

# Ontario Model United Nations III



## Disarmament and International Security Committee, Background Guide

April 7<sup>th</sup> to April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
[omun.ca](http://omun.ca)

## Letter from the Chair

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Hello Delegates!

My name is Gaurav Dogra, and I am tremendously excited to welcome you to this year's DISEC session.

Model UN has taught us much in the past few years. Even though I am only in Gr. 10, I have been doing Model UN for about three years already and have had the incredibly good fortune of travelling nationally and internationally for our club. Model UN has allowed me to develop passions for the economy, the role of international law, the ins and outs of lawmaking, the art of compromise, and so much more! I hope, more than anything, that this committee can help to spark or further develop a passion in what we discuss over the course of our committee session this year.

The Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) is the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (GA). It includes all nations that are United Nations Member States. DISEC deals with issues regarding the promotion, establishment, and subsequent maintenance of global peace. Under the UN Charter, all member states and observers of the United Nations are automatically part of the first committee of the General Assembly, and have an equal vote.

The two topics which I hope to discuss this upcoming session are both at the utmost importance and relevance for the DISEC community. Firstly, the topic of private military contractors -- extremely volatile, dangerous, and privatized task forces not subjected to any legal oversight. Secondly, the issue of arctic security and ensuring that this resource-rich landmass does not become a conflict zone. I am extremely excited to see the solutions you come up with for these pressing issues.

Position papers will be due by the beginning of the first committee session on Saturday, April 7th if the delegate should remain eligible for awards. They can be submitted through PDF to the email found on the website or can be handed in with paper at the start of the first session. Position papers should be one page in length, single spaced, in Times New Roman 12 point font.

On a final note, this background guide, while it is quite information heavy, should only be a starting point for your research. I strongly recommend you try to answer the guiding questions at the end of each section and explore the links I used in my bibliography to get you started after you read the background guide! These questions will really help you develop substantive arguments in moderated caucuses as well as in the resolution drafting process.

I am so excited to see you all on April 7th and 8th this year! If you have questions, feel free to email me.

Good luck!

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## **Topic 1: Private Military Contractors**

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### **Section 1: Background of Topic**

Private military companies (PMCs) are businesses that provide security assistance, training, provision and consulting services, which includes but are not limited to logistical support, armed security guards, and those involved in offensive as well as defensive military activity, often in armed conflict zones. PMCs differ from the traditional national security services such as armies, as they are registered businesses with corporate structures, and are not subject to public oversight. In addition, PMCs are driven and provide their services as a result of a profit motive, rather than for political reasons. In an age of rampant terrorism, inter-state conflict, and widespread government instability, PMCs have established a robust presence on the international scene, often presenting both beneficial yet destructive tendencies. On one hand, PMCs provide valuable security services, serving as bodyguards, police squads, infiltration teams, and supplying necessary military equipment and expertise. Nevertheless, they have also been involved in some of the most controversial military operations in modern times and continue to be at the forefront of debate regarding the criminalization of mercenary operations and the regulation of the paramilitary industry.

The history of private military companies (PMCs) is rather sordid, and is rooted in decades of violence and war. At the end of the Cold War, many ex-military personnel began to form PMCs, taking advantage of the the excess military resources overlooked by demilitarization efforts. While the use of professional “for-hire” soldiers had previously been somewhat limited, PMCS roles in warfare expanded as new opportunities arose in support operations, and as new and innovative weapon technologies developed. Today, they comprise a \$100 billion industry active on every continent except Antarctica. Even though PMCs are often considered “standing private armies” of nations, or illegitimate fringe groups with little to no accountability mechanism, PMCs are technically defined by the UN as “a legally chartered company or corporation organized along business lines and engaged in military operations across the

spectrum of conflict.” plomats. Additionally, despite making mistakes on the battlefield, such as civilian casualties, its is important to keep in mind that opponents of PMC operations often present exaggerated notions of mercenaries. From an economic standpoint, PMCs fulfill military support roles more efficiently (and often more effectively than states), as a result of specialisation, and thus governments do not have to spread their resources thinly. The role of this committee is consequently to analyze the situation in the status quo regarding PMCs, and seek solutions that balances the negative aspects of PMCs, but which also considers their involvement in legitimate humanitarian and military efforts. Currently, the main employers of PMCs include national governments, private companies, journalists, and diplomats.

