DISEC 2
Briefing Papers

The Issue of Corruption in Political Office

Corruption: form of dishonest or unethical conduct by a person entrusted with a position of authority, often to acquire personal benefit.

Political corruption: the use of power by government officials for illegitimate private gain.

Kleptocracy: a state of unrestrained political corruption (literally meaning "rule by thieves").

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       If an office-holder commits an illegal act directly related to their official duties, under the colour of law or involves trading in influence, it constitutes political corruption. Forms of corruption vary, but include bribery, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, patronage, graft, and embezzlement. Corruption may also facilitate criminal enterprise such as drug trafficking, money laundering, and human trafficking, though is not restricted to these activities.

       The misuse of government power for other purposes, such as repression of political opponents and general police brutality, is not generally considered political corruption. The same goes for illegal acts by private persons or corporations not directly involved with the government.

       Differences with regards to what constitutes 'political corruption', such as the aforementioned, occur depending on the country and its jurisdiction. For instance, some political funding practices that are legal in one place may be illegal in another. In some cases, government officials have broad or ill-defined powers, which make it difficult to distinguish between legal and illegal actions.

       A forerunner in the sphere of political corruption is bribery: worldwide, this form of political corruption alone is estimated to involve over 1 trillion US dollars annually. However, some forms of corruption - now called "institutional corruption" - are distinguished from bribery and other kinds of obvious personal gain: campaign contributions are the prime example. Even when they are legal, and do not constitute a quid pro quo, they have a tendency to bias the process in favour of special interests, thus undermining public confidence in the political institution. The result being that the institution is corrupt, without individual members being corrupt themselves.

A similar problem of corruption arises in any institution that depends on financial support from people whose interests may be in conflict with those of the primary purpose of the institution.

An example of political corruption was the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) in the 1970s to the 1990s. Mobutu Sese Seko, the then president of Zaire (DR Congo) at one point in the 1970s was siphoning 1/3 of government revenue for his family. He used that money to manage his real estates, for example, his 16th century castle in Spain and a 32 room place in Switzerland. He also used a government jet to make 32 trips to Venezuela to bring back 5000 long haired sheep to one of his palaces.

Points to Consider:

- Is it a possibility to prevent political corruption? If so, how?
- Are there any laws in place against corruption? Can these laws be enforced successfully?
- Are there any government leaders currently on trial for corruption during their time in office?

The Issue of Combating Chemical Warfare

Chemical warfare is the use of chemical agents as a weapon of war or terror. The first full scale use of chemical weapons was during the First World War, in the second battle of Ypres on the 22nd April 1915.

Since then, there have been restrictions put in place to prohibit the use of chemical weapons, for example, the Geneva Protocol in 1925. The UK, USA and Germany all had chemical weapons during the Second World War but it was only Germany who actually used them against civilians during the 'Final Solution'. But it was the use of chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq war by Saddam Hussein that triggered the creation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) 1993. However some countries have neither signed nor ratified nor done either to the CWC, for example the DPRK, South Sudan or Israel.

Despite these restrictions being in place, there are still chemical attacks occurring in the world today, most recently in the Syrian Civil War. It is not only Syria that has chemical weapons, the USA and Russia are the two countries with the biggest stockpile of chemical weapons. Russia has been suspected of carrying out chemical attacks in Syria earlier in 2017.

The CWC prohibits the use of chemical weapons and further mandates that State Parties shall not "develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain" chemical weapons. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is the enforcement body of the CWC. While it is not allowed to use force, the UN Security Council can authorise military action if needed. The CWC also makes it difficult for terrorist groups to acquire chemicals.

Recent developments on North Korea's chemical weapons program are also worth considering.

Points to Consider:
- Has your country signed and ratified the CWC?
- Does your country have chemical weapons?
- Has your country used or developed chemical weapons in the past?
- Has your country sign the Geneva Protocol?
- Are there any ways that the CWC can be enforced?

The Issue of Regulating Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

An Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) is an aircraft piloted by a remote control or a computer. The first use of a UAV was on 4th February 2002 when the CIA used a drone for targeted killing.

UAVs have grown increasingly more popular in the world, both military and civilian. Military uses of UAVs include targeted killing, surveillance and close air support. Civilian uses include filming things for films, social media, 3D mapping and search and rescue. However, UAVs can cause problems if they are flown in the wrong areas.

Military uses of UAVs can be controversial as people would argue that the UAV could target innocent civilians instead of the intended targets in the event of a malfunction. In 2016, the Obama administration stated that in June 2016, and estimated 64 people who turned out to be non-combatants.

However, it is not only the USA that have carried out UAV strikes and not the only country whose strikes have resulted in civilian casualties. The UK has accepted one UAV strike in which Afghan civilians were killed. France and Russia have also utilised strikes in Syria. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are also suspected of using Chinese UAVs in Yemen.

Points to Consider:
- Does your country currently use UAVs?
- What can be done to ensure that UAV technology doesn't fall into the hands of resistance or terrorist groups?
- For what purposes does your country use armed UAVs in conflict?
- Can anything be done to reduce unwanted civilian casualties?