



DISEC
ATIDMUN 2021

Foreign Intervention in Civil Wars

Chair Letters

Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure and excitement that I welcome you to the DISEC committee in AtidMUN 2021. I cannot wait to see you all debate, work together, and, most importantly, have a great time!

I am 17 years old from Ramat Gan, and I study at Ohel Shem High School. This year will be my fourth and sadly, last year of MUNing. I cannot begin to explain how much fun I have had being a part of this fantastic community. Joining my school's MUN club has helped me improve my English, enriched my vocabulary, increased my confidence, developed my leadership skills, and so much more. AtidMUN 2021 will be my 10th MUN conference and my second time chairing.

Other than MUNing, I do my best to make my high school experience a memorable one. I have been guiding in "Krembo Wings" for four years now, and I am responsible for the safety and logistics in my branch. I major in computer science, app development, physics, and I participated in a research project about cancer cells and the immune system during my sophomore and junior years.

If you have any questions or want to say hi and introduce yourself to us before the conference, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Daniel Hamzany



Dear Delegates,

My name is Guy Alkoby, and I will be your ATIDMUN 2021 Chair. I am 16, living in Tel Aviv, and studying at Atid Lod High. I love all kinds of music. I have been playing the guitar for about three years and moved to a bass guitar in the past year. My hobbies are pretty simple... I like partying and being with my friends, skating, and studying, of course.

I started MUN last year with my first conference being YachadMUN 2019, followed by 10 (or so) more conferences, this being my second time chairing.

I wanted you to know that as an introverted person, I too felt the stress before a conference, the excitement and thrill when you pass a resolution, when you win, and when you lose. These experiences and feelings have shaped my personality as a more mature person, and that is the reason I do MUN for. A committee is one of the safest places you can be in where you can act like someone else but still expressing your individual perception of all happening in the committee while researching, delivering opening statements, cooperating and collaborating, writing and merging clauses, and presenting /voting for the resolutions, you name it.

Both Danny and I are here for you so that you could have the most amazing and positive experience of ATIDMUN, & feel free to send me an email whenever you need it! See you soon :)

Sincerely yours,

Guy - alkobyguy@gmail.com



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Introduction to the Committee

The General Assembly First Committee of Disarmament and International Security (DISEC) deals with issues relating to disarmament, global military challenges, threats to peace in various regions, such as fighting global and regional terrorism, addressing the issues of small arms, light weapons, and nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, internal and external military conflicts that affect the international community. It seeks out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime.

The DISEC Committee considers all disarmament and international security matters within the scope of the Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any other organ of the United Nations; the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments; promotion of cooperative arrangements and measures aimed at strengthening stability through lower levels of armaments.

The DISEC Committee comprises all member nations of the United Nations. While its mandate is limited to recommendations, it has proven to be one of the most influential bodies in the United Nations as its resolutions have dealt with some of the most complex disarmament matters. The Committee works in close cooperation with the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament. Its sessions feature general debate, thematic discussions, and actions on drafts.



Background

The World Wars

The beginning of the 20th century was perhaps one of the deadliest eras in human history. The world wars have claimed roughly 86 million lives combined, which accounted to over 30% of the world's population at that time.

When the wars ended, it was obvious that the world must unite in order to prevent such utter disaster from recurring. The main decision taken to fulfill this goal was the formation of the United Nations as a body intended to preserve peace around the globe. In addition, the expansion of the Soviet Union and the formation of NATO

The Expansion of the Soviet Union

In the years following WWII, the Soviet Union decided to extend its influence by transforming many Eastern European countries into satellite nations. These nations were bound to the USSR's influence using military and economic agreements and treaties. In addition, Moscow had great control over the local Soviet political parties in those satellite states.

The concept of satellite states greatly contributed to Russia's military and economic strength. Furthermore, it positioned Russia closer to western powers as they could threaten those countries easily, for example during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Eventually, in 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed and Russia, as we know it today, rose from the ashes.

NATO – Past, Present, and Future

NATO, or North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is a military treaty that began with 12 members that agreed upon one basic principle best described by Article 5 of the treaty:

“The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in the exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the

***use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.”
(Article 5, The North Atlantic Treaty)***

The bottom line of Article 5 is that all NATO members agree to respond if any country launches an armed attack on a NATO member

As opposed to the Soviet Union, NATO has been growing ever since it was established, and today it includes 30 members: Greece and Turkey (1952), Germany (1955), Spain (1982), the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland (1999), Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (2004), Albania and Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2017) and North Macedonia (2020). Many of its new members are former USSR and Yugoslavia members, such as Slovenia, Poland, and Baltic Republics, just to name a few.