The predominant concerns and criticism surrounding PMCs are three-fold, and revolve around PMCs’ inconsistent accountability to standard military protocols, compounded by historical and modern day instances of human rights abuses. First, granting contracts to PMCs enable state actors to wage war without any democratic accountability. Traditionally, as a nation’s standing army is dependent upon civilian participation to sustain war efforts, public opinion of war has always been an important factor in determining the feasibility of armed conflict. The existence of PMCs, however, means state actors can simply circumvent the public’s opinion, and continue to wage war, or even secretly engage in a conflict, ignoring democratic traditions and principles. This has often fomented criticism that PMCs thus offer a state a “clean-hands” international relations policy, as PMCs can act as a clandestine agent of the state in place of a state army. A second concern revolves around the ambiguous legal status, and poorly defined international and domestics standards for the employment PMCs. In general, PMC soldiers are immune from local laws when engaged in international warfare, and additional bilateral agreements, such as those negotiated between the US and Iraq, protect PMCs from prosecution on the basis of property damage, civilian casualties and other criminal activities. Under international law, PMC accountability is also feeble, especially in developing countries where PMCs typically operate. Since PMC services are very expensive, firms sometimes will negotiate deals with governments that extend beyond the tenure and legitimate capacity of their employment. These deals will often allow PMCs to exploit weak nations’ natural resources, as well as remove a country’s assets away from it’s people, disenfranchising developing countries’ citizens. The third concern surrounding PMCs largely focuses on ethics. Since PMC’s contracts are only profitable when there is a need to maintain security or support a war effort, PMCs benefit from violence and instability. As a result, PMCs have often been criticized for being

proactive in creating a niche and conducive environment for the paramilitary industry, regardless of humanitarian repercussions. For example, many PMCs have been accused of aiding criminal and terrorist organizations, and engaging in illicit activities such as funneling money towards warlords and providing rebel leaders military assistance. PMC contractors have also been accused of engaging without having been fired upon, though lethal force is allowed only when there is an imminent threat. One of the most explosive controversies pertaining to the use of PMCs during the Iraq war was the Nisoor Square massacre, in which Blackwater agents engaged in a shooting that killed 17 civilians. Allegations of extrajudicial executions have also surfaced, and PMC agents, those working as interpreters at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq were further implicated in an abuse scandal. These problems are exacerbated by a lack of regulation, deterrence, and mechanism for accountability. In short, PMC activity must be carefully considered and weighed by delegates for the detrimental repercussions they may engender (in addition to their benefits), and delegates must consider what type of new policies, regulations, or actions must be undertaken to ensure that sovereign nations, other institutions and PMCs, on their own accord, do not illegitimately, and unjustifiably resort to using force.

## **Section 2: Past Actions**

In the past, the UN has traditionally denounced the use of PMCs and private mercenaries, but has gradually dialed down its recalcitrant rhetoric in recent times as PMCs have proved necessary in supporting UN peacekeeping efforts. Nevertheless, a host of legislation and documentation exists, created by governing and international bodies which deal specifically with the employment of modern mercenaries and PMCs. The most comprehensive treatise on PMC activity is the 1989 General Assembly Resolution 44/34, drafted at the International Convention Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing, and Training of Mercenaries. The convention was also known as the Ad Hoc UN Mercenary Convention, and the resolution identified the characteristics which are intrinsic to mercenaries. The treatise defined a mercenary as a dangerous element, and discouraged the employment by nations and other actors of “any person who is specifically recruited...motivated to take part in the hostilities by the desire for private gain...” PMCs almost always met the criteria for mercenary, considering most PMC agents are recruited specifically for an international conflict, having only an interest in private gain (with regards to warfare), and typically have no residential or ethnic ties to either party involved in the war. Nevertheless, even as this resolution went into

effect in October 2001, it was not adopted by any permanent Security Council nations. The second significant UN declaration regarding mercenaries is the General Assembly Resolution 47/84, which states that the “use of mercenaries is a threat to international peace and security,” lambasting any state that “persists in, permits or tolerates the recruitment of mercenaries.” Under this resolution, “the right to be a combatant or prisoner of war” are not guaranteed to any actor that fit the criteria of mercenary. In 2005, a UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries was further established in an attempt to assess and monitor the impact of PMCs on human rights across the world. Since, experts within this panel have recommended more regulation and oversight, citing an absence of international and domestic accountability measures. In a July 2010 report, various PMCs were identified to have been actually promoting instability by supporting Taliban groups in Afghanistan, as well as supporting Somali warlords. In 1972, the Organization for African Unity assembled a Convention for the Elimination of Mercenaries in Africa. The Council of Europe’s Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights have additionally conveyed unease over the popularising trend of PMCs undertaking state military responsibilities, citing that this “undermines the position of a state as the only actor allowed to legitimately and lawfully use force.”

