

# **STUDY GUIDE SPECPOL**



# Letter from Co-Secretaries General

Esteemed delegates,

It is with great honor and gratitude that we welcome you all to the second edition of IHSANMUN. To us, this isn't just a conference; it's a community. A community of people who have seen hardship firsthand and emerged from it stronger. This conference impacts us deeply, as it is our opportunity to bring something that shaped us and built our character throughout the years to our own community at Ihsan. It is with great pleasure that we work tirelessly to bring this event to life, as it means educating fellow students about the issues in our world, helping them grasp things they may never learn in school, and developing skills they will need throughout their lives.

This year, our committees highlight a range of crucial topics in our world today. From JCC discussing the Castellammarese War, Marvel addressing the Sokovia Accords, and HUNSC debating the USA invasion of Iraq, to the Arab League focusing on foreign influence in the Arab world. Our committees also tackle pressing global concerns through SPECPOL regulating private military companies and mercenaries, UN Women preventing human trafficking, the World Bank mitigating aid dependency, and DISEC addressing the use of chemical weapons and working toward their elimination.

The world today is riddled with injustice and malice, and the degree of your subjection to such injustice is simply a matter of geographical luck. There is virtually nothing standing in the way of you continuing your everyday life or being forced to flee it in a matter of seconds.

What matters most is that we, as the international community, recognize our privilege and advocate for those who lack it. From this conference, learn that there is power in diplomatic dialogue. There is power in advocacy. **There is power in you.** We want you to take this opportunity to bring change and impact the world in your own way. The world is ours to live in and shape.

Let us all use that power to balance the scales once again, just as we've done before: only now, on a much bigger and far more impactful scale.

In pursuit of balancing the scales, Nada Alghory & Maizah Hassan  
IHSANMUN'26 Secretaries-General

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# 1. Letter from the Under-Secretary-General

**Dear Delegates,**

My name is Mariam Mucahit and I am incredibly honored and excited to be serving as the Under Secretary-General of this committee. In a rapidly corporatizing world, many industries are becoming money-making machines to benefit a very small minority. Of course, militaries are not an exception. PMCs are the corporatization of mercenaries. They became a brand of their own, complete with their own engineers, pilots and many other military and non-military jobs. This is mainly to help steal the natural resources of the country they are sent to, in exchange of “defending” the corrupt governments they are sent to. In this committee we will focus on erasing the gray-zone that PMCs work under in order to properly hold these companies liable.

I am looking forward to seeing what you prepared for the committee. Prepare well and do not use AI to write your speeches, we can tell when you do.

If you are struggling at all when preparing, please do not hesitate to contact me by email [mariammojahed888@gmail.com](mailto:mariammojahed888@gmail.com) !!

Regards,

Mariam Mucahit

## 2. Introduction to SPECPOL

Special Political and Decolonisation Committee (SPECPOL) is one of the original general assembly committees of the United Nations (UN), formed in 1990 by the combination of the Decolonization Committee and the Special Politics Committee. It is the Fourth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. This committee focuses on a plethora of topics, from the effects of radiation, to defending many countries' sovereignty. The committee examines the effects of atomic radiation, promotes the peaceful uses of outer space, and oversees the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which provides humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees. In an increasingly complex global order, SPECPOL continues to engage in critical discussions on post-conflict reconstruction and the implications of political instability. The committee remains a pillar of international cooperation, striving to uphold its mandate despite geopolitical tensions and differing national interests. By 1945, when the UN was founded, 750 people lived under colonial rule, and now, over 80 former colonies have gained independence through the hard work of SPECPOL. Since Private Military Companies and mercenaries usually undermine countries' sovereignty, this agenda falls under this committee's topics.

### 3. Key Terms

**Proxy wars:** Wars fought by one or more third party countries by supporting one or more sides of the conflict to influence the war to end in their favor while avoiding direct contact.

**Mercenaries:** Hired professional soldiers, usually ex-military personnel, who fight for financial incentives regardless of political views.

**Private Military Companies (PMCs) :** Private Military Companies offer military services that usually include providing direct support to military operations (including taking part in combat) or delivering military training and advice. This is the definition accepted in this study guide but in some official UN reports and legal documents mercenaries and PMCs are interchangeable.

