *canton*, meaning corner or district^[2] refers to temporary military or winter encampment. However, in the case of the Indian subcontinent and other European British colonies, a cantonment refers to a permanent military station^[3]. Cantonments are different from Military Stations in that the Military Stations are purely meant for the use and accommodation of the Armed Forces established under an executive order, whereas cantonments are areas that comprise both military and civil populations^[4]. In India, 61 cantonments have been notified under the Cantonments Act 1924(succeeded by the Cantonments Act 2006)^[5]. It can be seen from the history of the Cantonments that they were originally located outside the cities and away from the civil

population. However, with the expansion of cities due to rapid urbanization, they began to grow around the existing cantonments, resulting in the Cantonments being surrounded by pockets of unregulated growth. As per entry 3 of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India, the Parliament is the competent legislature to make laws for the delimitation of Cantonment areas, local self-government in these areas, the constitution and powers in Cantonment areas, and the regulation of house accommodation, including the control of rent in such areas. Thus,

Cantonments continue to be the subject of the Union List subject ^[6]. However, the neighboring city areas, for all regulatory and development functions, are the responsibility of municipalities under state governments, as per the Twelfth Schedule of Constitution (Article 243w) ^[7]. There are various challenges and opportunities to create a seamless interface between the Cantonments and surrounding civil areas. Lack of coordination between the Cantonment Boards and the Municipalities due to this dual governance in the same cities causes conflicts over land use and developmental issues thus affecting the urban interface of Cantonments and the surrounding fringe areas of the cities. Owing to the disparities in infrastructure and services, both the Cantonments and the neighboring city areas on the fringes of these Cantonments face many problems. With the de-notification of some of the Cantonments by the Government and the excision of civil areas from the Cantonments ^[8], there is a need for the smooth transfer of civil pockets to municipalities. Therefore, there is a need for a detailed study on this subject.



Figure 1. Excision of Cantonments in India

1. Literature Survey

The Cantonments are mainly located in the Indian subcontinent and other British colonies. In other countries such as the USA, Germany and Japan, there are Military Bases that are somewhat similar to the Cantonments, which was mainly a British concept; the problems related to Cantonments are specific to these countries, and some studies have been published in India, Pakistan, Ghana, and Nigeria, all of which had Cantonment-related issues. From the study in this literature, the following were analyzed:

1. Since the orders for de-notification of Cantonments and excision of civil areas from them in India were issued on July 24, 2023^[8], no detailed research paper or study report on its long-term effect has been found in the literature.
2. Some of the articles in newspapers and magazines ^{[9][10]} discussed the Indian Army's initiatives to merge civilian areas of cantonments with municipal corporations, designating the remaining military areas as military stations, and also the proposal to abolish The Cantonments Act 2006, citing the historical context and challenges.
3. Research on the excision or abolition of cantonments is relatively limited; however, some resources that discuss the topic within the Indian context examine the Indian Government's decision to disband cantonments, describing them as archaic colonial practices. They also discussed the implications of

merging civilian areas with neighboring urban local bodies and converting military areas into military stations ^[11].

4. The study and research carried out on civilian pockets within the Cantonments in India also explored the impact of abolishing cantonments on urban local bodies, focusing on governance, administration, and the integration of civilian areas into municipal frameworks ^[12].

5. The studies from neighboring country Pakistan ^[13] point out the legacy issues concerning the Cantonments like outdated legislations etc, however in Pakistan, ‘a militarized developer state,’ the powerful civil and military bureaucracies have been developing these Cantonment areas for ‘financialization’ by creating modern housing by bending the laws and even selling it to the civilians. The article ^[14] explains the role of Cantonment Boards in Pakistan in confounding and affecting the implementation of development plans due to a lack of coordination with other local planning agencies. This has resulted in haphazard growth in cities, necessitating effective planning regulations and more efficient institutions for the management of these lands.

6. In African countries, problems related to colonial legislation of the Cantonments and urbanism-related issues exist because of the cantonment model of urban governance. Urban governance arrangements in British Colonial Africa were derived from cantonments in British India ^[15] with ‘indirect rule policy’ being applied on urban landscapes and governance which has even survived the post-colonial era. In Africa also, the urban population has increased manifold in the post-independence period and the local authority boundaries have been extended to include the peri urban areas formerly excluded by ‘indirect rule policy.’ Therefore, the spatial and legal consequences of the colonial-era African landscape still persist as the urban forms once established are difficult to change.

7. Another African model has been the transformation of cantonments into high income residential enclaves for Transnational Corporations (TNCs), wherein local capitalists have stepped in to meet the high-end housing needs of Diplomatic Missions and Multinational companies by taking advantage of the social and physical infrastructure of the cantonment areas. ^[16]

8. There is no published literature or research in the field of excision strategies, including land use planning, infrastructure development, and urban design guidelines, to create a seamless divide between military areas and civilian pockets.

9. However, in studies of certain Military Bases in other countries such as the USA ^[17], Japan ^[18], Germany ^[19] and the UK ^[20], it was found that the Cantonments/Military Bases were reduced, converted, and repurposed after their initial war purpose was over. With a comprehensive audit and strategic review, many bases have been converted into business parks, educational institutions, public spaces, and affordable housing.

