Massachusetts Institute of Technology
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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2019 MIT Model United Nations Conference (MITMUNC)! I am excited to introduce you to our committee, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL).

My name is Nico van Wijk, I’m a freshman who is planning to major in Neuroscience. I’m also an international student hailing from New Zealand (I was born in the UK however as my accent might give away). Although this will be my first model UN event in America, I have a lot of experience in NZ, having attended 13 conferences over the last 4 years. 8 of them were as a student, 5 as a volunteer and organiser, so I’ve spent a decent amount of time on both sides of the chair’s gavel. I also took a gap year between high-school and university, both working and travelling a bit, and as of MITMUNC, I will have visited 15 different countries. Therefore, I would be keen to chat to anyone about taking a gap year, MIT itself, or just travel in general, if you have any questions.

My name is Radha Mastandrea, and I’m a senior studying physics. I’ve been a chair for MITMUNC for four years now, after spending three years competing on my high school’s team. Outside of classes, I like dancing, reading, and cooking! I’m so excited to meet all of the delegates at my last conference at MIT.

The topic that we plan to debate in SPECPOL:
I. International Freedom of the Press
II. UN Peacekeeping (with Subtopics)

This is meant to be an introduction to the topics and should not replace individual research. We hope that you take the time to research your topics and your delegation’s affiliation with the given issues. In preparation for the conference, each delegate will submit a single page position paper on each topic to mitmunc-specpol@mit.edu.

We encourage you to take the time to read up on parliamentary procedures - however in the interest of time and fruitful debate, we will go over a few changes to our committee at the start of the conference. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at mitmunc-specpol@mit.edu.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the conference!

Sincerely,
Nico van Wijk
Radha Mastandrea
Chairs, SPECPOL
Committee goals:

The aim of this committee is to explore the nuanced situation regarding freedom for the press, and attempt to clearly define the role of international law and oversight whilst still upholding the right of free expression. This includes addressing factors such as censorship, sovereignty and even the safety of travelling journalists, along with the leveling of responsibility for when this safety is compromised. In this modern era, where a message can reach the corners of the globe in seconds, the need for reliable information is greater than ever before. Words can inspire, indoctrinate or inform. They have power. How much of this power needs to be controlled by member states is the question at hand?

TOPIC A: International Freedom of the Press

Introduction:

The recent presumed assassination of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul has once again thrust the safety of investigative reporters into the forefront of world consciousness. In a situation like the one presented, what responsibility should have a state hold? Irrespective of whether they were directly responsible for his murder, should the Saudi Arabian government be held accountable for not providing a safe environment for the expression of his views? Should different member states attempt to get involved, or do other international relationships, such as economic incentives, outweigh the need to uphold a global standard for freedom of the press?


Furthermore, how much of a right did Khashoggi even have to write his column in the manner that he did, where it was openly critical of a government regime, branding him as a potential an “enemy of the state” who had the risk of causing instability?³

This recent crisis is but one high profile example of a situation that is still far too common. In fact, 50 journalists were killed around the globe in 2017 alone⁴, with hundreds more imprisoned for simply doing their jobs. These crimes have been reported in a range of nations ranging from the Philippines, which ranks fifth in the global impunity index⁵, to Sir Lanka, which maintains an ongoing political crisis.⁶ Beyond that, other nations such as the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea rely on heavy censorship to prevent their populations from receiving views that dissents from the government sanction narrative.⁷ But at what point does the right for security of the individual and society outweigh the right for freedom of expression?

Background:

Freedom of Expression is something that is inherently enshrined in humanity’s nature as social creatures. We each interpret and perceive the world in a fundamentally unique way and developed language and art to communicate this to others. The idea of freely expressing information about ideals of a political nature has long perpetuated human civilisation too, championed by the ancient Greeks for example.⁸ However, freedom of the press as we define it in the modern day results originally from

³ ibid
⁷ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/north-korean-censorship_us_58fe78afe4b086ce58981445
⁸ https://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/free-speech-ancient-greece/
the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signed in Paris on the 10th of December 1948. More specifically, Article 19 declares that “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

However, the rights alone were merely ideals without any legal framework to support them. Hence in 1966, the UN compiled the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 19, in this, remains the same as Article 19 of the UDHR. However, it does contain sub-clauses for implemental practicality, most notably, Article 19.3 which states: “The implementation of the right stipulated in Clause 2 of this article is attached together with the obligations and responsibilities in particular. Therefore, it may be subject to certain limitations; however these limitations must be specified in the law and is necessary to: a) respect the rights or reputation of others; and b) protect national security or public order, health or morals of society.” Thus providing member states a legal basis to suppress any speech that is considered a threat to national security or public order.

