



**Disarmament and International Security Committee**

*The Question of the Illegal Arms Trade between Latin America and the USA  
The Question of the Use and Regulation of Private Military Companies (PMCs)  
in International Conflicts*



---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introductory Letters.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Committee Overview.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Topic Summaries.....</b>	<b>5</b>

### **Topic 1: The Question of the Illegal Arms Trade between Latin America and the USA**

Topic Introduction.....	6
Key Terms.....	7
History of The Topic.....	7
Global Reform Efforts.....	9
Topics your Resolutions Should Address.....	10
Countries Stances.....	10
Questions to Consider.....	13
Works Cited.....	14

### **Topic 2: The Question of the Use and Regulation of Private Military Companies (PMCs) in International Conflicts**

Topic Introduction.....	15
Key Terms.....	16
History of the Topic.....	16
Global Reform Efforts.....	20
Topics your Resolutions Should Address.....	21
Countries Stances.....	22
Questions to Consider.....	25
Works Cited.....	27

---

## Introductory Letters:

### Yihan (Laura) Wang

*Greetings delegates, welcome to DISEC!*

*My name is Laura and I'm a sophomore at WCIB. I've been involved in MUN for two years and have been honored to see this conference come together as a member of the THAIMUN SMT. This is my second time chairing and I look forward to working with all of you at THAIMUN XI.*

*Outside of MUN, I love debate (annoying people competitively), roller coasters, and coffee.*

*If you have any questions, feel free to contact me on Instagram at @munaccount (yes I am that obsessed with MUN) or email me at laura.yihanw@gmail.com. I look forward to meeting everyone in March!*



### Soham Bhagnani

*Greeting, fellow delegates of DISEC!*

*DISEC is one of my favorite committees at MUN, and I hope that through the THAIMUN conference, I can make it yours as well. Me and Laura are super excited to be working with each and every one of you.*

*Aside from MUN, I am currently a senior at Bangkok Prep, taking the A-Levels (I hope none of the IB students come to me about which course is more tough).*

*This is my third time chairing and, coincidentally, my second time with Laura on the same committee. Outside of Model UN, I run a video podcast on Youtube called Thirsty Tales(Go subscribe!) Finally, I hope that through fruitful debate, insightful resolutions, and engaging POIS, we can have an incredible conference and grow as politically aware individuals. If you*



---

*need any help whatsoever, please contact me on Instagram at sohambhagnani\_ or email me at sohambhagnani06@gmail.com.*

## **Committee Overview**

The Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) is the first of the six Main Committees of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). It was established on the 24th of October, 1945, along with the founding of the United Nations. DISEC's main purpose concerns issues of disarmament, nuclear and conventional weapons, and international security. All UN member states can attend DISEC sessions and it is the only committee in the UNGA permitted verbatim records.

The illegal arms trade between Latin America and the USA remains a persistent source of tension in the Americas. Driven by an extensive US firearms industry, limited border control, and lax gun laws, the flow of arms from the USA to Latin America has strengthened cartels, exacerbated violence, and eroded regional security. The USA makes up 37% of all arms exports, with high private profit-incentives to maintain the arms trade. This has led to tensions between the Americas, with Mexico suing US firearms manufacturers for destabilization and damage caused by the influx of arms. Coordinated efforts between INTERPOL, UNODC, and South American governments have resulted in the seizure of thousands of firearms in 2021, shedding light on the spread of hard to trace weapons like revolvers and silencer guns. With the rapid progress of technological development, the online medium has become an increasingly popular host for arms markets. This culminates in a problem that is critical to security and stability in the region.

Amidst a rise in international conflict, governments have increasingly turned to private corporations for military services. From their origins in the Cold War, Private Military Companies (PMCs) have grown to encompass over 50 countries across 6 continents. PMCs can act as both a replacement and supplement to traditional armed forces, with applications in combat, defense, intelligence gathering, and military logistics. Recent controversies involving high-profile PMCs like the Wagner Group have thrust them into the international limelight, raising questions regarding accountability, cost, and human rights. Whilst various legislative bodies have attempted to regulate PMCs and the like, including the 1989 UN Mercenary Convention and the Montreux Document, etc. The private nature of PMCs make them difficult to regulate cohesively. In the present day, PMCs remain a cost-effective tool, used by both nations and NGOs in international conflict, defense, and national monitoring.

---



## Topic Summaries

Dear Delegates,

We know this Chair Report is very long. We also know feedback from last year explicitly asked for Chair Reports to be shorter and more concise.

The Chairs had to follow a template and word count for this report, which was 16 pages before we even wrote anything. We realize that not all delegates will have the time to read the entire text. However, we do want everyone to enjoy and learn something from the conference, which requires delegates to have at least some idea of the topics at hand.

As such, we've made a [shortened version of this Chair Report](#), consider it an emergency revision guide if you're starting research the day before the conference. We understand if you're unwilling or unable to read the official Chair Report, but please - as a gesture of good will - do read the one linked above; it's 2 pages.

