



HUDA MUN'25

SPECPOL: Special Political
and Decolonization Committee

Study Guide

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1. Letter from the Under Secretary-General

!!!!!!!DELEGATES DO NOT SKIP THIS!!!!!!!

Dear delegates,

My name is Taim Aljajah, and I can't express how honored I am to serve as your Under Secretary-General in the second rendition of HUDAMUN. In the upcoming three days, which I hope to be filled with heated debates and plenty of gossip and fun, you will be discussing the threats imposed by foreign military presence on sovereignty. Therefore as you step into your roles as delegates, I encourage you to look at the world through the lens of the country you represent, and let that perspective navigate your speeches and arguments. **Remember**, these issues are real, these discussions are made as you're reading this, so approach this debate not just as a representative of a country but as someone who is looking forward to helping educate themselves about contemporary global issues, and as someone who is seeking to help humanity.

If you require any sort of assistance, or if you need to ask any questions, do NOT hesitate to contact me through this email, Taimaljajah@gmail.com. In the end, I'm only here to guide and support you.

Sincerely,

Taim Aljajah

Under Secretary General

2. Introduction to SPECPOL

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) is the Fourth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. It was formed in 1990 when the Decolonization Committee and the Special Political Committee were combined. Around 35 years ago, the UN established the first “International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism” which existed from 1990 until 2000. During this eventful decade, many former colonies have gained independence, thanks to the contribution of The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL). Today, fewer than two million people live in 17 Non-Self-Governing territories, and SPECPOL holds hearings with petitioners, including civil society organizations and private individuals, from these areas. SPECPOL also covers issues related to the Middle East, Palestinian refugees, and Israeli practices, as well as topics like the effects of atomic radiation, peacekeeping operations, space exploration, and international cooperation for peaceful uses of outer space.

3. Key Terms

Forward basing : The strategic placement of military bases used to support tactical operations near conflict zones. It allows for rapid deployment and resupply of troops and equipment.

Sovereignty : Sovereignty is a state's full right and power to govern itself without external interference.

Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) : A SOFA is a legal agreement between a host country and a foreign nation stationing military forces there. It defines the rights, responsibilities, and legal status of the foreign troops.

Military occupation : Military occupation occurs when a foreign power takes control of a territory without annexing it. It is usually temporary but often controversial under international law.

Non-intervention : the principle that states should not interfere in the internal affairs of other sovereign nations. It is a fundamental norm of international relations, especially in the UN system.

Proxy War : a conflict where external powers support different sides, often through funding, or weapons, rather than direct combat. These wars typically occur in third-party countries.

4. Historical events

4.1. UN Charter and Previous UN Actions

The UN charter is the foundational signed agreement of the United Nations. It includes all international relation principles, including the sovereign right of every Nation. Since the UN's founding in 1945, the mission and work of the Organization have been guided by the purposes and principles contained in its founding Charter, which has been amended three times in 1963, 1965, and 1973. In respect to our agenda, the charter does not explicitly prohibit or permit foreign military presence, YET, its core principles of sovereignty, self defense, and non intervention, shape how foreign military presence is judged under international law.

Article 2(4) of the UN charter states "All Members shall refrain... from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state". This statement is the chief and foundational argument used against unwanted military presence, as it may seem as a violation of sovereignty or territorial integrity.

Not much further down article 2, Article 2(7) states that "Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state". This conveys that military installments or any sort of foreign intervention without the host state consent may breach international norms.

Yet, Article 51 of the Charter states that "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs". This Article is often used by states to justify their foreign military deployments when done under collective defense agreements (e.g., Nato) or in response to terrorism in foreign states.

4.2. Major 20th century interventions

The 20th century was and still is recognized as the era of foreign interventions, with the US being responsible for more than 300 interventions, half of them occurring after 1950, as the cold war escalates. As war tensions increased between the two superpowers, their installments have increased relatively. By the late cold war (1980s), the US had around 700 military bases stationed all across the globe, mainly in Europe, East Asia, Middle East and Africa. On the contrary, the USSR, another superpower, pivoted their bases across their borders and allies, installing around 70-100 bases in eastern europe, vietnam, and a few in the middle east. This illustrates how the consequences of war, conflicts, and the pursuit of power are reflected in the extent of foreign military presence.