2. Need For Excision of Cantonments

2.1 Rapid Urbanization and Expansion of Cities

2.1.1 Many cantonments were established during British rule and were located on the outskirts of the cities. Over time, urban sprawl has surrounded these areas, making them an integral part of the city’s urban fabric ^[21].

2.1.2 This creates a governance mismatch, as cantonment areas function under the Ministry of Defence (MoD), while surrounding areas fall under municipal corporations ^[22].

2.2 Administrative and Governance Challenges

2.2.1 Dual governance: Municipalities and cantonment boards often have overlapping jurisdictions, leading to inefficiencies in infrastructure development and service delivery ^[23].

2.2.2 Unequal service delivery: Residents of cantonments may receive different levels of civic amenities compared to their municipal counterparts ^[24].

2.2.3 Lack of integration: Municipal master plans often exclude cantonment areas, disrupting coordinated urban planning.

2.3 Economic and Development Constraints

2.3.1 Limited commercial activity: Many businesses avoid cantonment areas because of land-use restrictions and additional regulations.

2.3.2 Infrastructure gaps: Owing to limited funds and restricted urban planning, roads, drainage, and utilities in cantonments may not align with the rest of the city ^[25].

2.3.3 Property ownership issues: Landownership complexities under the Defence Estates system slow down development initiatives ^[26].

2.4 Demand for Local Representation and Civic Participation

2.4.1 Residents in cantonments have limited participation in local governance because they rely on cantonment boards that are partially controlled by the defense establishment rather than elected municipal bodies ^[27].

2.4.2 Excision allows residents to elect local representatives under municipal governance, ensuring better accountability.

2.5 National Security Considerations

2.5.1 Certain core defence areas within cantonments are still operationally crucial, but many peripheral areas (residential and commercial) have no military significance.

2.5.2 The Ministry of Defence can retain strategic areas while integrating non-military areas into municipal jurisdictions.

2.6 International and National Precedents

2.6.1 Several cantonments in India have already been excised, such as the Yol Cantt in Himachal Pradesh ^[28], parts of Pune ^[29], Secunderabad ^[30], and Jalandhar, with mixed results but overall improved civic administration.

2.6.2 Learning from international examples, such as Pakistan ^[31], the UK ^[32], the USA ^[33], Germany ^[34], and Japan ^[35] where cantonments/army bases have been partially merged with urban administrations or developed independently into other mixed-use areas, India can adopt a phased approach.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Analysis of legal documents

Legislative frameworks for cantonments and municipalities in India differ significantly because of their distinct purposes, governance structures, and jurisdictions. Municipalities primarily focus on urban local governance, whereas cantonments have the dual responsibility of serving civilians and military personnel in specific areas near military installations.

3.1.1 Legislative Framework of Cantonments

Cantonments are established under the Cantonments Act, 2006, which is separate legislation specifically designed for the administration of cantonment areas in India. In terms of Entry 3 of the Union List

(Schedule VII) of the Constitution of India, Urban Self-Governance of the Cantonments and the housing accommodation therein is the subject matter of the Union of India^[36]. Directorate General Defence Estates is an Inter-Services Organisation of the Ministry of Defense that directly controls the Cantonment administration. Thus, Cantonments are regulated by the central government through the Ministry of Defence and the Cantonments Act, 2006, providing a legal framework for their administration. Cantonments are governed by a Cantonment Board that includes elected members as well as ex-officio and nominated members. Military authorities also play a significant role in the administration of cantonments, particularly in matters related to security and land use.

3.1.2 Legislative Framework of Municipal Bodies

Municipal bodies are part of the local government, and their governmental jurisdiction is below the state level. In the Indian federal system, there are three spheres of government: central, state, and local. The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments give recognition and protection to local governments, and each state has its own legislation. Within the administrative setup of India, democratically elected local governance bodies are called the "municipalities". The 74th Amendment to the Constitution of India in 1992 brought constitutional validity to municipal and local governments. State Municipal Acts are legislation enacted by state governments to establish municipal governments, administer them, and provide a governance framework for cities within the state. Every state has its own municipal act, and some states have more than one municipal act, governing larger and smaller municipalities under different acts.^[37] Most Municipal Acts are enforced across all statutory urban areas in the respective states, except the cantonment areas. The Twelfth Schedule of Constitution (Article 243 w) provides an illustrative list of 18 functions that may be entrusted to municipalities.^[38] These functions include both regulatory and developmental functions. Thus, the enforcement of building regulations and town-planning functions forms part of the jurisdiction of municipalities.

3.1.3 Post-Independence Developments

After independence, no attempt was made to bring the cantonments in tune with the spirit of the times, with respect to the principles of local self-government. In 1948, the government constituted a central committee, headed by Sh S K Patil, on Cantonments to examine the fresh delimitation of the Cantonment areas and the desirability of amending the Cantonments Act of 1924. The purpose was to make recommendations for the excision of civil areas in the Cantonments. As a result of the government decision and committee report, civil areas in six cantonments (Agra, Ahmednagar, Allahabad, Varanasi, Delhi, and Jhansi) were to be partly cut out.^[39] However, since the popular sentiments were against excision with respect to Ambala, Kirkee, and Pune, the proposal was dropped. Thereafter, there was no delimitation, except for parts of the Ambala and Khasyol Cantonments in 1977 and 1986.