Yours Sincerely,

Your Chairs

---

## **Topic 1: The Question of the Illegal Arms Trade between Latin America and the USA**

### **Topic Introduction:**

Gun control is one of the most prevalent issues facing the United States today. The United States of America holds over 390 million weapons, with 40% of their export revenue arising from arms deals. Attempts at provoking this growing issue have been launched through weapons regulation in the US congress. However, the question remains: what is the large-scale impact of the arms trade?

Between 2007 and 2019, more than 179,000 firearms were captured across Mexico and five Central American countries. These weapons were traced to gun factories in the United States. With Latin America having 46 of the 50 cities with the most homicides, the impact of the US gun distribution is readily apparent. 70% of the guns used for crime in Mexico can be directly linked back to the United States. The 30+ states involved in the Sinaloa Cartel have easy and affordable acquisition of weapons through the US-Mexico border.

Since 1993, the US weapons destruction program has invested more than \$291 million in Latin America and the Caribbean. It has attempted to strengthen civilian safety by disrupting and diverting illicit trafficking of small and light weapons. The United States is one of the biggest supporters of conventional weapons destruction, providing more than \$4.6 billion in assistance to more than 120 countries.

All in all, to what extent are the current policies by the United States exacerbating the issue of rapid gun distribution? With guns being so readily available through export channels, trade through the Pan-american borders would shape the social, economic and political situation of Latin American nations.

---

## Key Terms:

Term	Definition
Latin America	Nations and territories in the Americas where the Romance languages (those derived from Latin) are predominantly spoken.
Arms Trade	The import, export, sale, movement, and acquisition of weapons, small arms, explosives, and ammunition.
Trafficking	Trade in an illicit substance.
Weapons Licencing	A permit, issued by a legitimate state body, to buy and carry a particular weapon, usually a firearm
Small Arms	A light and portable firearm designed for individual use.
Tracing	Tracking small arms from manufacture to last legal ownership to determine the exact time and place in which they became illicit.

## History of The Topic:

While the use of arms dates back all the way to the Western Roman Empire in the early Middle Ages, the US-Latin America gun trade only dates back to the Cold War Era. After World War II, the United States engaged in a period of geopolitical tension between 1945 and 1991 with the Soviet Union. During this period, the superpowers fought each other through use of propaganda, political complications and infiltration. Due to their differing political views, communism and capitalism, Harry Truman had announced the 'Truman Doctrine'. This was an American policy aimed to "support democracies against authoritarian threats."

During this time period, the US had supplied weapons to Latin America on many occasions. Operation PBSUCCESS in Guatemala and the Nicaraguan Contra affair were all attempts to battle authoritative regimes. This funding was for the anti-communist regimes.

Following this, in the 1990s the United States remained active in South America through training programmes such as the International Military Education and Training (IMET) which provided soldiers with training and arms. The mission of IMET was to enhance regional stability through military assistance.

In the 1990s, Colombia faced significant challenges through a long-standing armed conflict with the leftist guerilla group. The US intervened through foreign military aid. Plan Colombia was an aid package aimed at addressing Colombia's insurgency challenges through the provision of helicopters and training for Colombian security forces.

Following this, from 2006 to 2012, Mexico saw a surge in violence with drugs with cartels such as the Sinaloa gaining more exposure. Estimates suggest that up to 70% of firearms from crime scenes in Mexico during this period came from the US.

In 2010, the Fast and Furious Scandal had occurred. This was an operation conducted by the US Bureau of Firearms and Explosive through the sale of firearms to suspected straw purchasers to track weapons to Mexican drug cartels. This was very controversial as many weapons went untracked and ended up in the hands of criminals.

Throughout the 21st century, the United States and South America have been engaging in trade of arms. US arms sales to Mexico include helicopters, aircraft and small arms. With the other countries, the US sale of weapons has resulted in heightened Guerilla warfare, conflict with centralized government and increasing rates of homicide.

Regardless of global reform efforts such as the Arms Trade Treaty, the illegal trade of arms from the United States to South America still remains an ongoing issue.

### Timeline:

Date	Description
1947-1991	<b>Cold War Era</b> - During this time, the US provided funding to Latin American nations in opposition to communism.
1950-1980	<b>Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG)</b> - The United States provided advisory, military equipment and training programmes to nations in South America.
1954	<b>Operation PBSUCCESS in Guatemala</b> - The elected Guatemalan president Árbenz Guzmán was deposed in a CIA-sponsored coup to protect the profits of the United Fruit Company.
1981-1986	<b>Nicaraguan Contra Affair</b> - The US funded an anti-Sandinista

	rebel group in Nicaragua through profits from the gun sale in Iran.
1999	<b>Plan Colombia</b> - A US aid package aimed at addressing Colombian tensions and insurgency. It involved a significant military component through the provision of helicopters and training for Colombian security forces.
2007	<b>Merida Initiative</b> - The US provides financial assistance and technology to enhance Mexico's law enforcement and military capabilities.
2010	<b>Fast and Furious Scandal</b> - An operation conducted by the US Bureau of Firearms and Explosives involving the sale of firearms to suspected straw purchasers to track weapons to Mexican drug cartels. Many weapons went untracked and ended up in the hands of criminals.