The strategic expansion of military bases is not merely a defensive tactic but also a tool used by superpowers to spread influence and secure geopolitical interests. For the United States, the intense amount of bases enhanced rapid response capabilities and served as a deterrence against the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the Soviet Union, focusing on the Warsaw pact and other allies, maintained ideological control (spreading communist propaganda) and buffer zones to battle western capitalist influence.

These deployments had major social, economic, and political consequences for host countries. For instance, in west germany and south korea, western military presence assisted both nations in developing economically and securely. Yet, foreign military presence has proven to have several dismal consequences in other nations. For example, in states like Cuba, Vietnam, and certain middle east countries, it has fueled national resistance movements, long-term dependency, and internal conflicts.

As the cold war progressed, foreign military presence lost the notion of defense, it became a symbol of global influence. It has propelled revolutions, proxy wars, and has sparked debates on what is enshrined in the UN charter, as breaching the principles of sovereignty has never been more prevalent.



5. Case Studies by Region

5.1. Middle East and US Expansion

The U.S. military's presence in the Middle East has been one of the most defining and contested aspects of post-Cold War international relations. Often justified under the banners of counterterrorism, stabilization, and regional security, this presence has also provoked political backlash and public resentment, especially in host nations such as Iraq. A key legal instrument governing this presence was the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) signed between the United States and Iraq in 2008. The SOFA established the legal framework for U.S. troops operating in Iraq and set a timetable for full withdrawal by 2011. This was seen as a milestone in restoring Iraqi sovereignty after years of foreign occupation and conflict. However, the rise of ISIS in 2014 led to the redeployment of U.S. forces, albeit under a different mission structure primarily counterterrorism under Operation Inherent Resolve. While legally distinct, this return was deeply controversial. Many in Iraqi civil society viewed it as a breach of the original SOFA's intent, reigniting debates over sovereignty and the legitimacy of foreign military presence. Polling data from that period reflected this growing discontent. For example, a 2019 survey by the Iraqi Independent High Commission for Human Rights found that over 60% of respondents favored the complete withdrawal of foreign forces from Iraqi soil. Parliamentarians echoed these sentiments, with recurring motions in the Iraqi Parliament calling for the expulsion of U.S. troops. Tensions escalated dramatically in January 2020, when a U.S. drone strike in Baghdad killed Iranian General Qasem Soleimani and Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. This action was taken without Iraqi governmental consent, sparking public outrage and prompting the Iraqi Parliament to pass a non-binding resolution demanding the withdrawal of foreign troops. These developments illustrate a broader pattern seen in many regions: foreign military deployments that are initially welcomed or tolerated can evolve into perceived occupations, particularly when the legal frameworks governing them become opaque or are seen as selectively applied. Over time, this erosion of trust can undermine host-nation legitimacy, fuel anti-foreign sentiment, and create new security threats, including insurgencies, violent protest movements, or increased regional polarization.

5.2. Africa – French, Chinese, and U.S. military bases

Africa has become an increasingly strategic continent for global powers, resulting in a rising number of foreign military installations. Among the most prominent actors are **France, the United States, and China**, each maintaining military outposts across different regions under the justification of counterterrorism, anti-piracy, peacekeeping support, or regional stability. However, the long-term presence of these forces has raised serious concerns over sovereignty, political manipulation, and the militarization of foreign relations.

France – Post-Colonial Military Ties and Backlash

France maintains a legacy network of military bases in West and Central Africa, notably in Djibouti, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Chad, often justified through bilateral defense agreements. The French presence has long been framed as a security guarantee against terrorism, especially in the Sahel. However, popular uprisings and growing nationalist sentiment have challenged this narrative. In countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, anti-French protests have erupted over what many perceive as neocolonialism. In 2022, Mali expelled French forces, accusing them of interfering in domestic politics and failing to contain jihadist violence. Similar calls followed in Burkina Faso and Niger, where military coups were partly fueled by resentment toward foreign interference.