## **4. Introduction to the Agenda**

Independent fighters are not a new phenomenon, there are records of mercenaries fighting for rations and land from ancient Egypt. Today however mercenaries have evolved to much more structured and strategic private military companies (PMCs). The first PMC, WatchGuard International, was founded in 1965 by the British David Stirling. It was established to provide military training and security services while trying to distance themselves from the frowned upon mercenaries. It provided a corporate way of war in a rapidly corporatizing world. With the cold war soon after, PMCs quickly multiplied. With this many PMCs their downsides were inescapable and finding a way to legally control them was evident. Attacks on countries' sovereignty, lack of accountability and impunity were the main risks nations strived to overcome by many agreements; the 1989 UN mercenary convention, The Montreux Document and The international Code of conduct (ICoC).

## **5. What are Private Militaries and are they the same as Mercenaries**

Private military companies (PMCs) are independent military companies that offer specialized military and security services for national governments and international organizations. PMC contractors are usually military veterans and retired officers often driven by financial gain. Mercenaries however are individuals hired to fight for a state or a nation regardless of their nationality and political views. While usually deployed for frontline fighting PMCs can be active in every part of a military. PMCs have more advanced weapons and tools compared to mercenaries who usually have light arms. The biggest differentiator between PMCs and mercenaries is their clients, PMCs tend to work for states while mercenaries work for non-state organizations. Mercenaries do not tie themselves to their clients whereas PMCs usually work for just one client that is usually registered and considered legal. Nonetheless the difference between PMCs and mercenaries is not fixed.

## 6. Commonly known PMCs

### Wagner Group

Founded in 2014 by Yevgeny Prigozhin (a Russian oligarch nicknamed “Putin’s chef”) and Dmitry Utkin. It is thought that Wagner was created to do the ‘dirty work’ of the Russian army, that entailed; stealing the natural resources of the country they are in, like their gas, being a proxy for the Russian army and hiring mercenaries to fight alongside Russian soldiers. Wagner first showed up in Ukraine aiding Russian separatist forces in 2014 till 2015.

The group then started to focus more on aiding the Russian-backed Assad regime with its ground forces. The group recaptured many cities in Syria including Palmyra and Hama. They also provided training to present forces in the region and even specialised units they created.



The main incentive for them to fight in this war was a deal they made with the Syrian government wherein every petrol spot Wagner defends, Wagner gets 25% of all the gas extracted. The rest of the money was split between the Syrian and Russian governments. One of the most known tactics of the Wagner group is one they have implemented many times in Africa. This tactic consists of finding unstable countries, mostly in Africa, and offering protection services to the probably corrupt government in exchange for the country's natural resources. This allowed Russia to distance itself from the events while still benefiting from the resources being imported and sold within its borders.

After that, the Wagner group helped Russia with its attack in 2022 which started the Russian-Ukraine war.

Rebellion of Wagner on the Russian government

## Wagner Group

Wagner forces were heavily involved in frontline fighting, where they supported Russian troops and carried out some of the most dangerous missions. One of their most significant operations was in the battle for Bakhmut, where Wagner fighters led prolonged attacks that caused heavy casualties on both sides. During this time, tensions began to grow between Wagner leadership and the Russian Ministry of Defense, as Yevgeny Prigozhin openly criticized military officials for not providing enough ammunition and for poor leadership in the war. These disagreements became more public over time and showed divisions within Russia's military structure.

The Wagner Group's growing power eventually led to internal conflict within Russia itself. In June 2023, its leader Yevgeny Prigozhin launched a rebellion against the government of Vladimir Putin after accusing the Russian Ministry of Defense of corruption and poor military leadership in Ukraine.



Wagner forces took control of military sites in Rostov-on-Don and began moving towards Moscow, raising concerns of a possible civil conflict. However, the rebellion was stopped within a day after a deal was negotiated. This event showed how powerful private military groups can become and the risks they pose when they act outside government control, highlighting the need for stronger international regulation on mercenary groups.

This ended in the nationalization of Wagner. After defeating Wagner, Russia would not let all the companies and agreements Wagner made just disappear, they absorbed them to benefit the Russian government. So today, even though Wagner does not exist anymore, all the mining companies they created to work on stealing struggling countries' resources are now working for Russia.