## Global Reform Efforts:

Whilst international attempts to tackle this issue are limited, there have been many examples of global legislation to limit the sale of weapons distribution.

**Arms Trade Treaty (ATT):** International treaty that aims to regulate the international trade in conventional arms to prevent their diversion to the illicit market. The treaty was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2013 and entered into force in 2014.

**The Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (CIFTA):** Adopted in 1997, a regional treaty aimed to eradicate the manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, ammunition and explosives.

## **Topics your Resolutions Should Address:**

Below there are several topics that resolutions can include, they are placed in this background guide to help delegates focus their research.

### ***International Cooperation?***

How would an international platform facilitate real-time communication and apprehend traffickers? Which organizations should be responsible for providing training for law enforcement agencies in Latin America? How can training programs be tailored to address specific challenges?

### ***Firearm Traceability***

Who is responsible for the maintenance of centralized databases for tracking firearms? What mechanisms should be in place to address potential political obstacles to international cooperation on firearm traceability? How can countries ensure compliance with marking and serialization requirements of weaponry?

### ***Strengthening Border Controls?***

How can countries collaborate to adopt best practices in utilizing technology to detect and prevent arms smuggling? How can countries ensure that border patrol personnel are adequately trained to identify signs of arms trafficking? How can countries address challenges related to sovereignty when implementing joint patrols and inspection points?

## **Countries & Party Stances:**

Here is some baseline information on countries that have prominent stances on this issue. This can be used to guide delegates with the research process. Countries that haven't been mentioned below should carry out independent research.

### **Latin America**

#### ***Mexico***

Mexico has consistently implemented strict gun laws. However, the provision of US weapons at a low cost imposes a challenge to the nation. Through initiatives such as the Merida Initiative, Mexico intends to form partnerships through the sharing of telecommunication methods. Mexico also maintains high restrictions on high-capacity magazines. The rise of illegal firearms significantly contributes to crime in Mexico. Drug cartels and criminal organizations often utilize the readily available weaponry provided

---



---

by the United States. The collaboration between Mexico and the US has faced criticism due to human rights concerns by Mexican security forces and the misuse of US supplied weapons.

### ***Brazil***

Brazil has implemented policies such as the National Arms Statute to regulate firearms possession. However, due to its location, it falls victim to the flow of illicit arms from the USA. Brazil experiences heightened crime rates and security challenges due to this inflow of illegal arms. It emphasizes regulation through joint efforts with neighboring countries to strengthen border controls. This is done with neighboring nations such as Uruguay and Argentina, through resource sharing, diplomatic cooperation and intelligence sharing. In terms of their take on weaponry, Brazil has disarmament programs to encourage citizens to surrender illegal weapons out of choice, they implement community policing to build trust between law enforcement and local communities.

### ***Argentina***

The United States is one of Argentina's largest trading partners with a high of \$23 billion in trade in 2012. Argentina has signed the Arms Trade Treaty to regulate arms exports. It has a relatively low level of gun violence; likely attributed to their emphasis on regional cooperation through the Southern Common Market. This is done through MERCOSUR which is an organization. Argentina works with other nations in the Southern regions of South America through hosting bilateral agreements and coordinated law enforcement programmes. Argentina has a National Arms and Explosives Registry which oversees the legal trade in firearms. Argentina enforces strict licensing protocols for legal arms sales, to prevent the weapons falling into criminal organizations.

### ***Columbia***

Columbia has restrictive gun laws due to historically being filled with misuses of illegal weapons through inter-cartel violence, entering through border crossing. Small organizations buy the guns in the United States, erase their serial numbers and ship them to Columbia. This is used for violent drug trafficking organizations. On April 28th 2021, strikes on this issue occurred in Columbia with over 1,500+ police violence incidents. Columbia has implemented policies such as the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration programs and the Arms Trade Treaty. Colombia also collaborated with neighboring countries through initiatives within the framework of the Organization of

---

---

American States. Nonetheless, military groups such as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) remain one of the most funded militant organizations in the world.

## **North America**

### ***United States***

The United States of America holds over 390 million weapons. The United States is a key player in the trade of arms through South America. Over 179,000 firearms were captured in Mexico and five Central American countries which were traced to gun factories in the United States. 70% of the guns used for crime in Mexico can be directly linked back to the United States. The United States officially opposes illicit arms trafficking. They have implemented various initiatives to address arms trafficking, including cooperation with Latin American nations on intelligence sharing. Despite these measures, the "Fast and Furious" scandal exposed flaws in enforcement.

## **Independent Groups**

### ***Oxfam International***

A global organization working to alleviate social injustice. The organization advocates for policies that reduce the impact of armed violence to communities around the world. Oxfam engages in advocacy in Latin America for stricter controls on arms sales. They also work with communities affected by violence and conduct research on the humanitarian consequences of arms trade in Latin America. Oxfam had established the Control Arms Coalition in 2003 to build stronger regulations on the international arms trade. This was done to prevent armed conflict. The organization monitors the implementation of arms control globally in adherence to the Arms Trade Treaty. This helps policymakers develop effective strategies and manage regulatory efforts.