As DISEC delegates, you will be tasked with creating effective and compatible measures of procedure, as well as designing monitoring and regulatory mechanisms that will ensure PMC accountability. Past conventions have failed to enact much change, and have yet to be adopted by the relevant countries. Considering the inter-state nature of PMCs, any solution must therefore be internationally premised, yet still respect national sovereignty and the individual will of countries.

### Section 3: Further Research

#### **Questions to Consider:**

- What measures should be taken to increase transparency and governmental oversight and accountability for PMCs?
- What military roles and responsibilities are suitable for private firms and what responsibilities should only be relinquished to a state-sponsored and state-regulated army?
- What type of insufficiencies exist in state and international law, and that should be corrected to ensure that PMCs can be held accountable for their actions?

- Should PMCs be universally subjected to “mercenary status” and consequently anti-mercenary resolutions and legislation? To what extent should the definitions of “lawful combatant,” and/or “unlawful combatant,” be amended and applied to PMCs to clarify their legal status?
- What types of standards for contract negotiations between PMCs and state governments should be created to mitigate problems like exploitation by PMCs and human rights violations in developing countries?

## Topic 2: Arctic Security

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### **Section 1: Background of Topic**

The interest in ownership over the arctic has recently spiked, and this is not without reason. With the climate changing rapidly, and opportunities to gain access to the valuable resources the arctic holds, nations around the world want to get a jump on these opportunities. Historically, the Arctic has not been a location of major interest like it is today. During the Cold War, the Arctic was a critical arena for nuclear operations for the two major nuclear weapons states (Russia and the United States) and three other NATO countries.<sup>1</sup> Since then, interest in the Arctic has drastically declined, and the primary security concerns have been environmental, waste and pollution-related, and protecting the livelihoods of humans and other species living in the Arctic.<sup>2</sup>

Seabed resources are now accessible in the Arctic due to the melting ice caps and chinking sea ice because of newly created waterways. This makes it possible to exploit oil, minerals, and gas; all extremely valuable resources that territorial disputes are over.<sup>3</sup> Now that nations realize the potential in the arctic, disputes over sovereignty of waterways and shipping lanes arise frequently. On top of the disputes themselves, the situation has been made all the more urgent because of the exponential increase in temperature in the arctic, and creates environmental problems like radiation from nuclear fallout and other dangerous pollutants.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen, Kathrin. "An Arctic Security Forum? Please, no!", Published May 26th, 2016.  
<https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/arctic-security-forum-please-dont/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Lajeunesse, Adam; Lackenbauer, Whitney. "Canadian Arctic Security: Russia's Not Coming", Published April 19th, 2016. <https://www.opencanada.org/features/canadian-arctic-security-russias-not-coming/>

<sup>4</sup> Selig, William, "Washington DC Forum: The Coming Arctic Boom and Polar Foreign Policy.", Published April 30th, 2014.  
<http://www.upf.org/peace-and-security/washington-dc-forum/5782-washington-dc-peace-a-security-forum-the-coming-arctic-boom-and-polar-foreign-policy>



At the moment, the challenge is preventing the use of arms in these disputes in the Arctic. Countries within the Arctic Circle have cooperative policies and practices, however, most of these countries have proceeded to build up their military capability in protecting their interests in the resources of the Arctic. Not only are nations within the Arctic Circle interested in Arctic resources, states outside the Circle like the UK, China, Canada, and the U.S.<sup>5</sup>

In light of the moment to make the Arctic Circle a nuclear-weapon free zone, the U.S and Russia have both reduced their operations in the arctic, but have not completely eliminated them.<sup>6</sup> Russia's nuclear headquarters, being the Kola Peninsula, is equipped with aircraft, and nuclear-capable missiles and submarines, while the U.S has a large amounts of weapons similar to Russia in their Alaska nuclear weapons bases. The U.S has also deployed nuclear-capable submarines in Arctic waters.<sup>7</sup> With all these nuclear weapons involved, there is a present possibility of an accidental launch of nuclear weapons despite the unlikeliness of the U.S.and Russia engaging in war.

Evidently, it is essential that cooperative security measures are put in place to change the way things are currently run in the Arctic. The Arctic Council, a Canadian initiative, which will be discussed in Section 2, is one of the very few attempts at doing this, but still needs to be improved to meet the needs to avoid tensions getting out of hand.

