

Origins of the accumulation of armaments



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Running Head: Contemporary and Historic Origins of the Accumulation of Armaments

CONTEMPORARY AND HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF WHY STATES NEEDS TO ACQUIRE AND ACCUMULATE THE MEANS OF DESTROYING OTHERS AND WHY SO MUCH CONCERN FOR ARMS CONTROL

- ROXY AGANIMO PEGGY

The issue of arms acquisition has been widely debated among states as well as other interest groups, hence the question, why would anyone need arms? Arms as stated by the United Nations are any forms of military weaponry ranging from tanks, armored vehicles, submarines, aircraft carriers, surface to air missiles, surface to surface missiles, to any form of battleship or gun boat, landmines or sub charges, heavy machine guns or even self-propelled guns[1]. Some may argue that we need arms for one or some of the following reasons: A. For protection- We may need guns and other weapons to help protect our family and other valuable possessions that are stored in our homes. B. For defense- In case of a robbery we may need a gun to defend ourselves and family[2]C. For recreation- Like going hunting or target shooting. How would you feel if you are not allowed to own/do these? But those are on a relatively small scale, why would states (Countries) desire to accumulate the means to destroy others? Could it be for fear, recreation, defense or protection? This paper would try to expatiate on the reasons behind arms control, disarmament and most especially how it all started i. e. despite the effective use of armaments, the need for the regulation and usage cannot be far-fetched, hence is acquisition should be curtailed.

Politics is the activity in which ‘ conflicting’ interest struggles for advantage or dominance, or as other political scientists postulate, the study of influence and influential [the influential being those who get the most of what there is to get] ^[3], one should not be surprised that states struggle to ‘ get what there is to get’, whether they be piece of land, or an island or (toys) weapons. Conflicts happens very often, they are basically forms of disagreement, which can be subdivided into 2 groups, a. Conflict of interests such as territorial, economic and governmental issues which undoubtedly are tangible. The theory of Lateral pressure explains why most conflict arises; it states that economic growth of states leads to geographic expansion as they seek natural resources beyond their borders which in turn leads to conflicts and sometimes war[4]. Next is b. Conflict of ideas such as ethical, ideological and religious ideas which are considered intangible elements. Both conflicts however, overlaps in their occurrence. In accordance with the Hobbesian theory of “ all against all”, the international system is structurally a “ self-help” environment i. e. anarchic (a state where there is no global authority to enforce rules) where every state must strive to ensure its own security and survival[5]. This philosophy reflects the Realist view of things- that mankind is not inherently benevolent but rather hostile, self-centered and competitive; states are therefore inherently aggressive (offensive realism- the need to get more power) and/or obsessed with security (defensive realism- the urge to build more weapons in defense from war), and that expansion and amassing of resources is only constrained by opposing powers which in modern time are referred to as the ‘ Great powers’. Thus, relations between states are determined by their comparative

level of power derived primarily from their military capabilities i. e. military force is relied upon when implementing the states foreign policies[6].

If one Great Power emerges as dominant, Realist theory predicts that other major and Great Powers will tend to form a coalition or an alliance so as to prevent that power or state from conquering the entire region[7]. Thus the inherent structure of the anarchic system necessitates that states play a “game” of “power politics” in which alliances are formed and reformed to maintain this balance. Realists’ philosophy views security as a zero-sum game(a situation where no one benefits/wins), in which only relative gains are possible, major and Great Powers always suspect each other’s intentions, and are endlessly engaged in mortal competition for power[8]. It also sees the need to retain power as a necessity, Morgenthau cited the example of Great Britain’s foreign policy in 1939-1940 against Finland, he stated that the foundation of the policy was not based on any legalistic-moralistic approach but on massive military aid in defense of the soviet aggression that might have backfired on Britain alone[9]

Over the years, territorial disputes has been a big issue, places/territories such as Bakassi -disputed by Nigeria and Cameroon, Chagos Archipelago-disputed by the United Kingdom and Mauritius, Ceuta- disputed by Spain and Morocco, the spratly islands- claimed by China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and Taiwan, Kashmir and Jammu region- claimed by the People’s republic of China, India and Pakistan, and a host of many others. Man as quoted from ===== has restless desire for power, so international politics is marked by constant power play which makes cooperation much more difficult[10]. Wars as seen from the Marxist approach are as a result of <https://assignbuster.com/origins-of-the-accumulation-of-armaments/>

clashes between capitalist whose interests are to create colonies[11]which are all as a result of economic exploitation and political subjugation of weaker states.