---

## Questions to Consider

- How can regulation of the export of weaponry be strengthened?
- What would the framework of firearm traceability contain?
- Should developed and established countries provide aid in training and support?
- To what extent should border control be maintained?
- How can training programmes be implemented?
- To what extent should Latin American countries remain transparent on weaponry usage?
- How would criminal apprehension be processed?
- What would accountability look like?

## Recommended Websites

1. [Clark Forum](#)
  2. [US-Mexico Arms Trade VICE Video](#)
  3. [Smuggling in Mexico - Al Jazeera](#)
  4. [U.S. Arms Transfers to Latin America, 1945-1974: Rational Strategy, Bureaucratic Politics, and Executive Parameters](#)
  5. [Arms Sales to Latin America](#)
  6. [Small Arms: No Single Solution](#)
  7. [Arms Trade](#)
  8. [The History of United States Weapons Export Control Policy](#)
  9. [Arms Trafficking and Colombia](#)
  10. [Insight Crime](#)
-

---

## Works Cited

- Kaplan, Stephen S. "U.S. Arms Transfers to Latin America, 1945-1974: Rational Strategy, Bureaucratic Politics, and Executive Parameters." *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 4, 1975, pp. 399–431.
- Carina Solmirano | May 15, 2023. "Behind a Rise in Latin America's Violent Crime, a Deadly Flow of Illegal Guns." *Americas Quarterly*, 18 May 2023, [www.americasquarterly.org/article/behind-a-rise-in-latin-americas-violent-crime-a-deadly-flow-of-illegal-guns/](http://www.americasquarterly.org/article/behind-a-rise-in-latin-americas-violent-crime-a-deadly-flow-of-illegal-guns/).
- Sowah, Amanda. "The Effects of the U.S. Arms Trade with Latin America - Clarke Forum." *The Effects of the U.S. Arms Trade with Latin America*, 2022, [www.clarkeforum.org/wp-content/uploads/Topical-Background-Isacson-Fall.pdf](http://www.clarkeforum.org/wp-content/uploads/Topical-Background-Isacson-Fall.pdf).
- Peters, Rebecca. "Small Arms: No Single Solution | United Nations." *United Nations*, [www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/small-arms-no-single-solution](http://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/small-arms-no-single-solution).
- Cardamone, Thomas. "Arms Sales to Latin America - Institute for Policy Studies." *Institute for Policy Studies*, 7 May 2014, [ips-dc.org/arms\\_sales\\_to\\_latin\\_america](http://ips-dc.org/arms_sales_to_latin_america).
- McDougall, Walter A.. "20th-century international relations". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 22 Dec. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/20th-century-international-relations-2085155>.
- Dinerman, Taylor (2008) "The History of United States Weapons Export Control Policy," *Space and Defense: Vol. 2: No. 0, Article 4*  
<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1219&context=spaceanddefense>
- Cragin, Kim. *Arms Trafficking and Colombia* | *Office of Justice Programs*. [www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/arms-trafficking-and-colombia](http://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/arms-trafficking-and-colombia).
-

## **Topic 2: The Question of the Use and Regulation of Private Military Companies (PMCs) in International Conflicts**

### **Topic Introduction:**

Amidst a globalizing world, the scope of international conflicts has undergone significant change, one of which is the use of Private Military Companies. National use of PMCs is mainly employed for two aims; outsourcing cost-effective military services in hostile regions and maintaining internal security. The former is generally used by global powers, most notably USA and Russia, providing comparatively expendable armies to expand military reach without risking public dissatisfaction. The latter is prevalent in nations with general instability or a history of conflict, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa.

The market for PMCs is valued at over 200 billion USD, and the industry employs over 1 million operatives across the world. Yet the modern-day relevance of PMCs is best demonstrated through examples. The Wagner Group rose to prominence after mutinying against the Kremlin on the 23rd of June, 2023. It played a significant role in the Russo-Ukrainian War, orchestrating the Russian occupation of Bakhmut, and acted as a front for Russian state presence in Africa. Academi (formerly Blackwater), was employed by the US government for security services in the Iraq War. However, it faced legal action following the 2007 Nisour Square Massacre, an event now considered a war crime.

Recent history has shown PMCs to be powerful tools. Whilst they were successfully employed for military logistics and defensive protection, controversies have led to calls for regulation and banning. The quasi-independent status of PMCs makes cohesive application of international law difficult, raising issues of accountability and transparency. The expanded public access to military services, including the use of PMCs used by NGOs and other non-state actors, has led to concerns about the responsibilities and resources permitted to individuals vs. states. Finally, discourse has increasingly steered towards the overlap between PMCs and mercenarism: a practice already heavily discouraged by the 1989 UN Mercenary Convention.

As international conflicts continue to evolve, determining the role of PMCs is crucial to shape the geopolitical, humanitarian, and economic landscape of warfare.