3.1.4 Balwantrai Mehta Committee Recommendations

The Estimates Committee of Parliament (1956-57) under Balwant Rai Mehta recommended the abolition of Cantonments and reverting them to purely military stations. This committee recommended that local self-government should be strictly under the State Administration and Army should be given representation or right to have say on any decision of the local authority that goes against the health,

welfare, discipline, and security of the troops. The Government examined these recommendations and reported to the Parliament that whatever the antecedents may be, the Cantonments serve a useful purpose, and the general views of the population in Cantonments were also in favor of the continuance of Cantonment administration.^[40]

3.1.5 The Cantonments Act 2006

The Cantonments Act 2006 repealed and replaced the Cantonments Act 1924. It introduced a greater democratization process by introducing a parity between civil members and military members. In conformity with the 74th Amendment to the Constitution, reservation to the extent 1/3rd of the seats for women were introduced. The new Act categorizes Cantonments into four categories based on the population. All Cantonments with a population of over 50,000 are in category I, and those with less than 2500 are in category IV.^[41] The Cantonments Act 1924, otherwise, until 2023, remained substantially as it was in 1924.

3.1.6 Denotification of Cantonments in 2023

The Government of India is now looking forward to moving away from the British era concept of Cantonment towns by demerging military stations and civil areas and merging the latter with municipalities in their respective states. The Defence Ministry, through a notification dated April 27, 2023, has de-notified Yol Cantonment in Himachal Pradesh, which is the first series of excisions of Cantonments that will happen over the coming months or years^[42]. The Government intends to abolish the balance of cantonments by carving out military stations from all these cantonments.^[43] The excision of civil areas and their merger with State Municipalities involves active consultation and concurrence of the concerned State Governments. The process is faster in areas where demarcation between civil and military areas is easy, whereas it takes time in other areas. Cantonments in the recent past had become unmanageable, with neither the civilians nor the army being happy in the current situation. Civilians were unable to benefit from the number of welfare schemes available from the state governments through municipalities, whereas the army will also be able to focus on the development of military areas excised from cantonments, strengthen their security, simplify their land management, and prevent encroachments.^[44]

3.2 Case Study: Yol Cantonment

3.2.1 Introduction

The excision of the Yol Cantonment in Himachal Pradesh marked a significant instance of cantonment dissolution in India. This case provides insights into the legal framework, administrative challenges, and policy considerations of the process.

3.2.2 Background

The Yol Cantonment, established in 1942, was one of India's 62 cantonments. Over time, urban expansion has led to increased interactions between military and civilian populations, necessitating reconsideration of its administrative status. The Government of India, under its broader policy to rationalize cantonments, initiated the excision of the Yol Cantonment in 2023^[45]. The decision was made in line with the

recommendations of the Ministry of Defence (MoD), with active involvement from the Himachal Pradesh state government and the Dharamshala Municipal Corporation.

3.2.3 Legal Framework

Excision was carried out under the provisions of the Cantonments Act, 2006, which governs the administration, management, and dissolution of cantonments in India. The legal process required consultations with the Ministry of Defense, state government, and local municipal bodies to ensure seamless transition. The Defense Estates Office (DEO) ^[46] played a key role in facilitating the legal transfer of land and assets. However, there were likely legal implications due to the dissolution of the Cantonment Board and the change in the status of Yol Cantonment to the Military Station. This had implications for the erstwhile cantonment villages in terms of vacation of A1 defense land ^[47], accessibility, NOC guidelines for future construction and security, and so on.

3.2.4 Administrative Challenges

3.2.4.1 Land Ownership and Transfer: A key challenge was to delineate military and civilian land and boundaries. The identification and costing of assets after a detailed joint reconnaissance and survey with defense state officials, defense officers, and state government officials was a major time-consuming exercise that required deliberations. Handover, transfer, barter, and compensation for the assets was another challenge that would be even more complex in larger cantonments yet to be excised. While core military areas remained under the Ministry of Defense, civilian areas merged with local municipal governance. Notably, the Army's Corps Headquarters continued to function within military jurisdiction, while civilian areas were integrated into Dharamshala's municipal structure ^[47]. The demarcation of areas, fencing, and security measures after excision are processes that may take some time before completion. After excision, the Cantonment Hospital and School were transferred to the Himachal Pradesh State government along with the staff, whereas the assets were transferred to Military Engineer Services. Although the hospital and school are located on A1 defense land, only civilians used these facilities. These must be leased to the state government until it makes permanent arrangements.