United States – AFRICOM and Strategic Interests

The United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) oversees a dispersed but extensive military footprint on the continent. The U.S. has bases or military access agreements in over a dozen countries, including Djibouti (Camp Lemonnier), Kenya, Niger, and Somalia. Officially, these facilities support counterterrorism operations, particularly against Al-Shabaab and ISIS affiliates. Yet critics argue that the opacity of U.S. operations, such as drone warfare and covert missions, creates distrust and undermines the sovereignty of partner nations. The deadly 2017 ambush in Niger, which resulted in U.S. and Nigerien casualties, highlighted how U.S. operations often proceed with limited local understanding or public accountability. Additionally, the militarization of aid and diplomacy has raised alarms about long-term dependency and eroded civilian governance in fragile states.

China – Djibouti and Beyond

China opened its first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017, near both U.S. and French installations. Officially described as a logistics hub for anti-piracy and peacekeeping missions, the Chinese base reflects Beijing's broader ambitions to protect its economic investments and maritime routes under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). While not yet on the scale of U.S. or French operations, China's military footprint is expanding, including training partnerships in Zambia, Tanzania, and other BRI-aligned countries. Some African civil society groups worry this may signal a shift from soft power to hard power engagement, potentially entrenching authoritarian partnerships and strategic dependencies.

5.3. Asia-Pacific – Okinawa, South Korea, Chinese bases in Djibouti

The Asia-Pacific region is home to some of the world's most significant foreign military presences, where the presence of U.S. troops, allied forces, and increasingly China's military footprint shapes local politics and regional security in profound ways. Yet, beneath the strategic calculations lie complex stories of communities grappling with the reality of hosting foreign forces.

Okinawa – Strained Relations and SOFA Violations

Okinawa, a Japanese prefecture, hosts a large proportion of U.S. military bases in Japan—despite covering less than 1% of Japan's land area. For decades, Okinawans have voiced deep frustrations over the heavy American presence, citing noise pollution, accidents, crime, and environmental damage. Central to these tensions is the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the U.S. and Japan, which governs the conduct and legal jurisdiction of U.S. personnel. However, numerous incidents involving U.S. troops, from traffic accidents to criminal offenses, have sparked outrage because they are perceived as violations or abuses of the SOFA provisions—especially when U.S. servicemembers avoid local prosecution. These incidents have fueled widespread protests and calls by Okinawans and local politicians for the reduction or removal of U.S. bases. Many residents feel their voices are marginalized in Tokyo's national security decisions, highlighting a growing gap between host community interests and strategic alliances.

South Korea – U.S. Forces and Sovereignty Concerns

South Korea hosts approximately 28,500 U.S. troops under a bilateral SOFA agreement, a legacy of the Korean War armistice. The U.S. presence is viewed by many as a critical deterrent against North Korean aggression. Yet, similar to Okinawa, periodic controversies around U.S. personnel behavior, SOFA application, and base-related incidents stir local resentment. In 2019, for example, an incident involving U.S. servicemembers sparked a diplomatic dispute after it was reported that local courts could not try some troops due to SOFA protections. Such incidents feed nationalist sentiments and raise concerns about the balance of power between national sovereignty and foreign military agreements. South Korean civil society and politicians increasingly demand reforms to SOFA to ensure greater transparency, accountability, and respect for South Korea's judicial authority.

China's Military Base in Djibouti – A Strategic Foothold

Though not in Asia geographically, China's military base in Djibouti is often linked to Asia-Pacific security due to its location near key shipping lanes and its proximity to U.S. and French bases. Opened in 2017, the base reflects China's expanding global military ambitions. While officially a logistics hub supporting anti-piracy and UN peacekeeping, the base signals China's intent to project power beyond its borders. For the international community, China's foothold in Djibouti highlights new strategic competition in a region long dominated by U.S. influence.