---

## Key Terms:

Term	Definition
PMC	Private Military Company: a commercial organization that provides military security, training, and intelligence services, hired by governments and NGOs to supplement or replace traditional armed forces.
PSC	Private Security Company: a commercial organization focused on non-combat security services, often operating in a set location to protect individuals, facilities, and act as logistical support.
Mercenarism	The process of participating in armed conflict for financial gain, acting as military service providers to non-governmental forces.
Military Contractor	A commercial organization that enters into a written contract with military agencies to provide military equipment, logistical support, and/or other military services.
Armed Escort	Armed security personnel that protect individuals, convoys, and assets during transport.

## History of The Topic:

### History and Politics

Whilst mercenarism dates as far back as the early Middle Ages, the creation of PMCs as distinct entities began around the 12th Century. They were first used in the Anarchy - a war of succession in England - offering services to whoever could pay and furthering the breakdown of law and order. Mercenary groups were then employed by various armies, including those of Philip II of France, Henry II, and Richard I of England. Free Companies - bands of mercenaries called Routiers - were used by both the French and English during the Hundred Years' War. They were active in the countryside and are considered to be the precursor to modern day PMCs. The White Company, one of the most prominent PMCs in the 14th Century, was crucial in spreading military tactics, introducing the practice of mounted infantry in Italy.





---

PMCs first rose to prominence following the Cold War. Popular public sentiment called for reduced defense budgets, driving governments to streamline their armed forces and increase military outsourcing. PMCs filled in the gap for a cost-efficient and flexible alternative to traditional militaries. PMCs were popularized as they could be employed and dismissed on the basis of necessity, required less resources spent on training, and were comparatively more expendable than national soldiers. The post-Cold War era was also marked by globalization, allowing governments to adopt a mindset of neocolonialism in foreign policy. National governments stationed PMC forces in distant or hostile regions, allowing them to maintain a global presence from readily available soldiers.

As an extension of sending PMCs to distant regions, governments began to deploy forces to Africa between the 1990s and 2000s. The continent was seen as ripe for neoimperialism, encouraging various states to monitor regional conditions. As PMCs could consist of local soldiers, they were ideal alternatives to stationing national troops in an area lacking utilities and infrastructure. PMCs were also hired by states facing public instability. The Executive Outcomes (EO) PMC - was hired by the Angolan government in 1993. EO was successful in fulfilling the terms of their contract: combating insurgency by the UNITA rebel group. They experimented with military tactics, employing unconventional strategies aimed at securing critical infrastructure for the Angolan Government. Despite achieving military success whilst maintaining a decent human rights record, EO's achievements brought it too close to the limelight. It raised moral questions regarding the employment of private contractors for military use and caused the international community to reevaluate PMCs; a process that continues to this day.



The late 2000s marked an even greater turning point for PMCs. Whilst they were generally successful in military logistics and combat, their human rights record caused public outcry. The Nisour Square massacre in 2007 - in which 17 civilians were killed by military consultants - remains a prominent example of uncontrolled violence by PMCs.

---



PMCs continue to play a role in international conflict in the present day. The Russian government has used the Wagner Group, an unofficial PMC, in the Russo-Ukrainian War, rehashing the same concerns about privatization and human rights. The attempted Wagner Group mutiny against the Kremlin raised greater concerns. Namely, that of private companies being powerful enough to violently replace elected governments: posing the risk of a PMC “military” coup if a state neglects its own armed forces and outsources defense.

### **Society and Culture:**

PMCs were established during the Anarchy: a period of Civil War where sides shifted constantly. Societal fragmentation was the ideal breeding ground for PMCs, with high demand - countless factions requiring support - meaning companies had their pick between whichever side had better terms. This established the idea of security as a commodity, paving the way for the commercialization of violence and becoming the cultural norm following PMC integration into various national armies. PMCs have also caused the public to reevaluate the idea of a state monopoly on force, putting into question the role of governments in maintaining security. Finally, Globalization has made PMCs more viable on a global stage, with interconnection and dependency encouraging nations to maintain an international presence.

### **Economy:**

The post-Cold War era was marked by a decrease in military spending. This actively contributed to the success of PMCs, being considered the cost-effective alternative to national militaries. PMCs were more willing to operate in dangerous conditions - unlike national soldiers who had to be catered to by governments, they could be used to supplement already existing forces, and required less state spending on training and arms supply.



## Timeline:

Date	Description
1138 - 1153	<b>The Anarchy:</b> The first recorded use of PMCs, supporting multiple factions in a Civil War in England.
1337 - 1453	<b>The Hundred Years' War:</b> A war between England and France in which both armies used PMCs. By the end, PMCs - known as Free Companies - were hallmarks of warfare and had even defeated the French Army in the Battle of Brignais.
1989	<b>Executive Outcomes</b> (EO) was founded in South Africa, it's considered one of the first modern PMCs.
20 October 2001	The International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries - also known as the UN Mercenary Convention - was entered into force.
July 2005	The UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries was created by Resolution 2005/2 to examine the impact of PMCs on human rights and state self-determination.
16 September 2007	<b>Nisour Square Massacre:</b> A war crime by Blackwater - now Academi - in Iraq, killing 17 civilians. The massacre remains the most prominent example of human rights violations by PMCs.
October 2007	The <b>UN Mercenary Report</b> was released. It was a study conducted over 2 years, describing the rise of hired "security guards" being used as military personnel in a foreign country.
September 2008	<b>The Montreux Document</b> is entered into effect, a document clarifying the legal obligations of states in relation to PMCs.
2009	The Convention on the Regulation, Oversight and Monitoring of Private Military and Security Companies is drafted, encouraging accountability and discussing PMCs and human rights.
23 June 2023	The Wagner Group stages a rebellion against the Russian government, causing a return of public discussion about PMCs.