3.2.4.2 Municipal Integration: The transition required the integration of erstwhile cantonment areas into the Dharamshala Municipal Corporation. This involves changes in taxation, service delivery, and governance mechanisms. The major challenge was the shift from Cantonment Board Management to civil governance. The Cantonment Board comprised eight elected members, three nominated military members, three ex-members (the Station Commander Military Officer, Garrison Engineer, and Senior Executive Medical Officer), and one Distt Magistrate representative ^[48]. One Officer of Indian Defence Estates Services or DEO is the Cantonment Board's Chief Executive Officer and member secretary ^[49]. In the Municipal system, Dharamshala has 17 directly elected councillors and five nominated councillors with a Mayor and a Deputy Mayor ^[50]. A Commissioner appointed by the state government holds all administrative and executive powers, with an Additional Commissioner appointed by the state government to assist the commissioner. Each councillor represents a ward with only one councillor looking after the interests of the Yol ward. The new governance structure will be both a challenge and an opportunity.

3.2.4.3 **Public Service Continuity:** Ensuring uninterrupted provision of civic amenities, such as water supply, waste management, and healthcare, poses logistical difficulties. The Himachal Pradesh Public Works Department (PWD) and the Jal Shakti Department were in charge of infrastructure and water supply management, respectively. The funds for development and necessary sources of funds would now be provided by the state government instead of the central government ^[51] and its effect on infrastructure will now have to be monitored and assessed before reaching the conclusion. The other areas of concern are dependency management of excised civil areas from the cantonment, lead time for asset building and operation, and signing of the final MoU with the state government for continuity, provision, and sharing of certain facilities until the time new assets are created and are in operation.

3.2.4.4 **Coordination Aspects with Central and State Government including Cantonment Board:** The following aspects merit attention to facilitate early implementation of the excision process:

3.2.4.4.1 Coordination with the State Education Department for the management of educational institutions in the cantonment ^[52].

3.2.4.4.2 Coordination with State Health Department for transfer of staff and other liabilities of the Cantonment Board Hospital ^[53].

3.2.4.4.3 Coordination with irrigation and public health departments for water supply schemes and individual connections to civil households.

3.2.4.4.4 Coordination with the Electricity Board for street lighting in excised areas and civilian electricity connections.

3.2.4.4.5 Coordination with the Public Works Department for roads, pathways, and the National Highway passing through Yol Cantonment, which has been maintained by the Cantonment Board.

3.2.5 Policy Implications

The Yol Cantonment excision underscores the need for a standardized policy framework for future cantonment dissolution. Key areas include:

3.2.5.1 Security of Military installations and assets

3.2.5.2 Establishing clear guidelines for land demarcation and administrative jurisdiction.

3.2.5.3 Developing financial transition plans to support municipal bodies assuming governance responsibilities.

3.2.5.4 Enhancing coordination between the Ministry of Defence and state government for efficient execution.

3.2.5.5 Conducting stakeholder consultations with elected representatives and community groups to ensure smooth adaptation to new governance structures.

3.2.5.6 Cantonment Board employee's management including their movement, pay and allowances and pensions.

3.2.5.7 Issuance of revised guidelines for the Military Station.

3.2.5.8 Final MoU between the Defence Estates and the State government.

3.2.5.9 This is the first case of complete excision of a cantonment, and the complete process needs to be documented for implementation in larger cantonments that are to be excised in the future.

3.2.6 Conclusion

The excision of Yol Cantonment serves as a precedent for future rationalization efforts in India. While this demonstrates the feasibility of such transitions, addressing administrative complexities through a well-

defined policy framework remains crucial for sustainable urban integration. The role of key government officials, including defence secretaries and state-level administrators, highlights the necessity of high-level coordination in such transitions.

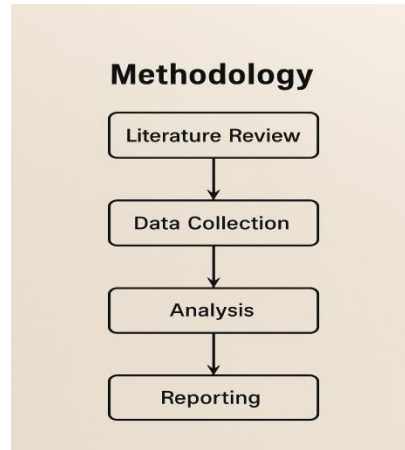


Figure 2. Detailed Architecture of Proposed Methodology.

4. Administrative & Socio-Economic Impacts of Excision

4.1 Administrative challenges-Transition of governance

4.1.1 Change in Governance Structure

4.1.1.1 Civil areas have shifted from the jurisdiction of Cantonment Boards (under the Ministry of Defence) to local municipal bodies (under State/UT administration).

4.1.1.2 This reallocation alters administrative chains of command, operational frameworks, and reporting authorities.

4.1.2 Civic Service Delivery

4.1.2.1 Municipal bodies are responsible for basic amenities, such as water supply, sanitation, solid waste management, street lighting, and infrastructure development.

4.1.2.2 Service levels may improve or deteriorate, depending on the efficiency and capacity of the ULB.

4.1.3 Fiscal Reallocation

4.1.3.1 Revenue generated from civil areas, including property tax and service charges, will now accrue to municipal bodies instead of Cantonment Boards.

4.1.3.2 This could lead to financial stress for the remaining cantonment areas, especially where civil revenue formed a substantial share of the budget.

4.1.4 Coordination Challenges

4.1.4.1 Continued interaction and interdependence between excised civil and military areas necessitate strong coordination, particularly regarding infrastructure, drainage, traffic management, and health services.