## **Blackwater (Academi)**

Founded in 1997 by Erik Prince and Al Clark, both former Navy Seal Officers, Blackwater is best known for its controversies. The company started out as a training company, providing training to law enforcement, military organizations and the justice department. The military then expanded and moved on to signing deals with the US government. They got their first contract with the US government after the bombing of the USS Cole which was in 2000.

They are most known for the protection and security services they provided the US government in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Following the US invasion of Iraq in the so-called 'war on terror', Blackwater offered to provide security to US agencies operating in the region.

By 2009 the company had made over 1 billion dollars from the state department on their operations in Iraq according to Prince. Due to the lack of oversight on the PMC's operations, the company ended up with a staggering amount of human rights violations. Most notably was the 2007 Nisour square shooting where a 19-man group of Blackwater tactical support team tasked with defending an evacuation route for US officials started shooting civilians in the square to 'lock down' the place to secure it. This ended in the murder of 17 Iraqi civilians and the injuring of 11 others. This of course raised countless questions on the legality of PMCs and their impunity.



## Group 4 Securicor

G4s started as a small guardian company in Denmark, it then moved on to being a private fire rescue company. After countless rebrands two PMCs merged in 2004, Securicor and Group 4 Falck which ultimately created G4S. This PMC like most PMCs provides mostly protection and cash handling services. It is not only the biggest PMC in the world, but one of the top ten militaries in the world in terms of troop number (about 800,000 employees). This company has been under scrutiny for many reasons throughout the years. One of the biggest controversies surrounding this company is its involvement in the Israel-Palestine conflict. The company provides protection services



## Executive Outcomes (EO)



Executive Outcomes was set up in 1989 by ex-SADF (South African Defense Force) Lieutenant-Colonel Eben Barlow as a small close corporation in South Africa to provide specialist covert training to SADF's Special Forces. However, it was only in 1993 that the firm attained notability when they carried out a successful operation to liberate the oil city of Soyo, Northern Angola, from UNITA occupation in place of the London-based Heritage Oil & Gas.

Following their success, Angola's MPLA government formally requested the services of EO in improving the capabilities of the armed forces to

## Group 4 Securicor

defeat the UNITA rebels. By the end of 1994, UNITA had lost all major urban centres and its traditional foothold in Huambo. Likewise, in Sierra Leone, EO's involvement drastically changed the dynamic of the conflict which concluded with the surrender of RUF rebels. At its prime, Executive Outcomes could deploy hundreds of highly trained soldiers anywhere in Africa. Although, the company in December 1998 announced that it would close its doors by January 1999. Unexpectedly, after more than 2 decades, Eeben Barlow revived Executive Outcomes following the demands of unspecified African governments.

Eeben Barlow claims that "EO is, with the possible exception of the South African army, the most deadly and efficient army operating in sub-Saharan Africa today".

One of the major reasons for EO's success was the emphasis it made on the loyalty among the personnel, making the company stand out from its rivals. This was achieved through official statements and sportive events among the members.

Eeben Barlow expected his men to adhere to EO's code of conduct. This reflected the mission statement of the company: essentially, working for UN-sanctioned governments and as a legitimate business. In the event that any of the firm's employees were found disobeying them, they would be readily dismissed and tried by the authorities where the crime had been committed.

Executive Outcomes seeks to provide clients with:

"A highly professional and confidential military advisory service to legitimate governments; sound strategic and tactical military advice; the most professional training packages currently available to armed forces, covering aspects related to land warfare, air warfare, naval warfare; peacekeeping (persuasion) services; advice to armed forces on weaponry selection; para-military services; a total a-political service based on confidentiality, integrity, professionalism and dedication in order to create a climate for peace and stability for foreign investment"

However, besides its formidable military effectiveness, EO has been deeply controversial, especially in South Africa. Executive Outcomes and Chairman Eeben Barlow truly capture the complexity of the private military industry. The firm was fiercely criticised both at home and abroad while, at the same time, local populations and humanitarian groups showed appreciation for its success.

## **Vinnell Corporation**

Vinnell corporation was founded by the late A. S. Vinnell in 1931 to pave roads in Los Angeles. Since then the company has handled a number of large domestic as well as government projects. The company was the major contractor for US military operations in Okinawa, overhauled Air Force planes in Guam in the early 1950s, and sent men and equipment onto the battlefields of the Korean War.

Now based in Fairfax, Virginia, the company has been controlled in the past through a web of interlocking ownership by a partnership that included James A. Baker III and Frank Carlucci, former U.S. secretaries of state and defense under presidents George Bush senior and Ronald Reagan respectively.