Furthermore, although Article 19, as shared above, states that individuals should have the freedom to seek information, “regardless of frontiers”, this is far from the truth in reality, as many nations restrict the flow of journalists across their borders, often vetting for the angle that may be presented by them in their reports. One such nation is China, which has notably restricted access to US journalists in the past. The international non-profit, non-governmental organisation, “Reporters Without Borders”

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compiles an annual World Press Freedom Index based upon nations’ relationship to the media, that shows how many countries still a long way to go before they can claim freedom for the press.  

Factors to Consider:

1. The Question of Responsibility

When a journalist in a foreign nation is injured, captured, or killed, does the right rest with the individual or the state that they are residing in? The International Press Institute would ask that states take full responsibility. In a document they drafted in 2016, titled the “The International Declaration for the Protection of Journalists,” included the following statement as part of its first item: “States bear the primary responsibility to respect and ensure the human rights of their citizens, as well as of individuals within their territory as provided for by relevant international law.”

But how often are both individuals and states actually held accountable for violence committed against journalists? Statistics compiled by the Committee to Protect Journalism indicate that between January 1st 1992, and June 18th 2007, full justice was received for assaulted journalists in only 6.7% of global cases.

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13 https://ipi.media/international-declaration-on-the-protection-of-journalists/
14 http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001567/156773e.pdf (page 7)
Furthermore, if responsibility is more clearly assigned to states, then what will the impact on the freedom on journalists be. There is a price for protection as governments will need to know the identity of journalists to protect them. This could compromise the work of investigative journalists, encourage tighter borders or even result in an increased rate of journalists illegally sneaking into nations through tourists visa or porous borders\textsuperscript{15} - at which point, can the state be held responsible for their safety at all?

2. The Need for International Law

There are other complications to consider before any international agreements can be drafted, many which stem from the ambiguity of international law itself. These include fundamental questions such as “who is a journalist?”. One definition proposed by the International Federation of journalists is “persons who are regularly or professionally engaged in the collection, processing and dissemination of information to the public via any means of mass communication, including cameramen and photographers, technical supporting staff, drivers and interpreters, editors, translators, publishers, broadcasters, printers and distributors.”\textsuperscript{16} But this definition notably excludes informants. Furthermore, in this modern age we must also factor in social media, and whether it is defined as a tool of journalism.

Furthermore, the exceptions described in Article 19.3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as discussed above, allow many nations a legal “loophole” to rob journalists of the right of speech through claiming that they are upsetting political stability. This is establishing true when they target journalists who are “besmirching” government officials. This flawed tool makes it

\textsuperscript{15}\url{https://www.poynter.org/news/international-coalition-protect-press-freedoms-could-have-unintended-consequences}

\textsuperscript{16} ibid
very difficult for any investigative journalist to expose corruption within the government of a member state. There is also no legal framework to enforce breaches or abuses of this clause.\footnote{ibid.}

3. Censorship, Sovereignty and Stability

To build upon the “loophole” of Article 19.3 of the ICCPR, it’s vital to discuss another important aspect of Press Freedom, namely its link to Censorship. To what extent should nations have control over the public release of information to their citizens? Censorship can often serve an important role in both maintaining the stability and also the sovereignty of a nation, through preservation of cultural ideas and identities. Often, knowing the reasons behind, and effect of withholding certain information, large corporations will often self-censor before being affected at a governmental level.\footnote{https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/18/world/asia/reporter-on-unpublished-bloomberg-article-is-suspended.html}

The nature of the issue of censorship has also evolved with the development of social media technology, making both the ethical and practical considerations of controlling media flow much more difficult to consider. When terrorist factions such as ISIS, launch large recruitment campaigns through social media,\footnote{https://www.technologyreview.com/s/541801/fighting-isis-online/} it seems quite straightforward for companies to decide to block this content where they can. When it extends to hate groups,\footnote{https://abcnews.go.com/US/hate-groups-similar-online-recruiting-methods-isis-experts/story?id=53528932} this line becomes a little more blurred. When it comes to promoting of partisan politics and influences the direction of nations\footnote{https://www.technologyreview.com/the-download/609478/last-year-social-media-was-used-to-influence-elections-in-at-least-18-countries/}, can we justify the suppression of material that is simply a manner of reporting? This harkens back to the questions of who is a journalist and how do we define the press?
**Potential Country Blocs and Positions:**

(Note: These are generalised sweeping statements that are only true to each nation to a limited extent)

USA, UK, France and other Western powers

- These nations have dealt with the effects of hate groups, terrorist threats and extremist policies, thus understand that the media needs to controlled to some minor extent. They are also proponents of free speech, and are the source of a large number of journalists who travel internationally to report, hence would be aiming for a resolution that delicately balances most of the relevant factors.