4.1.5 Legal and Regulatory Changes

4.1.5.1 Civilian areas will now be governed by municipal laws and urban development norms, replacing the Cantonment Act and related defence state regulations.

4.1.5.2 There is a need for harmonization of building codes, zoning norms, and land-use regulations.

4.2 Socio-Economic Impacts

4.2.1 Enhanced Civic Participation

4.2.1.1 Residents of excised areas gain broader representation in elected municipal councils, in contrast to the limited electoral representation in Cantonment Boards.

4.2.1.2 This enhances accountability and responsiveness in governance.

4.2.2 Urban Development Integration

4.2.2.1 Integration into mainstream urban jurisdictions allows access to Central and State government schemes, such as the Smart Cities Mission ^[54], AMRUT ^[55], and PMAY ^[56].

4.2.2.2 This facilitates infrastructure improvement and urban planning aligned with regional growth strategies.

4.2.3 Impact on Land Use and Property Markets

4.2.3.1 The relaxation of military-imposed restrictions can lead to increased land value, real estate development, and commercialization.

4.2.3.2 However, this could also trigger gentrification or displacement if not managed well.

4.2.4 Cultural and Community Transitions

4.2.4.1 The distinctive identity and civic discipline traditionally associated with cantonment living may erode.

4.2.4.2 Residents may experience a shift in their social and cultural environments owing to their integration with larger urban dynamics.

4.2.5 Economic Opportunities and Challenges

4.2.5.1 Businesses in excised areas may benefit from better infrastructure and market connectivity.

4.2.5.2 However, changes in licensing, taxation, and competition in larger urban markets pose new challenges.

4.2.6 Security Considerations

4.2.6.1 Greater public access to excised areas increases the need for clearly defined buffer zones and coordinated security protocols between military and civilian authorities.

5. Comparative Analysis

Country/Program	Overview	Key Strategies	Outcomes	Lessons & Insights
United States – Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Program	Since 1988, several BRAC rounds have been executed to reduce surplus military infrastructure; over 350 installations have been closed or realigned.	- Comprehensive audit and strategic review - Legislative and stakeholder buy-in - Civilian reuse through the Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA) - Environmental remediation before repurposing	- Many bases converted into business parks, educational institutions, and public spaces - Successful examples include the Presidio in San Francisco, now part of the National Park Service	- Importance of local governance in reuse (LRAs) - Need for federal funding for environmental cleanup and transition - Transparent, apolitical decision-making process critical to public trust
Germany Conversion of War	- After the Cold War, Germany	- Federal and state-level coordination through	- Berlin Tempelhof Airport repurposed	- Flexibility in planning allows

Country/Program	Overview	Key Strategies	Outcomes	Lessons & Insights
Former Soviet and U.S. Bases	inherited numerous vacated Soviet and NATO facilities, especially in eastern Germany.	agencies like BVVG and Bundesanstalt für Immobilienaufgaben- Focus on sustainable redevelopment (housing, industry, environmental recovery)- Public-private partnerships	as a large public park- Many ex-military zones integrated into city fabric or converted into nature reserves	tailored local development- Emphasis on adaptive reuse preserved architectural heritage- Long-term vision is essential for successful economic regeneration
United Kingdom – MoD Estate Rationalisation	The UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) launched the “Better Defence Estate” strategy aiming to release 25% of its estate by 2040.	- MoD coordination with Homes England to promote housing development- Sales of land and property to local councils or private developers- Consideration of heritage and conservation in redevelopment projects	- Conversion of former military housing into civilian housing stock- Aldershot Garrison partially redeveloped for mixed-use urban projects	- Phased disposal allows smoother absorption into local markets- Clear land use policies and zoning reforms facilitate transition- Coordination with housing policy supports broader national development goals
India – Limited Excision of Cantonments	India’s excision of cantonment lands is more restrained, shaped by national security and administrative priorities; examples include Secunderabad and Pune.	- Demarcation of civilian versus military areas- Transfer of municipal responsibilities to local governments- Controversy and disputes over land control and civilian access	- Civilian areas sometimes suffer from inadequate infrastructure after transfer- Ongoing security concerns hinder full integration of areas- Limited economic and urban redevelopment compared to other models	- Need for clear legal and institutional frameworks for land transfer and provision of municipal services- Public consultation and stakeholder engagement crucial to mitigate conflict- Institutional clarity between Ministry of Defence, Directorate General Defence Estates (DGDE), and municipalities is critical

Country/Program	Overview	Key Strategies	Outcomes	Lessons & Insights
Japan – U.S. Base Relocation (e.g., Okinawa)	Continuing efforts to reduce U.S. military footprint, particularly in Okinawa, amid long-standing local opposition and socio-political tension.	Bilateral agreements negotiated between Japan and the U.S.- Reclamation and/or relocation of military facilities- Gradual civilian redevelopment efforts underway	- Partial base closures achieved in some areas- Socio-political tensions and community opposition persist- Some economic redevelopment zones successfully established (e.g., Kadena Town)	- Strong community engagement and effective bilateral diplomacy are vital- Long timelines and complex negotiations require patience and resilience- Balancing security interests and local socio-economic aspirations remains challenging