Perhaps the most important military contract Vinnell signed was in 1975 when the Pentagon helped the company win a bid to train the 75,000 strong Saudi Arabian National Guard, a military unit descended from the Bedouin warriors who helped the Saud clan impose control on the peninsula early in the last century.

## Vinnell Corporation

An article in Newsweek at the time described the company's first recruitment efforts with the aid of "a one-eyed former U.S. Army colonel named James D. Holland" in a cramped office in the Los Angeles suburb of Alhambra to put together "a ragtag army of Vietnam veterans for a paradoxical mission: to train Saudi Arabian troops to defend the very oil fields that Henry Kissinger recently warned the U.S. might one day have to invade."



## Aegis Defense Services

Aegis Defence Services is a British private military and private security company that was founded in 2002 by Lt Col Tim Spicer and 3 partners. It specializes with providing security services to governments and major oil companies. Aegis was based in London, and even though there is no direct connection to the UK government, the fact that many of the employees are formerly served for the British military creates some kind of network. Yet, the UK government distanced itself from Aegis after the controversies about the founder's past of serving in Northern Ireland.

Aegis made a significant part of their business with the US government during their time in Iraq. In 2005, the public witnessed Aegis's operation in Iraq when a user published a video on the internet. The video showed a group of Aegis employees randomly shooting at civilian vehicles. In the video, it appeared that Aegis soldiers were shooting out of the back of their vehicle on the road to Baghdad airport. Allegedly, a former employee posted the video. The US army's criminal investigation division cleared Aegis of any wrongdoing in June 2006. Aegis had claimed that the former employee had manipulated the footage

Moreover, Aegis worked under a UN contract to serve in Somalia and multinational companies who operated in high-risk environments, like the companies in Angola, Niger, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR). In 2015, GardaWorld, a Canadian security company, acquired Aegis Defence Services

## 7. Present Legal Frameworks

The 1989 UN mercenary convention

Although the 1977 Additional Protocol I (Article 47) was the first International agreement to properly define the term ‘mercenary’, the 1989 UN mercenary convention was the first to formally criminalize them. This convention urges parties to either extradite or prosecute mercenaries. One of its biggest limitations was that it was not ratified by all major world powers, this was because most major powers were currently making use of mercenaries and PMCs.

The convention consists of 21 articles, which consist of articles defining related terms and specifying the punishments countries ought to implement. This convention defines a mercenary as:

1. A mercenary is any person who:

- a. Is specially recruited locally or abroad in order to fight in an armed conflict;
- b. Is motivated to take part in the hostilities essentially by the desire for private gain and, in fact, is promised, by or on behalf of a party to the conflict, material compensation substantially in excess of that promised or paid to combatants of similar rank and functions in the armed forces of that party;
- c. Is neither a national of a party to the conflict nor a resident of territory controlled by a party to the conflict;
- d. Is not a member of the armed forces of a party to the conflict; and
- e. Has not been sent by a State which is not a party to the conflict on official duty as a member of its armed forces.

3. A mercenary is also any person who, in any other situation:
- a. Is specially recruited locally or abroad for the purpose of participating in a concerted act of violence aimed at :
    - i. Overthrowing a Government or otherwise undermining the constitutional order of a State; or
    - ii. Undermining the territorial integrity of a State;
  - b. Is motivated to take part therein essentially by the desire for significant private gain and is prompted by the promise or payment of material compensation;
  - c. Is neither a national nor a resident of the State against which such an act is directed;
  - d. Has not been sent by a State on official duty; and
  - e. Is not a member of the armed forces of the State on whose territory the act is undertaken.

In article one of the convention. The biggest problem with this document is that it defines mercenaries as a person who fights with material compensation as the primary motive which is extremely difficult to prove in court.

## **The Montreux Document**

This document was finalized in 2008 and is the first official document to address the activities of private military companies.

The agreement does not aim to completely ban PMCs but rather limit and properly hold them accountable, it states that PMCs do not exist in a 'legal vacuum'. Currently it is supported by 59 states. It is not a legally binding treaty which is its biggest limitation, it lacks direct enforcement mechanisms. It mostly relies on voluntary compliance from supporting countries.