NATO was a great concern for the USSR, as viewed in the establishment of the Warsaw Pact, which was the Soviet equivalent of NATO. Currently, this military alliance - the largest in the world, still seems to be a major concern for Russia, primarily after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the admission of former satellite states into NATO.

The Cold War

When WWII ended, Europe was devastated in almost every aspect. And although the fighting never got close to the US mainland borders, it lost 479,000 killed; and the USSR which didn't care for human lives- 20 million.

Both countries may have been allies in WWII, but it was not for the sake of friendship, yet rather for the sake of defeating the Axis powers.

The West viewed the USSR's ideology as a great threat to the socio-economic order that existed in these countries and, therefore, attempted to hinder its progress from the very start during the Bolshevik Revolution.

By the end of WWII, it was clear to both the US and the USSR that they were in great ideological disagreement, and both feared that the opposing ideology would expand and prevail globally. As a result, the fighting turned from a military game to a much more political game, as both countries

attempted to expand their sphere of influence as much as they could. This new type of warfare was then called “The Cold War”.

This new concept of warfare exhausted the need for direct application of force between superpowers; however, it legitimized a new type of war called “a proxy war”.

The Cold War may have officially ended in 1991, with the collapse of the USSR; however, many of the characteristics that characterized the Cold War are still present in today’s world, and proxy wars are a great example of that.

Current Situation

Proxy Warfare

A proxy war is defined as:

“a war fought between groups or smaller countries that each represents the interests of other larger powers, and may have help and support from these” (Cambridge Dictionary)

An example of a proxy war was the Spanish Civil War, which took place during the late 1930s. The war began as a small uprising of right-wing military officers and their supporters against the government, and soon became a great battle between two ideologies – Nationalism, which received support from Italy and Germany, and Communism, supported by the Soviet Union. The former was far greater, which led to their victory and seizing control over Spain for almost four decades.

It was not simple nationalism per se - even though that’s what they called themselves - but a Spanish type of Mussolini-like fascism - the Falangist Party - which favored the church, the military, the great landowners, and was anti-democratic, anti-worker, anti-pluralistic, and of course, antisemitic.

The concept of proxy warfare became more prevalent than ever during the Cold War, for many reasons such as the reasons mentioned above and the possibility that direct conflicts between superpowers would deteriorate in such ways that would lead to the use of nuclear weapons. In addition, in recent years regional powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia have engaged in proxy wars, such as the civil war in Yemen.

The main problem in proxy warfare is that in most cases, superpowers do not have to deal with the negative consequences of the warfare themselves. The US for instance, can fuel an ongoing war in

Randomistan without sending troops and risking their lives, without directly hindering any form of economic activity occurring on its land, and without the same extent of public pressure and public criticism. Iran, too, can supply vast amounts of weaponry and technical support for Hezbollah's arsenal, without any fear of retribution in the form of attacks on Iranian soil.

Another problem is the inevitable escalation that the intervention of superpowers leads to. These superpowers can fund more lethal weaponry and provide financial support that can keep the war "alive" for long periods of time.

One can claim that foreign intervention can be used as a tiebreaker if certain wars result in a stalemate. This claim raises a few good questions such as the question of morality, the question of the possible backlash of such one-sided intervention, and the question of the possibility of another superpower intervening.

On the other hand, one can claim that there is a very thin line separating a civil war from a massacre, ethnic cleansing, or even genocide and given that, a non-intervention policy can essentially legitimize tyrants terrorizing their citizens and applying brutal violence against them. For example, the Syrian Civil War began with recurring massacres of Assad's regime against protesters.

The Middle Eastern Cold War

The struggle for influence and hegemony in the Arab world, split between the two opposing religious views – the Sunni and the Shia, has resulted in a new cold war taking place around the Middle East. The two sides are led by Saudi Arabia and Iran, respectively.

These two countries seek to further increase their sphere of influence both for religious and political purposes. Thus, these countries are actors in the regional conflicts, such as the Syrian Civil War and the civil war in Yemen.

Some may argue that Iran uses these conflicts to create bases right at their opponents' borders, for instance, using Syria and Lebanon as a base for launching attacks against Israel, as well as Yemen as a base for launching attacks at Saudi Arabia. In order to maintain these strategic strongholds, Iran cannot reduce its involvement in these conflicts, thereby essentially keeping it alive. A great example of that is Hezbollah, which continues to be both a militia and a political party, that mostly complies with Iran's interests and requests, for example: joining the Syrian Civil War. Hezbollah is perhaps one of Iran's earliest proxies when it is claimed that Iran played a significant role in its establishment.