---

## Global Reform Efforts:

Whilst PMCs are, essentially, a group of mercenaries, they have not been regulated to the same extent. However, global legislation concerning mercenaries does act as a starting point to measure the general mood of the international community towards PMCs.

**The UN Mercenary Convention**, fully known as ‘The International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries,’ was adopted on the 4th of December, 1989, by UNGA Resolution 44/34. It entered into effect on the 20th of October, 2001 and has been ratified by 46 states. Extending on the Geneva Protocols, the UN Mercenary Convention defines and criminalizes the use, training, recruitment, and financing of mercenaries.

**The UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries** - officially known as ‘The Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the rights of peoples to self-determination’ - was established in July 2005 by OHCHR Resolution 2005/2. Composed of a panel of 5 experts, it holds annual sessions on developments or issues regarding PMCs and issues UN reports. Specifically, the UN Working Group focuses on PMCs in their relation to human rights and international law.

**The Montreux Document** - officially known as ‘The Montreux Document on Pertinent International Legal Obligations and Good Practices for States related to Operations of Private Military and Security Companies during Armed Conflict of 17 September 2008’ - was entered into effect in September of 2008. Whilst the Montreux Document is not a UN resolution; it’s a multinational agreement that has been ratified by 58 states. It is also recognized by various international organizations, including NATO and the EU. The Montreux Document discusses the responsibility of states that contract PMCs, where PMCs operate, and where PMCs are registered.

**The Instrument on PMSCs**, fully known as ‘The Instrument on an International Regulatory Framework on the Regulation, Monitoring of and Oversight over the Activities of Private Military and Security Companies’ is being drafted by a UN Intergovernmental Working Group. The Committee was established on the 28th of September, 2017, by UNHRC Resolution 36/11.

Finally, various UN resolutions have addressed PMCs, PMSCs, PSCs, and mercenaries. Including [2005/2](#), [44/43](#), [74/138](#), [42/9](#), [36/11](#), [15/26](#), [18/4](#), [21/8](#), [24/13](#), [27/10](#), [30/6](#), [33/4](#), [36/3](#), [39/5](#).

---

## **Topics your Resolutions Should Address:**

Below there are several topics that resolutions can include, they are placed in this background guide to help delegates focus their research.

### ***Who is Accountable for PMCs?***

Who is accountable if PMCs are misused: PMCs or their employers? How is accountability distributed between PMC leaders, officers, and subordinate soldiers? Which is more important: orders or actions, when taking responsibility for harm? Does the type and extent of harm affect which parties are accountable? Does the extent of cooperation between an employer and the PMC affect accountability? Do the penalties for violating international law differ for PMCs versus traditional militaries? Are penalties under the legal jurisdiction of the international community or the nation where relevant legislation was violated? Resolutions may also specify how the legal framework for persecuting PMCs would work in conjunction with international law.

### ***What would Regulation Look Like?***

To what extent should the UN regulate PMCs? How would regulation be cohesive across nations with different military legislation and traditions? Should regulation differ between PMCs and PSCs? What penalties are there for circumventing regulations? Should regulation cover the funding and training or just the operation of PMCs?

### ***What Comes in Place of PMCs?***

*Only applicable for anti-PMC blocs.*

What happens to the military equipment, resources, and employees left over after PMCs have been disbanded? What alternative development schemes could be launched to direct these resources? What prevents “unofficial” PMCs from using non-traditional branding to avoid international regulation?

### ***PMCs and NGOs***

This concerns the employment of PMCs by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This generally involves local PMCs being hired for small-scale security operations, or established PMCs being used for work in active conflict zones.

Should NGOs be able to hire PMCs? If an NGO operates on a basis of international humanitarian aid, would its neutrality be compromised upon association with PMCs? Can the UN work in conjunction with NGOs who have or are still employing PMCs?

---



---

### ***PMCs as National Threats***

This concerns PMCs having the resources, manpower, and strength to rival national militaries, posing a threat to democratically elected governments.

What, if anything, can the UN do to prevent PMCs from displacing legitimate national governments? Can international commitments be made to support governments in case of violent resistance by PMCs? What, apart from sustained conflict, could be done to hold actively hostile PMCs accountable if their military strength equals that of nations? How does international law apply to PMCs?

### ***Public Transparency***

Do states need to publicly disclose government use of PMCs? If so, to what extent do they need to declare contract details, cost, and purpose? Does the extent of PMC use or the government body responsible for their employment affect the need for public transparency? Should states be mandated reporters of potentially harmful use of national PMCs? To what extent is a state responsible for the PMCs registered in said country?