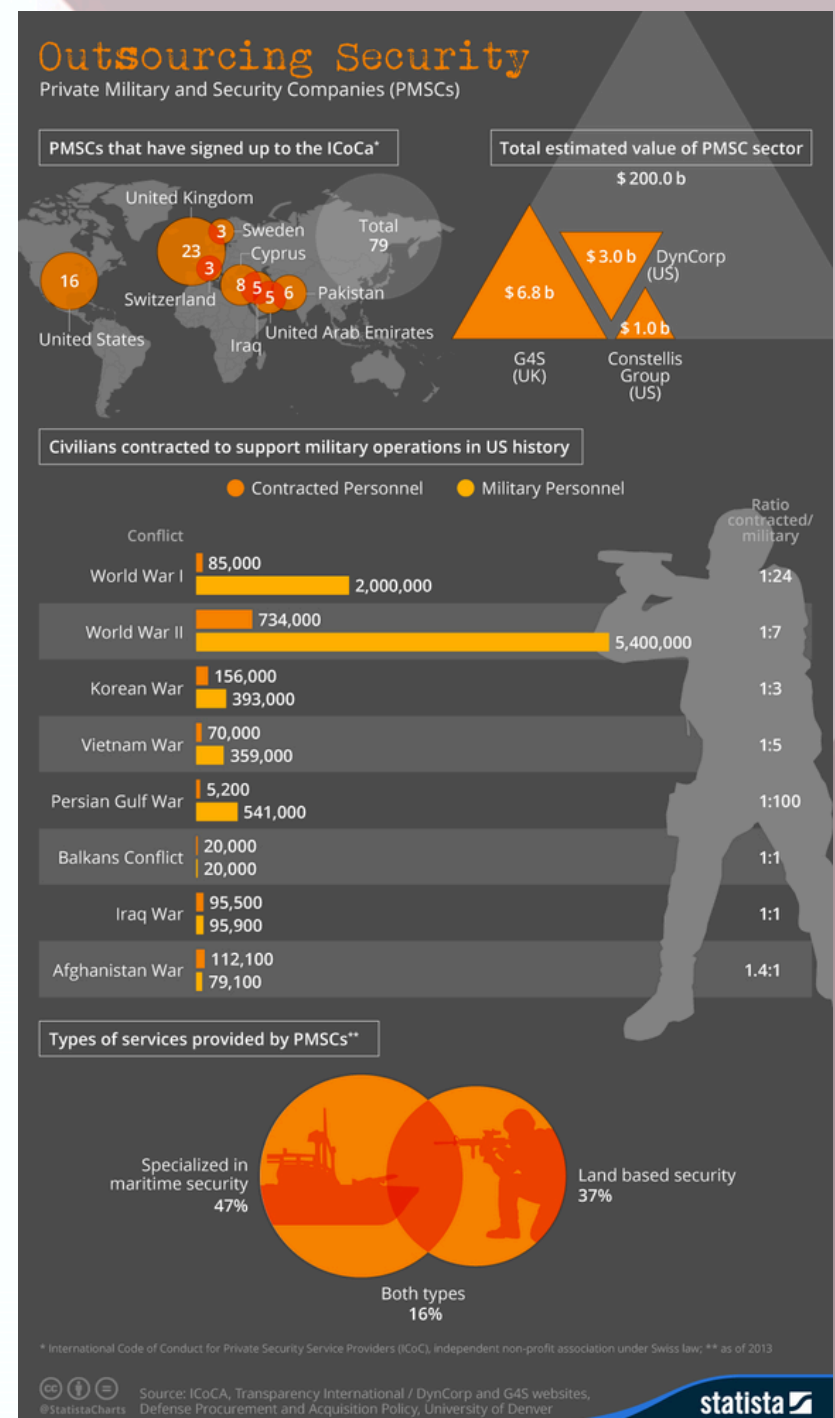
**MONTREUX  
DOCUMENT  
FORUM**

## The International Code of Conduct (ICoC)

The ICoC was established in 2010 and it is supported by governments, private security companies, and civil society organizations that would promote responsible behavior and respect for human rights, among private military and security companies.

The code sets specific standards that the companies are expected to follow, including respecting international humanitarian law, avoiding human rights abuses, and ensuring accountability for their actions. It also led to the creation of the *International Code of Conduct Association*, which monitors member companies, and ensures they comply with these principles. Companies that join the ICoC agree to follow rules related to the use of force, treatment of civilians, and transparency in their operations.