The most interesting thing to notice is that the superpowers did not stay neutral or uninvolved in this conflict, and effectively took sides. The US backs Saudi Arabia, while Russia and China back Iran. This leads anywhere from selling weapons and military equipment, providing cooperation, and even goes to the extent of sending troops in extreme cases, for instance, that was what happened in the Syrian Civil War.

This cold war is so intense, that it essentially reorganizes the entire Middle East into two distinct camps. These changes led to the recent peace treaties signed between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, and Sudan.

Case Study 1: The Recent Civil War in Yemen

Background

Until 1962, and for about 1,000 years, Yemen was ruled by Zaidi Imams who were Shia Muslims. Subsequently, Shiites suffered from discrimination as the country began its Sunnification process. As a result, a Shiite group called the Houthis was born, and in 2004 it led a small-scale insurgency against the government. Their struggle continued in a few rounds of combat when along the way, Saudi Arabia began supporting Yemen's government, and Iran began supporting the Houthis.

In 2011, following the Arab Spring, Yemen's citizens took to the street and protested against their government. The protests quickly turned violent and created mayhem, to the extent that the minister of defense in Yemen delivered a speech that told soldiers that they could act upon their own accord and not stay loyal to the president. Some may argue that at the time Yemen experienced a small-scale civil war.

The outcome of these protests after almost a year was a transition of power from the president to his vice president, which was not the change the protesters intended to see.

In August 2014, Houthis took to the streets once again and protested against the rising prices of fuel. The protesters encountered severe violence and repression. It was not long before the Houthis would unleash their greatest attack yet.

Main Events

The civil war began after the Houthis launched an attack on Sana'a and seized control over the city in September 2014. It is worthwhile to mention that this attack was backed by Iran and Hezbollah. The Houthis, then, confronted the president, Hadi, and negotiated an agreement that led to the resignation of the government, much to the Houthis' benefit, who gained significant political influence.

In spite of the resignation, Hadi continued claiming that he was the legitimate ruler of Yemen and that the Houthis' seizure of power was illegal and illegitimate. As a result, tensions escalated even further with a few notable events such as the battle over Aden's airports, and the mosque bombings in Sana'a.

Unhappy with the outcome of the Houthis' actions, on 26th March 2015, a large coalition led by Saudi Arabia and supported by the US, carried out "Operation Decisive Storm", aimed at blocking the progress of the Houthis and helping Hadi regain control over Yemen. The coalition was broad and included many Sunni countries such as the UAE, Egypt, Sudan, and Bahrain. Additionally, countries such as Eritrea and Djibouti, which did not actively participate in the coalition, cooperated with it and allowed it to use their military bases, airspace, and territorial waters. The operation was conducted by airstrikes against Houthi targets, a naval blockade, and even deployment of soldiers in Yemen.

Saudi Arabia declared roughly a month later, on 21st April 2015, that the operation had been a success and that it would therefore discontinue the airstrikes. They claimed that it was time for a diplomatic solution for the crisis, which they called "Operation Restoring Hope". The airstrikes, as well as any other form of combat, however, did not cease, and the situation has been in a stalemate ever since.

Many criticize this operation for causing a significant deterioration in the humanitarian conditions in Yemen.

It is worthwhile mentioning that after the announcement, a few rounds of peace talks were held with the support of different parties ranging from Iran to the US, most ending with no clear outcome. In 2016, the most significant round of peace talks was held in Kuwait. However, after a few months of negotiations, the talks did not bear any fruit. Finally, in November 2016, a ceasefire agreement was reached.

Ever since then, the violence and havoc have never fully stopped, and a solution to this pressing issue does not seem in sight.

Actions Taken by the UN

From the very beginning, a civil war was a great concern of the UN. Serious talks in the UN began in April 2015. The first major UN resolution was also adopted later that month, on 14th April. It called for the Houthis to withdraw control over Sana'a and placed sanctions and an arms embargo on them. The Houthis chose to condemn it.

Additionally, the UN-sponsored peace talks that took place in December 2018, also ended with no outcome.

Case Study 2: The Rwandan Genocide

Background

Rwanda is home to 2 main ethnic groups – the Hutu, 85% of the population (before the genocide), and the Tutsi, 15% of the population (before the genocide).

