

An often-heard suggestion (e.g., Johansen, 1982) is for a general non-intervention treaty. In it, the superpowers (and possibly other states), would pledge not to engage in military intervention (carefully defined) in any other state, even if requested to intervene by the government of such a state. This last provision is put in to guard against interventions such as the USSR in Afghanistan or the US in Vietnam. Interventions on government request are common; the "request" usually comes from a puppet government, or comes as a result of threats or pressure by the eventual intervenor. It is therefore important to include a prohibition of interventions on request in the treaty, or the treaty would lose most of its value.

A non-intervention treaty would be self-verifying, since violations would be obvious to anyone. The benefit of a non-intervention regime in the world would be great reduction in superpower tension, as well as the reduction of direct violence in the countries invaded. If each power could be assured that its rival power would not intervene in some civil war situation, it would have little incentive to intervene on its own part. At least some interventions are probably pre-emptive or competitive in nature, aimed at preventing or thwarting intervention by the other side. If that is so, then keeping both intervenors away would achieve "balance at a lower level," which is the aim of all disarmament measures. Non-intervention is not really disarmament (it does not discard any weapons); it reduces the intent rather than the capability to wage war. As such, it would be a very valuable supplement to disarmament.