However, the ICoC is voluntary, which means that companies have the choice of whether or not to join, and it does not have strong enforcement mechanisms, so groups like Wagner are not members, which highlights a major weakness in the current system. The ICoC shows both an effort to regulate private military actors and the limitations of existing international frameworks, reinforcing the need for stronger and more binding global regulations.



## Summary of Agreements:

Agreement	Type	Year	Main Goal	Major Weakness
UN Mercenary Convention	Binding Treaty	1989	Criminalize mercenaries	Low ratification by major powers
Montreux Document	Intergovernmental	2008	Define State obligations	Non-binding
ICoC	Industry-led	2010	Corporate self-regulation	Voluntary; no "real" teeth

## Laws in individual countries

Laws regarding the PMCs differ from country to another across the globe, ranging from strict prohibition to not having specific legislations banning the PMCs. Yet, saying most countries treat the agenda of PMCs as a grey zone would not be wrong. The stance of the United States and Russia regarding the agenda are below:

**United States:** In the last few years, and largely in reaction to incidents involving PMSCs, the Government of the United States and Congress adopted various measures increasing the government oversight over PMSCs and expanding and clarifying jurisdiction over offences committed by private militaries and security personnel operating abroad. The Working Group welcomes the adoption of these measures, which have improved the situation, but notes that much remains to be done to ensure effective oversight, accountability and legal remedy when human rights violations occur.

**Russia:** In 2008, on the initiative of the International Red Cross, the Montreux Document was adopted as an attempt to regulate the functioning of PMCs. It is a set of 70 best practices applied to countries sending PMCs, as well as for the countries where they operate. However, with 54 signatories, Russia is not one of them. Moreover, according to Art. 47 of the Protocol (I) Additional to the Geneva Conventions regarding the protection of victims of international armed conflicts from 1977, mercenaries are not entitled to the status of veteran or prisoner of war.

### **United Kingdom :**

The United Kingdom does not have laws in its constitution regarding mercenaries and PMCs, rather they rely on the broad international regulations to prosecute mercenary activities of British citizens. Older laws the UK had that could be used to try British citizens becoming mercenaries, like the Foreign Enlistment Act 1819, have become irrelevant or have been repealed. Trying mercenarism in uk then would not be because of the actual act of becoming a mercenary but instead because of any war crimes committed by the British mercenaries. The British law for murder still applies for UK citizens abroad.

**Germany:** In Germany the government can not legally hire PMCs to conduct outsource military operations. Recruiting German citizens to work in foreign PMCs or militaries is also illegal. There are exceptions to this rule regarding Private Maritime Security Companies who are allowed to carry semi-automatic weapons to protect German flagged cargo ships. Germany is a signatory of the 1989 UN Mercenary Convention but importantly has not ratified it. This convention explicitly prohibits the recruitment, training, financing and hiring of PMCs. Germany is also a signatory of the Montreux document.

**Türkiye:** The Turkish government has no legal mechanism to hire PMCs for combat operations or defense duties. Under Turkish law it is illegal to recruit Turkish citizens to fight independently of the state; doing so can lead to life imprisonment. Turkish citizens who work in foreign PMCs or armies are at risk of their citizenship being revoked. Private security companies are allowed to work in Türkiye under the strict supervision of the ministry of Interior. While Türkiye is party to the Geneva convention it is not signatory to the Additional protocol I which contains article 47 which defines and penalises mercenaries.

## **8. Case Studies**

### **Cold war era**

The cold war was a big turning point in terms of modernizing private militaries. It was the point that militarization went from being random to being the organizations we know today. During the Cold War, direct conflict between the US and the USSR was too dangerous because it risked nuclear disaster. This prompted proxy wars between the two superpowers. This provided the two sides with plausible deniability if/when a mercenary gets caught. There were proxy wars in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

### **The Congo Crisis**

Considered the first modern mercenary war. Mercenaries supported by western countries fought to defend mining interests in the natural resource-rich country of Congo by fighting the Soviet Union. This helped stop rapidly spreading Soviet influence in Africa.

### **Corporatization**

At the end of the Cold war both sides began to modernize their disorganized mercenaries. This shifted the mercenaries towards a more corporate model which turned the very jumbled fighting of present mercenaries to a military-level of organisation, complete with; engineers, intelligence analysts, consultants, medevac personnel and aviation support along with the soldiers.