## **Countries & Party Stances:**

Here is some baseline information on countries that have prominent stances on this issue. This can be used to guide delegates with the research process. Countries that haven't been mentioned below should carry out independent research.

### **Asia**

#### ***China***

China has not ratified the UN Mercenary Report. The state prefers PSCs to PMCs, relying on the former to avoid the violent reputation of PMCs. Historically, China has used PSCs to reinforce infrastructure projects built under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Following the deaths of various BRI employees in hostile regions, PSCs were seen as a cost-efficient way to protect both citizens and Chinese assets. As, by Chinese law, security contractors are not allowed to carry arms outside the country, PSCs generally serve as monitoring and logistics organizations rather than a military force. This reflects a more moderate approach to PMCs than some of China's counterparts. The state believes that national militaries should have knowledge of and influence over the operations of PMCs. Most Chinese PMC soldiers previously served in the People's Liberation Army and/or national police systems. Chinese PMCs, most notably the Frontier Services Group (FSG), are an expanding market. However, they're not a state priority, reflecting China's image of remaining neutral in international affairs.

---



### *Iraq*

Iraq has faced such an abundance of military contractors that an entire association was made to regulate PSCs: the Private Security Company Association of Iraq (PSCAI). PSCAI has emphasized compliance with established international law and maintaining accountability for PSCs. The Iraqi government, whilst supporting the use of nationals PMCs, effectively bans international military contractors. The 2017 Private Security Services Companies Law stated that operative licenses would only be granted to Iraqi PSCs, approving international organizations only as a last resort. PSCs are generally unpopular amongst Iraqi civilians, having raised controversy for various human rights violations, including the Nisour Square Massacre. This, however, has not reflected in its government stance on PMCs.

## **Europe**

### *Russia*

Article 359 of the Russian criminal code technically bans the recruitment, training, and financing of mercenaries, penalizing their use in armed conflict. In 2012, President Vladimir Putin called for the legalization of PMCs, however, this hasn't yet been officially passed. Whilst PMCs are technically banned, their use is normalized: being deployed by the state in various international conflicts and monitoring schemes, including the Russo-Ukrainian War. The Russian government refers to these unofficial PMCs as "volunteer detachments." Russian PMCs are generally seen as fronts for the Kremlin. In a study of 37 PMCs, all were connected to the government and most received direct funding. Having a presence in 34 countries, they are used both as a monitoring tool and as an active fighting force in international conflict.

### *United Kingdom*

The United Kingdom is both a source and an employer of PMCs. Since the dawn of PMCs in the post-Cold War era, UK corporations have consistently been active in the international market. Even today, the British PMC G4S is the largest PMC still in operation, with over 800,000 employees spread across 85 countries. The UK has no legislation on what type of operations can and can't be outsourced to PMCs, but will not allow military operations against allies, or nations with no hostilities towards the UK. British PMCs are generally deployed to conflict zones, most notably Afghanistan and Iraq, being used for logistics, defense, and intelligence operations. There is minimal legislation prohibiting individuals and NGOs from hiring PMCs or PSCs, leading to discussions regarding lack of transparency and risk.

---

## **Africa**

### ***South Africa***

PMCs first emerged in South Africa in the post-Cold War era, with over 9500 still operating in the modern day. Executive Outcomes, a PMC established in 1989, was active throughout Africa before its dissolution in 1998. The Dyck Advisory Group, a PMC hired to combat Muslim insurgents, raised controversy after allegedly shooting at innocent civilians in Mozambique. The criticism faced by both PMCs may have led to more stringent government policy on security contractors. Whilst South Africa has not ratified the UN Mercenary Convention and does not ban PMCs, it is considered a frontrunner in restricting and regulating their activity. The South African Foreign Military Assistance Act of 1998 aims to prevent the training, recruitment, and use of PMCs. It mandates state permission to all PMCs before engaging in international conflict, serving to regulate their foreign influence. Moreover, the Prohibition of Mercenary Activities Act and the Prohibition of Certain Activities in Areas of Armed Conflict Act both serve to criminalize mercenarism at large.

## **The Americas**

### ***Colombia***

Colombia's policies towards PMCs are quite lax; reflecting the state's dedication towards making the defense sector more profitable. The State Defence Department employs PMCs for a variety of security initiatives: restricting unions, preventing insurgency, and clamping down on protest. In a cooperative effort between both governments, the US has deployed a variety of PMCs to Colombia to eradicate the illicit narcotics trade. The US-Colombian collaboration has also been targeted against guerilla agents. CIA and Colombian PMCs have conducted intelligence gathering against insurgent forces, providing information to the Colombian Army. This has led to the displacement of over 2.5 million people. Colombian companies are dominant in the PMC market. As most soldiers have military experience from fighting FARC - a communist Colombian revolutionary group - Colombian military contractors have a reputation for experience and security. This has led to Colombian PMCs being hired by the UAE to aid in the Yemeni Civil War, used actively in international conflict.