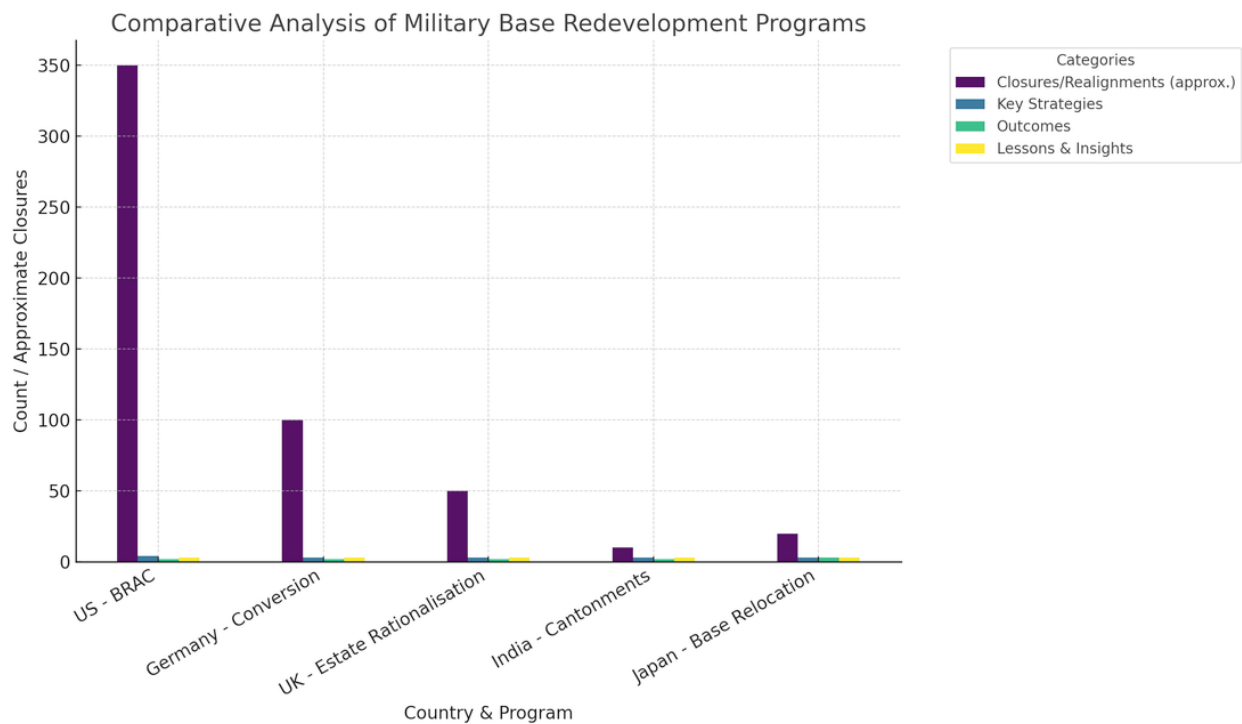
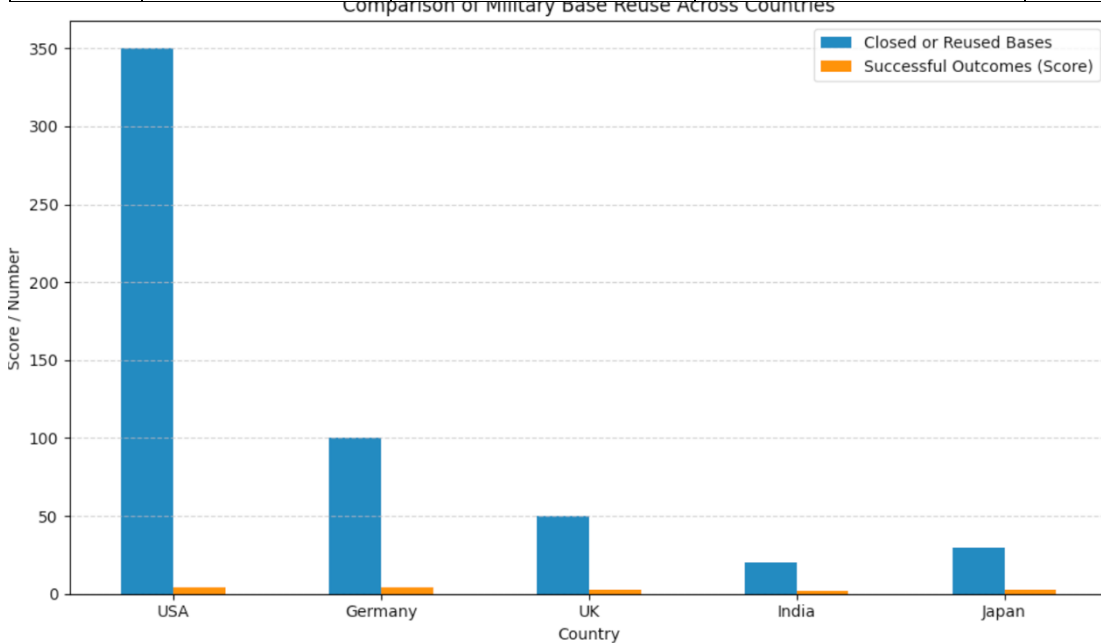
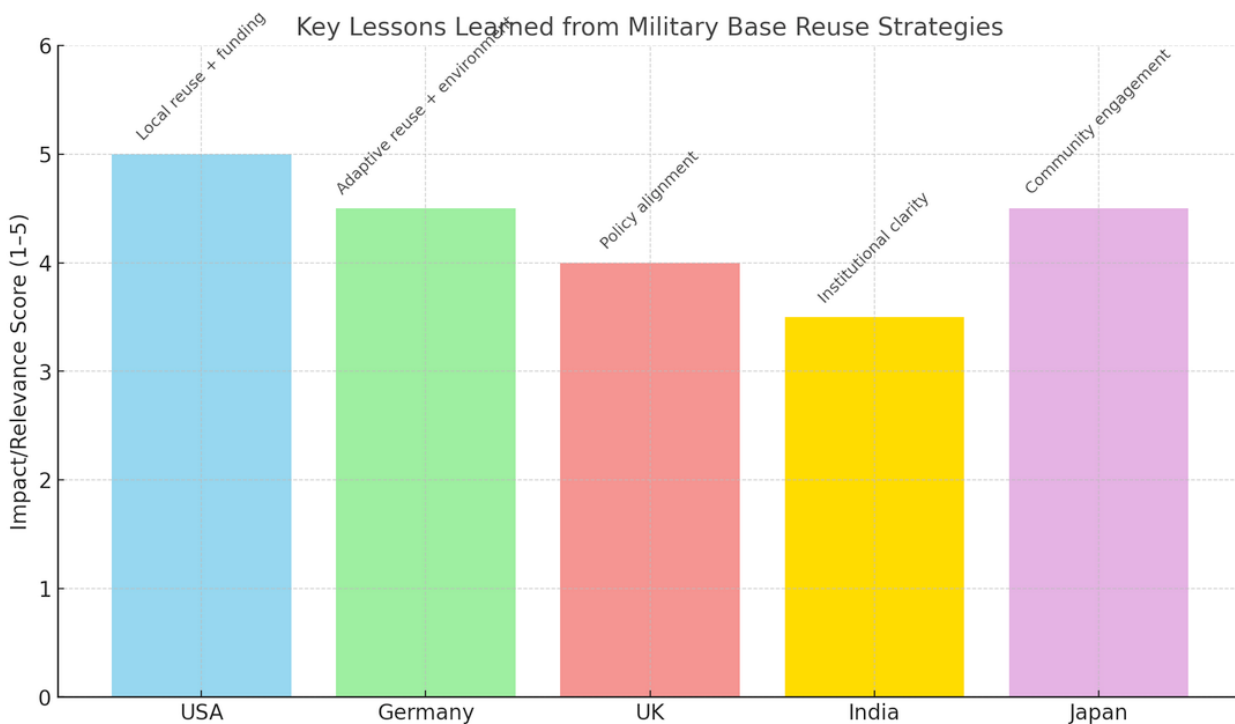