## 9. Often Faced Problems

### **Accountability**

Due to PMCs being very meticulously designed to avoid legal problems, holding them accountable proves to be difficult. PMCs circumvent laws relating to mercenaries and taxing laws by designing money laundering schemes. Wagner Group for instance is made up of 174 entities as of 2023 before their nationalization, which had made Wagner group more of a brand than an actual company. Wagner group was mainly made up of; catering companies, management companies, logistics companies and resource extracting entities.

Another reason why PMCs are rarely held accountable is because their accountability falls between three actors; the sending state, the company and the host state. The sending state usually does not have laws regarding mercenary fighters in foreign countries, the host state is often too war-torn to effectively remove or fight the PMCs and the company is a private business not part of the government so military laws do not apply to them.

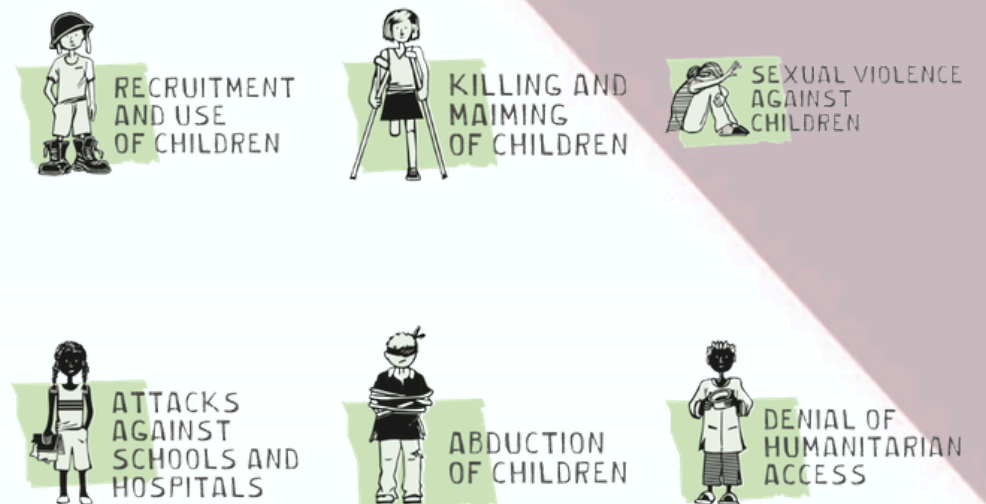
### **Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs)**

Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) are another way PMCs can so easily avoid being held accountable for their human rights abuses. SOFAs are agreements between a state that sends its military to another country that ensures the sending nation's troops are not tried in the host nation's juridical system. Although these agreements are meant for the sending nation's official troops, PMCs often benefit from them too despite not officially being tied with the sending nation. When the private militaries are tried in the sending nation, they often avoid facing legal trouble because it is not in the sending state's best interest to punish the PMC's troops.

## PMCs and Child Rights

A 2026 investigative report done by King's College London and UNICEF emphasizes the concern PMCs raise in regards to abuses towards the rights of children. PMCs have been linked with the violation of all six grave violations towards children. That includes:

1. Recruitment and Use of Children
2. Killing and Maiming of Children
3. Sexual Violence against Children
4. Attacks Against Hospitals and Schools
5. Abduction of Children
6. Denial of Humanitarian Access



The report ends by underlining just how irregular PMCs are especially in protecting children. The report has a recommendation section split into two sections to detail their recommendations towards States, international and national organisations and company associations. Needless to say, because this is just a report the recommendations have until now stayed as just recommendations, that are in no way binding.

## 10. Questions to be Addressed

1. Are current legal frameworks enough to properly combat PMCs?
2. What is the best definition for PMCs to prevent companies from evading legal confrontation?
3. Who should be liable for the crimes committed by mercenaries/PMCs (host nations, Companies or sending nations)?
4. Does signing contracts with PMCs undermine a nation's sovereignty?
5. How can existing frameworks like Montreux Document and ICoC be strengthened to ensure enforcement?
6. How is the safety of often marginalized groups, like children and women, protected from the countless violations and human rights abuses committed by PMCs and mercenaries?
7. How should the international community respond to PMC involvement in internal conflicts, such as the activities of the Wagner Group?

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