### ***USA***

The US has a lax policy towards PMCs. It has not signed the UN Mercenary Convention and does not support a ban on PMCs. However, it has ratified the Montreux Document and remains open to regulation in accordance with international law. The US uses PMCs

---

---

with relative frequency; it typically hires them for international operations where it would be politically controversial or practically infeasible to send traditional troops. It has deployed PMCs to Afghanistan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, etc, but the most famous case is the use of Blackwater in the US occupation of Iraq. PMCs in the United States have shifted away from traditional combat, having been used in clearing minefields, training international troops, controlling prisons, and protecting power lines.

## **Oceania**

### ***Australia***

Australia hasn't ratified the UN Mercenary Convention and does not support a ban on PMCs. Whilst it supports the regulation of PMCs, Australia has no concrete legislation describing the exact regulatory framework that should be employed. It prioritizes promotion of the Montreux Document, which it has ratified, and national representation in international discourse. Critically, Australia does not support an internationally binding convention on PMCs. At this time, it prioritizes suggestions and strengthens existing frameworks before more decisive discourse can be held. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) primarily deploys local PMCs in international embassies, prioritizing defense over military combat.

## **Questions to Consider**

- Should PMCs be used in international conflict?
  - Who should be held accountable for the human rights violations of PMCs?
  - What would the international legal framework for persecuting PMCs look like?
  - Should NGOs be able to hire PMCs?
  - How should we regulate PMCs, if at all?
  - How do we draw the line between PMCs and states when there is significant overlap?
  - How can the UN combat the use of PMCs in neocolonialism?
  - How, if at all, do we prevent states from using PMCs as a front for foreign relations hostilities?
  - If PMCs eclipse the strength of national militaries, how would states protect themselves against violent uprising?
  - How does international discourse on PMCs fit with previous legislation on mercenaries?
  - To what extent do states need to be transparent in their hiring of PMCs?
-

## Recommended Websites

Here are some resources that provide further context and detail on the topic. Delegates are encouraged to use these links for independent research.

## Videos

1. [Private Armies: How Mercenaries Fight Today's Wars | Animated History](#) - The Armchair Historian
2. [Inside the Private Military War Machine | System Error](#) - VICE News
3. [What Are PMCs? Playlist](#) - GeoVane Geopolitics
4. [Wagner Group, Russian PMCs & Ukraine - History, Motives & Privatized Warfare](#) - Perun
5. [Russia's private military force, explained](#) - Vox

## Articles

1. [The Montreux Document](#)
  2. [The International Convention Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing, and Training of Mercenaries](#) (P19 for the English version)
  3. [UN Mercenary Report](#)
  4. [Private Military Companies – A Positive Role to Play in Today's International System](#)
  5. [Private Military and Security Companies: A New Form of Mercenarism?](#)
  6. [Private Security Forces and African Stability: The Case of Executive Outcomes](#)
  7. [What is the Wagner Group? The 'brutal' Russian military unit in Ukraine](#)
  8. [The Dark Truth about Blackwater](#)
  9. [Private military companies: 'Shadow soldiers' of neo-colonialism](#)
  10. [International Committee of the Red Cross PMSC Reading List](#)
  11. [Private military firms see demand in Ukraine war](#)
  12. [What are private security companies doing in Afghanistan?](#)
-

---

## Works Cited

- Bell, Duncan. "Private Military Company (PMC)." Encyclopedia Britannica, 3 Nov. 2023, [www.britannica.com/topic/private-military-firm](http://www.britannica.com/topic/private-military-firm).
- Warsaw Institute. "The Awakening of Private Military Companies." Warsaw Institute, 2 Feb. 2021, <https://warsawinstitute.org/awakening-private-military-companies/>.
- Aning, Kwesi, et al. "The Role of Private Military Companies in US-Africa Policy." *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 35, no. 118, Nov. 2008, pp. 613–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056240802569300>.
- Leander, Anna. "The Paradoxical Impunity of Private Military Companies: Authority and the Limits to Legal Accountability." *Security Dialogue*, vol. 41, no. 5, Oct. 2010, pp. 467–90, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010610382108>.
- Doswald-Beck, Louise. "Private Military Companies Under International Humanitarian Law." Oxford University Press eBooks, 2007, pp. 115–38, [doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199228485.003.0008](https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199228485.003.0008).
- Kinsey, Christopher. *Corporate Soldiers and International Security: The Rise of Private Military Companies*. 2006, ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA77262568.
- "Band of Brothers: The Wagner Group and the Russian State." *The Post-Soviet Post* | CSIS, [www.csis.org/blogs/post-soviet-post/band-brothers-wagner-group-and-russian-state](http://www.csis.org/blogs/post-soviet-post/band-brothers-wagner-group-and-russian-state).
- "The Mercenary Business: 'Executive Outcomes' on JSTOR." *www.jstor.org*. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/4006397](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4006397).
- Zumkhawala-Cook, Richard. "Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army- by Jeremy Scahill." *Peace & Change*, vol. 34, no. 3, June 2009, pp. 321–25, doi:10.1111/j.1468-0130.2009.00568.x.
-