Table 1. Comparative Analysis on Excision of Military Cantonments/Bases

Country	Strategy Type	Key Focus Areas	Notable Outcomes	Key Lessons Learned
USA	BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure)	Efficiency, economic redevelopment, transparency	Presidio transformed into a national park; business zones; universities	Local reuse authorities are essential; transition funding critical
Germany	Post-Cold War Reuse	Sustainability, reunification, heritage reuse	Tempelhof converted into public park; eco-neighborhoods	Adaptive reuse with environmental focus leads to successful outcomes
UK	Defence Estate Rationalisation	Housing development, phased disposal, heritage preservation	Aldershot military town redevelopment; Ministry of Defence housing reuse	Policy alignment with national housing and infrastructure priorities
India	Selective Civil Transfer	Security, clear demarcation, decentralization	Mixed results (e.g., partial transfer in Secunderabad)	Clear institutional responsibilities and infrastructure transfer are vital
Japan	Bilateral Relocation (US Bases)	Diplomacy, local resistance, redevelopment	Kadena base partial relocation; redevelopment in Okinawa	Community engagement is crucial to avoid resistance and ensure cooperation



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6.1 Joint Survey and Demarcation

6.1.1 The excision process must be initiated by a joint survey comprising all stakeholders, including representatives of Defence Estates Officers, Local Military Authority, Cantonment Board, State Government-concerned departments, and representatives of the civilian population.

6.1.2 There is a need to clearly indicate the excised area both outside and within the boundaries of the A1 defense land.

6.1.3 Alternate access roads for civilian populations and public transport must be identified.

6.2 Cut Off Date

6.2.1 A firm cut off date for financial issues to be forecast to allow preparatory actions by all stake holders and wide publicity to the same.

6.3 Interim Arrangements

6.3.1 To ensure a smooth excision process, a plan for interim arrangements for essential services, schools, healthcare, movement/transfer of employees, and disposal of assets must be formulated and implemented.

6.4 Financial Impact

6.4.1 The excision of civilian areas and passing of financial control from the Cantonment Board to various state government departments and military establishments must be planned in advance for smooth execution and to avoid unnecessary additional expenditures.

