



FOREIGN INTERVENTION

(PARTICULARLY IN CIVIL CONFLICTS)

COMMITTEE: POLITICAL & DISARMAMENT

Since the start of the cold war to present day, the world has seen the major powers engage in less wars themselves and instead opt to support the various warring factions. This avoids fully confrontational war but still achieves positive outcomes. We have seen examples from Vietnam to North Korea, from Afghanistan to Sudan. The USA and Russia (previously USSR) are most famed for this approach but their multitude of allies have been involved throughout history (e.g Britain, China). While this approach is advantageous from the superpowers' point of view, it can create many problems in the long term.

Regime Change

With any civil conflict, the government will be weak and so with global assistance, it is possible that rebel factions may take over. This could be advantageous to either side (such as the Chinese Communist uprising was to the USSR) but can create national and international instability. One prevalent example is the civil war in Syria where funding to both sides meant the war reached an impasse and terrorist organisations sprang up. The prolonged war, change of regime and the more powerful weapons means foreign intervention often causes more grief for the citizens of the country.

Weapons

The support of a foreign sponsor usually involves weapons and/or training. This can make a rebel or government group significantly more powerful than the other (such as the Spanish civil war). However this tactic, especially when being given to the rebelling side, has the potential to be very dangerous. Not only are high quality weapons (often unregulated) being given to disorganised and unofficial organisations, but the soldiers are being trained to use them most effectively. This often backfires as with the Taliban in Afghanistan who were trained and supplied by the US, only to use those same weapons to kill US servicemen a few years later.

Rebels or terrorists

Some will sympathise with rebel groups that others do not (e.g. Vietnam). However what one group calls a Freedom Fighter is another's Terrorist (again Syria). The justification for the support of either side can often be branded as a fight against terrorism or to help promote freedom. However as of yet the UN has not come up with a definition for a terrorist making the subject a grey area. It is up to the UN to clarify this area in order to reduce support for terrorist groups by countries.

To consider

- Should countries be allowed to sponsor groups in civil conflict?
- If so what restrictions should be placed on them? E.g. should foreign parties be allowed to give weapons, money or training to such groups?
- Should the UN finally agree on a definition for a terrorist?
- Should terrorists be sponsored?