Germany was the first colonialist power that controlled Rwanda, and its reign was characterized with a clear preference to the Hutu, which, unlike the Tutsi, were appointed to serve important roles in the society and the governmental institutes. After WWI, Belgium became the ruler of Rwanda. Unlike Germany, Belgium saw the Tutsi as superior to the Hutu, and promoted them to the important roles in the government. Under Germany and Belgium, the Tutsi and the Hutu respectively felt severe suppression.

Rwanda received its independence from Belgium in 1962, and naturally, the Hutu, being an overwhelming majority, won the elections. Following this victory, 20 thousand Tutsis were killed in an outbreak of violence, and 200 thousand fled from Rwanda to neighboring countries.

In 1987, Tutsis residing in Uganda established the RPF, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, aimed at returning the Tutsi refugees to their homeland. In October 1990, under the leadership of Paul Kagame, the RPF invaded Rwanda. The invasion was carried out at a time when the Tutsis had suffered less violence and greater economic prosperity.

Following this invasion, the conditions of the Tutsis deteriorated, as anti-Tutsi propaganda, to the extent of calling the Tutsis' traitors, started and suspicions against the Tutsis grew. The public spoke with a hardening tone against the Tutsis and the RPF, and an even more extreme Hutu party was established. In 1992 a ceasefire was achieved, however, the strong feeling of the public made it largely irrelevant.

In January 1994, Romeo Dallaire, the commander of the UN forces in Rwanda (UNAMIR), had strong suspicions that the Hutu planned a genocide against the Tutsis. He informed the UN headquarters and requested to be allowed to intervene. His request was denied based on the claim that it was not within the scope of the UNAMIR. Nonetheless, the UN sent a warning to Rwanda's president.

Main Events

On 6th April 1994, a plane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi was shot down. Suspicions were immediately pointed at the RPF and Hutu extremists. The following day, the prime minister of Rwanda was assassinated.

These two events served as catalysts to one of the most horrendous genocides in modern history. Local leaders ordered the Hutu to kill Tutsi residents with whatever means they had. One of the most common weapons in the genocide was the simple machete. The murderers went to the extent of bombing buildings where Tutsis were hiding and making the structures collapse on them. Sometimes those who refused to participate in the genocide were also murdered themselves. In addition, during the genocide, many Tutsi women were raped.

As disorganized as it may seem, the genocide was a carefully orchestrated mechanism supported by the Rwandan government and carried out by the Hutu elites. For instance, the weapons, primitive as they may seem, were supplied by the government to the people.

Alongside the genocide, the RPF continued its battle against the Rwandan Government and seized power over it in July 1994. Subsequently, 2 million Hutu people fled to neighboring countries in fear of revenge for being put on trial.

It is estimated that anywhere from 800 thousand to one million people lost their lives in this genocide, as can be seen in the following graph:

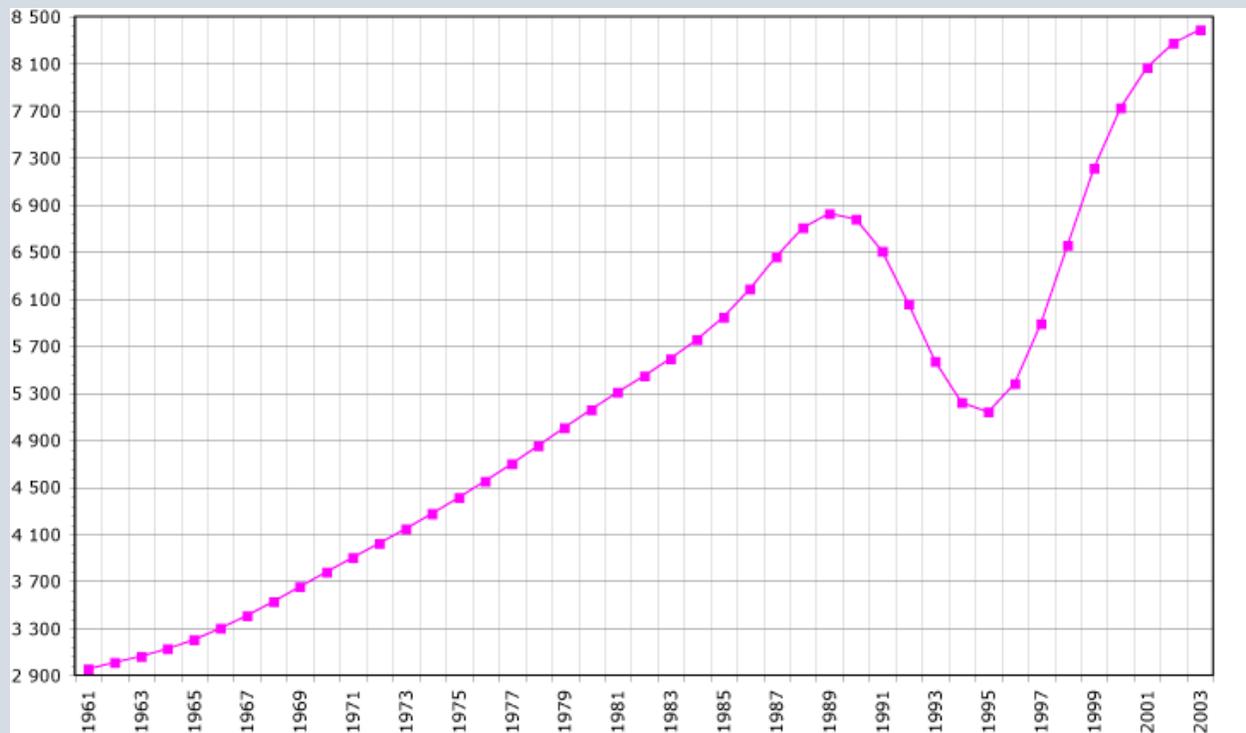


Figure 1: The change in Rwanda's population (in thousands of people) 1961-2003. According to this graph, the growth of Rwanda's population has started slowing down in 1989 until it hit its lowest point in 1995 right after the civil war, and started recovering only after 1995.

International Responses to the Genocide

It is estimated that the US under President Bill Clinton was trying to prevent the UN from defining the events in Rwanda as genocide because such a situation would require the US to send military forces to intervene. Others claim that the US did not intervene due to its previous intervention in Somalia. In addition, France, China, and Russia claimed that the events were no greater than a civil war and that they would not like to interfere in Rwanda's internal issues.

As a result, the UN was not too quick to respond. In fact, only on 29th April, was it willing to admit that the events in Rwanda might indeed be genocide, despite the information that was given by UNAMIR. By that time, it is estimated that 500 thousand had been slaughtered.

A meaningful resolution did not arrive until 17th May. Resolution 917 introduced an arms embargo on Rwanda and reintroduced UNAMIR, which contributed to the stability of the region until its termination in 1996.

It is worthwhile to mention that the new Tutsi regime was formed independently, without any foreign interference, based on the understanding that the Tutsi could not oppress the Hutu majority.

Conclusion

We have seen two drastic case studies that show what can happen as a result of too much interference or too little interference. The common attribute that these two cases show is the weak response from the UN.

This committee must decide if the UN members should intervene in civil wars, to stop its deterioration, or refrain from making it far worse. 2 Other greatly important questions are the question of the role of the UN in coordinating such intervention and the question of the aftermath of civil wars.

We wish you the best of luck. Daniel & Guy!

Questions to Consider

Familiarizing Questions

- Is my country ethnically diverse?
 - If so, are there any serious disputes between different groups? Can it deteriorate into a civil war?
- Did my country go through a civil war?
 - If so, did it end? How? Can something be learned from it?
- Is my country politically associated with the USA, Russia, Iran, and/or Saudi Arabia?
- What can my country gain/lose from further legitimization of foreign intervention carried out by the UN or other countries?
- Which current military conflicts are accompanied by foreign intervention, and how can the global community assist in solving them?

Clash-Oriented Questions

- What is the difference between civil war, ethnic cleansing, and genocide? How can the UN monitor the deterioration of civil wars and ensure that they are conducted with proportionality?
- Can and should the UN draft guidelines around foreign intervention in civil wars?
 - If so:
 - Is this justified?

- What are the criteria for enabling intervention within a given civil war?
- Should the form of intervention be restricted? How?
- How should a violation of the guidelines be treated?
- If not:
 - What should otherwise be done, if at all?
 - Should countries that intervene in civil wars be sanctioned somehow?
- Can and should the UN centralize all foreign intervention regarding civil wars? How?
- Should the UN be involved in the aftermath of civil wars? How?
- What is the difference between a soft intervention in the form of financing and providing weapons to a fighting party and a hard intervention to the extent of launching airstrikes or sending troops? How should this difference be treated?
- If a non-state actor in a civil war attacks a third-party UN member, should its involvement be considered as a foreign intervention?

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