Sweden, Denmark, Norway, New Zealand

- These nations consistently rank highly in individual freedom, safety, and lack of corruption. They would be supporting of any humanitarian concerns, with a prioritisation of journalist safety, followed by an emphasis on freedom of speech, and information flow.

EU members

- As an extra note, the EU is resistant to the growing power of corporations, hence are against the power shift in information control to social media platforms and privatised news media outlets.
Syria, Libya, Iraq and other Middle Eastern Nations

- These nations have the highest rates of journalist death within their borders, hence would be most affected by changes in regulation. They will likely resist anything that detracts power from their governments, and/or makes the onus on them to protect journalists more difficult. That isn’t to say that they don’t care about the safety of individuals however, just that they’d likely prefer stricter borders and less of an issue to confront.

China, DPRK, Eritrea, Ethiopia and some other Asian and African nations

- The nations listed, among others, have notably high levels of media censorship. They are more opposed to press freedom on the basis of protecting national stability and sovereignty. Many of these nations would be in favour of limiting the international reach of journalists, even beyond the current exceptions in international law.

Other Member States

- Other states’ stances might be inferred by their impunity index score, but in general most member states are in support of better protection for journalists, and a decrease in global censorship.
Where the Most Journalists are Killed
Number of journalists killed between 2012 and 2016, by country

- Syria: 86
- Iraq: 46
- Mexico: 37
- Somalia: 36
- Pakistan: 30
- Brazil: 29
- Philippines: 21
- Yemen: 21
- Afghanistan: 20
- Honduras: 19
- India: 18
- Libya: 17

Global total: 530

Source: UNESCO

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22 ibid
23 https://www.statista.com/chart/12104/where-the-most-journalists-are-killed
TOPIC B: UN Peacekeeping

**Introduction:**

Peacekeeping serves a vital role in the United Nations’ attempts to quell conflict and promote peace across the world. Chapters 6 and 7 of the UN Charter lay out the powers of the Security Council to investigate international and sectarian conflicts and to settle such disputes via a variety of diplomatic and military interventions, and this authority is often enforced through peacekeeper action (Charter of the United Nations). Over the years, the United Nations has deployed 71 peacekeeping operations, 14 of which are currently active. These 14 are largely focused in Middle Africa and the Middle East (DATA | United Nations Peacekeeping). Despite their many uses and successes, some question the efficacy of peacekeeping operations (including how they may or may not infringe on national sovereignty) their history of sexual violence, and the division of cost between UN member states.

**Background:**

UN Peacekeeping began in 1948 during the Cold War, and was limited in scope: unarmed and lightly armed peacekeepers were employed to support peaceful conflict resolution by enforcing ceasefires, promoting political cooperation, and reporting violations of UN mandates. The first two peacekeeping operations, UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), which are still in effect today, focused on maintaining 3rd party observers in contentious regions in order to report violations of ceasefire agreements and human rights principles (“Middle East (UNTSO)”; “Kashmir (UNMOGIP)” ). In 1956, the UN Peacekeeping force launched its first armed mission, the UN Emergency Force (UNEF I) to intervene in the Suez Crisis, which resulted in the removal of French, Israeli, and British forces from Egyption territory and implemented buffers between Egyptian and Israeli forces.
(FIRST UNITED NATIONS EMERGENCY FORCE - Facts and Figures). In the 1960s and 70s, the UN launched its first series of short-term missions, including the UN Operation in the Congo (UNOC) which aimed to support Congolese independence and force withdrawal of Belgian military forces and mercenaries from the Congo. This was the first peacekeeping mission that involved significant military force, and resulted in the deaths of 250 UN personnel (ONUC).