## **Section 2: Past Action**

One of the major issues with this topic/problem is the lack of past action itself and attempts at decreasing tensions and lowering the potential for something bigger. However, there have been few attempts at settling this issue and doing the aforementioned.

As touched upon earlier, the Arctic Council was an initiative of the Canadian Government, and established in 1996 with the goal of addressing all the issues in the zone, including issues of security. But, in order to get all countries on board with the Arctic Council, the section

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen, Kathrin. "An Arctic Security Forum? Please, no!", Published May 26th, 2016.

<https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/arctic-security-forum-please-dont/>

<sup>6</sup> Lajeunesse, Adam; Lackenbauer, Whitney. "Canadian Arctic Security: Russia's Not Coming", Published April 19th, 2016. <https://www.opencanada.org/features/canadian-arctic-security-russias-not-coming/>

<sup>7</sup> Lajeunesse, Adam; Lackenbauer, Whitney. "Canadian Arctic Security: Russia's Not Coming", Published April 19th, 2016. <https://www.opencanada.org/features/canadian-arctic-security-russias-not-coming/>

pertaining to security issues in the mandate was taken out and rendered the main focus of the council to be environmental issues. It should be noted that many people and nations all across the world believe that the Arctic Council should expand its mandate back to include issues of security, and take up cooperative measures and measures for peaceful conflict resolutions. The Arctic Council, although rendered useless in the case of conflicts and security issues in the Arctic Circle, is a prime example of nations stepping forward trying to affect the issue in a positive way, and countries involved in initiatives alike should be commended for their actions, but encouraged to expand the scope of their mission to explicitly include security issues in order to further help mediate the issue.<sup>8</sup>

People like Peter Taksoe-Jensen, Danish Ambassador to the United States, are calling for Arctic governance structures to finally consider traditional, military security issues. Most notably, organizations like the Arctic Council are being called upon, as stated earlier.<sup>9</sup> Because of the revision to exclude security issues in their mandate, the Arctic Council is unable to step in on this issue, and many people around the world have issues with that, with Peter Taksoe-Jensen being only one example. To date, there are very few Arctic forums that deal explicitly with military security, so why doesn't *the world* create more forums and organizations like the Arctic Council expand to deal with military and security.

Although there is an astounding amount of people who are in support of more groups and organizations that deal with military and security, it is also believed and argued that such developments are likely to create extreme division xtc between Arctic actors rather than alleviate any of these disagreements. Because calls for Arctic Security Forums (ASFs) “always refer to an unpredictable future where such a forum would be necessary to maintain Arctic peace”, the argument lies that “an explicit security forum for the Arctic—for example within the Arctic Council—create problems rather than solve them.”

Due to the inadequate number of attempts at solving the issue at hand, there lies a broad number of new options and solutions for nations of this committee to put forward, and may include but are not limited to improving and expanding on what has already been done, such as

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen, Kathrin. “An Arctic Security Forum? Please, no!”, Published May 26th, 2016.  
<https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/arctic-security-forum-please-dont/>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

calls for organizations like the Arctic Council to expand their outreach, or the creation of organizations with military and security aspects to them.

### **Section 3: Further Research**

#### **Questions to Consider:**

1. How can all countries currently disputing come to a mutual understanding to prevent any military conflict to arise and the situation worsen? Is this even possible?
2. This is a multi-faceted issue. How will you balance the potentially contradictory goals from different aspects of your society – i.e. resources like oil, etc. – and ensure that you are pushing for policies reflective of the whole state you represent?

#### **Sources for Further Research:**

1. DISEC on the UN website – learn about the committee  
<http://www.un.org/en/ga/first/index.sht>
2. Open Canada – learn about the issue as a whole and some perspectives  
<https://www.opencanada.org/features/canadian-arctic-security-russias-not-coming/>
3. The Globe and Mail – learn about Canada and the issue of arctic security  
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/arctic-security-fighting-for-the-true-north/article574574/>
4. The Arctic Institute – arctic security forums and military and security in this issue  
<http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/180288/want-prevent-piracy-privatizeocean-peter-t-leeson>
5. The Simons Foundation – country policies, war potential, and the appeal of the arctic

<http://www.thesimonsfoundation.ca/arctic-security>

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5. Author Unknown, "Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)." Date unknown. <http://www.un.org/en/ga/first/index.shtml>
6. Author Unknown, "Arctic Security." Date unknown.  
<http://www.thesimonsfoundation.ca/arctic-security>