6.4.2 The following steps are recommended for seamless handing/taking over:

6.4.2.1 **Cut Off Date:** A firm cut off date for financial issues be forecast to allow preparatory actions by all stakeholders and accord wide publicity to the same

6.4.2.2 **Additional Funds:** Additional projection of funds for work, maintenance funds, and executing contracts for the next financial year depending upon the date of the excision/gazette.

6.4.3 **Tariffs:**

6.4.3.1 Firm cut off date to be intimated to the user civilian population for shifting of service provider from Military Engineer Services to the state government.

6.4.3.2 All pending tariffs to be recovered by the Cantonment Board before transferring the connections to avoid backlog and litigations at later stage.

6.5 Cantonment Board related Issues

6.5.1 **Employees:** Disposal of the Cantonment Board employees must be planned in confirmation with the Cantonment Board as well as the state government. Employees are expected to be absorbed as per the agreement (MoU) between the Ministry of Defense and the state government. This MoU may be delegated to different departments by the respective government. The employees occupying accommodation within the A1 defence land are required to vacate the same as per the timelines decided by the central and state government authorities. The accommodation is taken over by the Military Engineer Service/Station Headquarters of the Military Station on vacation.

6.5.2 **7.5.2 Schools:** Schools located in the excised area to be transferred to Municipal Corporation for further maintenance with a clear cut-off date for payments of dues and handover. All lighting and water supply connections, along with assets and liabilities, should be taken over by the state government. All maintenance charges will be borne by the concerned department of the state government. Individual electricity connections should be taken over by the state electricity department with a clear cut-off date for payment of dues and handover. All roads, paths, and other civil constructions should be transferred to/taken over by the State Public Works Department.

6.5.3 **7.5.3 Hospital/ Health Centre:** The Cantonment Board hospital along with staff and other liabilities including responsibility of health care to be transferred/taken over by the state government. If the hospital exists on A1 defense land, then permanent assets may be transferred to military engineering services. If the hospital is in the excised area, it may be transferred to the concerned municipal corporation.

6.5.4 Essential Services and Maintenance

6.5.4.1 **Water Supply Schemes:** Water supply schemes with all assets and liabilities should be bifurcated between the state government (PHE Department) and the Military Engineer Services

6.5.4.2 **Electricity:** The electric supply should also be bifurcated with proper load distribution after a joint survey, and all assets and liabilities are bifurcated between the state electricity department and Military Engineer Services.

6.5.4.3 **Sewerage Disposal:** The trunk sewer carrying the main sewerage load to the outfall sewer may be taken over by the municipal corporation, whereas the branch sewer lines may be maintained by the respective agencies in whose jurisdiction the sewerage system exists. A joint survey by the municipal authorities and Military Engineer Services may determine the responsibilities of various sections of the sewer. The sewage treatment plants may be handed over to the agency in which the jurisdiction of the STP is located. The STP may continue catering to the excised area until the Municipal Corporation constructs a new STP for the same.

6.5.5 Zonal Plan of the Station

6.5.5.1 All infrastructure such as schools and hospitals that have been earmarked for the civilian population should be taken over by the state government on the cut-off date and shifted out of A1 defense land within a stipulated time (3-4 years). The state government may make interim arrangements to run these institutions until permanent buildings are constructed at an alternate site. All schools/hospitals that

exist outside A1 defense land may be transferred and taken over along with the assets by the state government.

6.5.5.2 Additional land that is likely to be available as a result of the shifting of civilian assets should be earmarked for future military uses after the revision of the Zonal plan by the Military Engineer Services.

6.5.5.3 All adjoining land to the new Military station, which has been excised from the Cantonment Board, should have a new Zonal/Master Plan with building by-laws and development controls duly approved by the military authorities to cater to all the security concerns of the defense establishments.

6.6 Security Issues

6.6.1 It is recommended that post excision of the Cantonment, a security wall/fence be constructed around all the pockets of the new military station to prevent unrestricted and unauthorized movement of civilian persons within the Military station.

6.6.2 In order to give right of way to residents of adjoining villages or civilian pockets, suitable measures including provision of public transport or construction of under passes or over passes may be considered.

6.6.3 Alternatively, state governments may be approached with specific requirements to provide alternative land to select pockets where access is considered not feasible due to security or administrative reasons.

6.6.4 There will be implications for security due to changes in the parameters of the No Objection Certificate guidelines of a Military station vis-à-vis the Cantonment Board. This constitutes the distance and height of civilian structures from the defence boundary wall. The retrospective implementation of the NOC guidelines for military stations may lead to legal issues. However, all future building plans may be referred to the Military Station Headquarters for approval before municipal approval is given for the construction of any new building or addition/alteration of any existing building.

7 Conclusion

Excision of cantonments is necessary for **better governance, streamlined urban planning, and improved quality of life** for residents. However, it must be **strategically** implemented to balance urbanization needs with national security concerns. The removal of civil areas from cantonments represents a transformative shift in urban governance and development. While it offers significant potential for improved civic amenities and democratic participation, it also brings forth administrative complexities and socioeconomic disruptions. A carefully planned transition, supported by clear legal frameworks and inter-agency coordination, is critical for ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of this initiative.

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