After the Cold War, UN Peacekeeping goals and strategies shifted in keeping with the types of conflicts the world faced. During the Cold War, peacekeeping missions focused primarily on international conflicts, while in the late 70s, they started focus more heavily on intranational and sectarian disputes, and increased in number and scale. In keeping with the changing goals of peacekeeping, new roles within peacekeeping forces sprung up. Humanitarian workers, advocates for free and fair elections, police forces, lawyers, public health and safety experts, and volunteers from other sectors have joined the predominantly military peacekeeping forces in order to help the UN lay the groundwork for longer-lasting peace (“Civilians”).

In the early and mid 1990s, three peacekeeper missions came under public criticism and scrutiny, forcing the UN and the world at large to reevaluate the proper role and scope of peacekeeper action. The United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia, the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda, and the UN Operation in Somalia II represented a shift towards peacekeeping in still-violent regions, and were widely criticised for their inability to minimize civilian deaths or generate sufficient political support for peace (UN Failed Rwanda; “United Nations”). After a period of reevaluation (see Security Council inquiries and letters S/1999/1257, A/54/549, and S/1995/231), the UN authorized new UN Peacekeeping operations refocused on maintaining peace -- including a new operation in former Yugoslavia (UNPREDEP MISSION PROFILE).
As of today there, there are 14 active UN Peacekeeping missions in Haiti, Western Sahara, Central African Republic, Mali, D.R. of the Congo, Darfur, Golan, Cyprus, Lebanon, Abyei, Kosovo, South Sudan, India and Pakistan, and the Middle East (“Where We Operate”). In this committee, we'll be discussing issues relevant to all current and future Peacekeeping missions, as well as whichever issues delegates choose to highlight within particular missions within our general framework. The subtopics we'll be discussing are outlined in the next section.

**Subtopics:**

In this committee, we'll be discussing how to improve efficacy of peacekeeping operations with regard to minimizing civilian casualties and maintaining long-term peace, sexual violence by UN Peacekeepers, and how to best divide costs of UN Peacekeeping missions (both in terms of monetary and UN Volunteer contributions). These are issues relevant to all UN Peacekeeping missions, but you are encouraged to research your country’s relationship with UN Peacekeeping missions to find examples that you wish to highlight.

1. Efficacy of Peacekeeping Operations

Some critics of the United Nations’ use of peacekeepers argue that they are ineffective, with arguments largely rooted in the UN’s failures in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Somalia in the early 1990s. Since then, the UN Security Council has re-evaluated its role on the global stage, investigating key factors to its past failures (lack of political solutions, unfocused mandates, undetermined priorities, and lack of necessary equipment are some major obstacles) and started to implement major reforms.
In order to respond to the new challenges facing modern peacekeeping, the Secretary-General launched Action for Peacekeeping (A4P), with the goal of developing a full agenda and agreement as to what peacekeeping should look like in the coming decades by the end of this year. In this conference, you should discuss what Agenda 2030 goals your nation would like to see pursued.

Earlier this year, the Security Council published the Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations (Note to Correspondents: Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations | United Nations Secretary-General), which emphasizes the “5 Ps.” (You should check if the nation you represent has signed this declaration at: https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/action-for-peacekeeping-a4p) The “5 Ps” are peacebuilding, performance, people, partnerships, and politics.

Peacebuilding emphasizes cooperation between UN agencies, regional political actors international financial institutions, and others in order to support institution-building (e.g. running free and fair elections and reforming justice institutions), and supporting women and youth. Performance emphasizes creating clear mandates for missions, and following through with all necessary equipment, training, support, safety mechanisms, and mechanisms for continuous revaluation and mission-shifting. Partnerships calls for greater cooperation and information-sharing (which, as an aside, is an important and often neglected infrastructural aspect of international development and peacebuilding) between member states, UN organizations, and nongovernmental organizations. As many current peacekeeper missions are centered in Middle Africa, stronger information-sharing protocols with the African Peace and Security Architecture is particularly important. Political solutions include allowing for Special Representatives of the Secretary General to exert more influence in missions, as well as developing stronger ties between the Peacebuilding Commission and local governments to develop policies for long-term peace (“Action for Peacekeeping”).
In addition to A4P, project New Horizon was also initiated to provide the Secretary General with updates on peacekeeping operations in progress and how they can be better supported by the UN at large. Their most recent progress report was published in 2011, which represents an area in which you and your committee members can urge the Security Council to take stronger action in producing new progress reports. In 2014, a High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations was founded to assess the state of the peacekeeping, and submitted a report to the Secretary General in mid-2015 highlighting the primacy of politics, regional partnerships, and people-centered operations (Secretary-General’s Remarks ...).