5.4. Eastern Europe – NATO vs Russian deployments

Eastern Europe stands at the heart of a complex and tense military rivalry between NATO and Russia, where foreign troop deployments are deeply intertwined with questions of national identity and sovereignty. Since the Cold War's end, NATO has expanded eastward, welcoming countries such as Poland and the Baltic states—nations that view NATO's presence as a vital shield against potential Russian aggression, especially after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. From Russia's perspective, however, this expansion is perceived as a direct threat to its security and influence. In response, Russia has increased its military presence along its western borders, including in Kaliningrad, Belarus, and Eastern Ukraine. The annexation of Crimea and Russia's ongoing support for separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine have destabilized the region, leading to widespread displacement and international condemnation. The military buildup on both sides creates a classic security dilemma: NATO's deployments aim to defend its members, but Russia sees them as provocations, prompting further troop increases. Countries like Ukraine and Belarus find themselves caught in the middle, enduring insecurity, conflict, and contested sovereignty. Civilians bear the brunt of this standoff, facing displacement, economic hardship, and ongoing trauma. This case highlights how foreign military presence, while intended to provide security, can escalate tensions and threaten peace when driven by competing fears and mistrust. It underscores the urgent need for diplomatic dialogue and conflict resolution approaches that prioritize respect for sovereignty and international law, to break the cycle of mutual suspicion and suffering.

5.5. Israeli Military Presence in Palestinian Territories and Golan Heights

The West Bank, including Jerusalem, has been under military occupation by Israel since 1967, making it the longest occupation in modern history. Though its occupation is illegal, Israel has cited a few reasons in hope to justify its actions. Main motives being: historic rights stemming from the Balfour Declaration; security grounds, both internal and external; and the area's symbolic value for Jews. According to an analysis by the Israeli think tank Molad in 2017, Israel deploys 50–75% of its active IDF forces in the West Bank, while only one-third deals with Arab states, Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas and other perceived external threats. This heavy military presence reflects Israel's prioritization of control over the West Bank, but it also reveals the profound effects on Palestinian communities living under occupation. Palestinians face numerous daily challenges, including restrictions on movement caused by military checkpoints and roadblocks, limiting access to jobs, schools, and medical care. The ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements, viewed by most of the international community as illegal, exacerbates tensions and deepens the sense of dispossession among Palestinians. The occupation has generated widespread resentment and frustration, which frequently erupt in protests and clashes. Reports from human rights organizations highlight the use of administrative detention without trial, excessive force during demonstrations, and frequent arrests. These actions contribute to a cycle of violence and mistrust that make peaceful resolution difficult. Beyond the West Bank, Israel's military presence in the Golan Heights territory seized from Syria in 1967 and later annexed adds another layer of complexity to regional dynamics. The Golan remains a strategic military zone but also a point of contention in Middle East diplomacy, particularly given the displacement of Syrian populations and ongoing conflict in neighboring countries. This case exemplifies how long-term military occupations justified by security and historical claims can entrench divisions, prolong instability, and undermine prospects for peace. It highlights the delicate balance between security imperatives and the respect for human rights and sovereignty, an issue at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and broader regional tensions.

5.6. Turkish Military Presence in Northern Syria

Since 2016, Turkey has maintained a significant military presence in northern Syria, launching multiple cross-border operations aimed at pushing back Kurdish-led groups such as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which Ankara considers linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) a group designated as terrorist by Turkey, the U.S., and the EU. Turkey justifies these incursions primarily on security grounds, emphasizing the need to create a safe buffer zone along its southern border to prevent attacks on Turkish territory and to manage the large flow of refugees from Syria. However, for many Syrians living in the affected areas, especially Kurdish communities, Turkey's military actions have brought new waves of violence, displacement, and insecurity. Entire towns have

been uprooted, families forced to flee their homes, and civilian infrastructure damaged or destroyed. These incursions have deepened the humanitarian crisis in northern Syria, compounding years of war and suffering. The Turkish presence has also created a complex geopolitical environment. While Turkey seeks to secure its borders and limit Kurdish influence, its operations have drawn criticism from the Syrian government, which condemns the violation of its sovereignty. Russia, a key ally of Damascus, walks a diplomatic tightrope, balancing relations with Turkey and Syria. Meanwhile, the United States finds itself caught between supporting Kurdish partners in the fight against ISIS and managing its NATO alliance with Turkey. The Turkish military footprint in northern Syria also highlights the broader regional power struggles playing out on Syrian soil, where foreign forces pursue their strategic interests amid ongoing civil war. This foreign military presence, although framed by Turkey as a necessary security measure, has sparked resentment among local populations and complicated efforts to bring lasting peace to Syria. Ultimately, the case of Turkey in northern Syria shows how military interventions beyond borders, even when justified by security concerns, risk escalating conflict, displacing communities, and undermining sovereignty. It serves as a cautionary example of the challenges faced when regional powers assert military influence in fragile, war torn states.