In addition to the aforementioned programs, you should also read some foundational UN documents related the reform of peacekeeping operations: the Brahimi Report (focused on setting clear and achievable mandates supported by proper resources), Capstone Doctrine (lay out primary goals and guidelines for peacekeeping missions), Peace Operations 2010 (outlines strategies from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations), 2005 World Summit [A/RES/60/1] (details on the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission), and High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change [A/59/565] (written at the turn of the 21st century to reflect on strategies for collective security and peacebuilding in a new era) (“Reforming Peacekeeping”).

2. Sexual Violence by Peacekeepers

One major problem with peacekeeping missions is rampant sexual assault, especially of minors. In 2016 alone, the UN reported 41 cases of abuse by peacekeepers, with many more likely going unreported. Beyond being wrong in its own right, sexual assault by UN Peacekeepers represents a public health problem -- in Cambodia, sexual abuse by peacekeepers lead to the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases to women and children in the region (Anderlini).
It also undermines the UN’s ability to do peacebuilding work. When peacekeepers are (rightfully) mistrusted by the communities they have been sent to help, they are less likely to receive information about local activities and have less authority when maintaining ceasefires. To combat this, many nations have signed the Voluntary Compact With the Secretary General of the United Nations on the Commitment to Eliminate Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, which calls for accountability for peacekeepers who violate the trust of the communities they serve and support for victims. (Voluntary Compact). The Departments of Field Support and Peacekeeping Operations have also implemented Security Council Resolution 2272 and Provisions on Unsatisfactory Conduct, Investigations, and The Disciplinary Process [ST/TAI/2017/1], which outline how peacekeepers are disciplined for sexual abuse and other misconduct. An online training program on the prevention and identification of sexual exploitation is also mandatory for all UN Volunteers (“Conduct in UN Field Missions”).

3. Division of Costs

UN Peacekeeping missions are funded by all Member States of the United Nations, as mandated by the UN Charter, but some nations contribute more than others. The formula that the General Assembly uses to determine how much each nation should be takes into account relative wealth and Big 5 status. Big 5 nations pay more proportionally because their permanent status in the Security Council necessitates greater commitment to international peace and order. Many nations also provide resources in the form of transportation, UN Volunteers, medical supplies, and more (“How We Are Funded”). You should research how much your nation contributes to the peacekeeping budget, whether your contributions are monetary or in kind, and how your nation’s government feels about contributing to missions.
Potential Country Blocs and Positions:

Please note that these bloc positions describe the sentiments of the region in general, and that your country may have different view from others in your bloc.

African and Middle Eastern States

- The majority of UN Peacekeeping missions are centered in Africa and the Middle East. As each mission requires host-nation consent, there is considerable support for UN Peacekeeping missions in the region. However, abuses of power and inefficiencies are of particular concern.

Asian States

- Adjacent states generally support the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). China is the second largest contributor to the UN Peacekeeping budget, and Japan is the third.

Eastern European States

- Some former Soviet nations have a history of mistrusting peacekeeping operations, primarily due to the failures in Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Russia is the 7th largest contributed to the UN Peacekeeping budget.
Latin American and Caribbean States

- There is some distrust in the region of the efficacy of peacekeeping missions, given that the UN Peacekeeping mission in Haiti is credited with bringing Cholera to the island, and sexual assault was rampant. No South American and Caribbean Nations are among the top 10 contributors to the UN Peacekeeping Budget.

Western European and Other States

- Contributions from the United States, Germany, France, the UK, Italy, Canada, and Spain make up the grand majority of the UN Peacekeeping budget. Nations in this bloc are also major contributors of UN Volunteer forces, both military/police and civilian.

Open Questions:

The purpose of discussion on this topic in SPECPOL is to allow you to air and debate different ideas for how UN Peacekeeping operations can be improved. Major open questions we’d like to see you discuss include (but are not limited to):

1) How can we make the goals of peacekeeping missions more clear, coherent, and achievable?
2) How can peacekeeping missions evolve quickly to accommodate changing needs?
3) Where would we like to suggest the Security Council implement new missions?
4) How can we hold peacekeepers more accountable for abuses of power?
5) How can a focus on local community-building support long term peace?
6) How can we respect national sovereignty without sacrificing peace?

Works Cited