6. Regional Military Presence

6. Major Parties Involved

6.1. Military Bases Hosts

These countries host foreign military forces through bilateral agreements, peacekeeping arrangements, or in some cases, under dispute or protest.

Key Hosts (with consent, partial consent, or contested):

- **Germany** – Hosts ~35,000 U.S. troops; key NATO partner.
- **Japan** – Hosts ~50,000 U.S. troops; SOFA often criticized by locals (esp. Okinawa).
- **South Korea** – U.S. troops stationed under alliance treaty.
- **Djibouti** – Hosts multiple foreign bases (U.S., France, China, Italy, Japan).
- **Iraq** – Foreign troops (especially U.S. and Turkey) present under controversial or partial consent.

- **Syria** – Turkey and U.S. military operations ongoing; contested by Syrian government.
- **Cyprus (Northern)** – Hosts Turkish troops; considered illegal under UN resolutions.
- **Qatar, UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait** – Host U.S. and other NATO forces via SOFAs.
- **Somalia** – Hosts U.S. and Turkish military forces; debated domestic approval.

6.2. Countries with foreign military deployments

These states maintain military forces outside their own borders for strategic, defensive, or interventionist purposes.

Most Active Deploying States:

- United States – ~750 foreign bases in 80+ countries; largest global network.
- Russia – Bases in Syria, Armenia, Belarus, Central Asia; previously Ukraine and Georgia.
- China – Overseas base in Djibouti; growing naval presence in Indian Ocean and Pacific.
- France – Active in Africa (e.g., Chad, Niger, Djibouti), legacy of colonial ties.
- United Kingdom – Bases in Cyprus, Falklands, Bahrain, Brunei, Gibraltar.
- Turkey – Troops in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Qatar, and Somalia; controversial in some cases.

6.3. The United Nations' stance

The UN recognizes the sovereign right of states to enter into defense agreements, but it firmly opposes foreign military presence when:

- It lacks host country consent.
- It violates international law or UN Charter Article 2(4).
- It contributes to occupation, human rights abuses, or instability.

Key Positions:

The UN recognizes the sovereign right of states to enter into defense agreements, but it firmly opposes foreign military presence when:

- It lacks host country consent.
- It violates international law or UN Charter Article 2(4).
- It contributes to occupation, human rights abuses, or instability.

Key Positions:

- Condemned: Turkish occupation in Northern Cyprus (UNSC Res. 541, 550), Russian aggression in Ukraine (GA Res. ES-11/1).
- Concerned: Presence of foreign forces in Syria, Iraq, Libya without clear mandates.
- Permitted: Peacekeeping missions under UN Security Council mandates (e.g., MINUSMA in Mali, UNIFIL in Lebanon).

7. Questions to be Addressed

1. How can host nations reinforce accountability mechanisms when SOFA agreements are violated by foreign military personnel?
2. What legal frameworks can be created or reformed to prevent foreign deployments from evolving into long term occupations?
3. How should the UN respond when foreign military presence is initially permitted by the host country yet later opposed by the population (e.g., Okinawa)?
4. Should there be any international regulations or report requirements for military bases established under SOFA agreements.
5. How can the UN mediate disputes where host nations revoke consent for foreign military presence (e.g., Iraq, Mali)?
6. What international recommendations can SPECPOL propose to address non-consensual foreign military presence and how can the UN better monitor or respond to these situations.
7. What accountability mechanisms can SPECPOL recommend when foreign
8. military actions in host countries lead to civilian harm or political instability?
9. What can host nations and the UN employ to ensure accountability to SOFA violations? (P.s., SPECPOL does not have legal enforcement powers but you could propose solutions that include diplomatic pressure, multilateral oversight, and confidence building mechanisms.)
10. How can SPECPOL facilitate the creation of international reporting requirements and transparency measures in foreign military bases under SOFA agreements?