There has been behavioral revolution in social science throughout ages, hence the birth of system analysis/theory. Morton Kaplan, a major contributor to the system made mention of international and nation state system which he felt had coherence, regularity hence important in international relations. He also made note of the fact that change was possible, notwithstanding the role of states that is constantly being determined by the international system; dividing the international system into 6 models- the first known as the “ Balance of power” (BOP) system which happened between 1815- 1914[12]. He noted that the system began to falter as major actors were seen in the international system, hence the breakout of the First World War. The treaty of Versailles was the peace settlement signed after World War One had ended in 1918 in the shadow of the Russian Revolution and other events in Russia. The treaty, which was a prequel to Wilson’s fourteen points of peace to the US congress in January 1918[13]- was signed on June 28th 1919 at the vast Versailles Palace near Paris – hence its title – between Germany and the Allies. The three most important politicians there were David Lloyd George of Britain, Clemenceau of France and Woodrow Wilson of America who after months of argument and negotiations, finally decided what the treaty should contain[14]. It was also referred to as ‘ Diktat’- as it was being forced on the Germans who had no choice but to sign it. Although many people in Germany did not want the Treaty signed, the representatives there knew that they had no choice as

German was incapable of restarting the war again[15]. Consequently, we can say Germany was disarmed – the act of reducing, limiting, or abolishing weapons, but in modern day, disarmament is often taken to mean total elimination of weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear arms. General and Complete Disarmament refers to the removal of all weaponry, including conventional arms.

Initially, only the United States possessed atomic weapons, but in 1949 the Soviet Union exploded an atomic bomb and the arms race began – arms race. Both countries continued building more and bigger bombs. In 1952, the United States tested a new and more powerful weapon: the hydrogen bomb. The Soviet Union followed with its own version in 1953. Einstein watched with growing dismay as the two superpowers seemed to move closer and closer to nuclear war. Convinced that the only way to prevent the annihilation of humankind was to prevent all future wars, Einstein spoke out more fervently than ever in favor of international cooperation and disarmament[16].

The first red scare, which happened in America between the years 1919-1920, left the America's cherished civil liberties threatened as communism claimed to subvert the American society[17]. To strident American anticommunists, the post- World War II Soviet danger lay not only in military aggression, but even more in the limitless prospect of Moscow's ideological expansion aimed at world domination. To them the U. S. S. R.'s self-assigned leadership of world Communism possessed the power and will to incite and support Communist-led revolutions everywhere, imposing on them its influence, if not its direct control. This presumption assigned to the Soviet

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Union the unprecedented power to extend its presence over vast distances without military force[18]. US, however carried out the ‘ Marshall plan’ which was a financial aid to rebuild Europe’s economy as the fear that Soviet Union would invade Western Europe via provision of aid[19].

An arms race denotes a rapid, competitive increase in the quantity or quality of instruments of military or naval power by rival states in peacetime. What it connotes is a game with a logic of its own. Typically, in popular depictions of arms races, the political calculations that start and regulate the pace of the game remain obscure. As Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr., has noted, “ The strange result is that the activity of the *other* side, and not one’s own resources, plans, and motives, becomes the determinant of one’s behavior.” And what constitutes the “ finish line” of the game is the province of assertion, rather than analysis[20]. Many onlookers, and some participants, have claimed that the likelihood of war increases as the accumulation of arms proceeds apace. There is no doubt that the United States and its European allies are primarily concerned with weaponization, they might accept a scenario in which Iran stops short of a nuclear weapon. Israel, however, has made it clear that it views a significant Iranian enrichment capacity alone as an unacceptable threat. It is possible, then, that a verifiable commitment from Iran to stop short of a weapon could appease major Western powers but leave the Israelis unsatisfied. Israel would be less intimidated by a virtual nuclear weapon than it would be by an actual one and therefore would likely continue its risky efforts at subverting Iran’s nuclear program through sabotage and assassination — which could lead

Iran to conclude that a breakout capability is an insufficient deterrent, after all, and that only weaponization can provide it with the security it seeks[21].

Looking at the early forms of arms race, we see that states such as Israel is willing to use force (nuclear arms) to secure its nuclear monopoly in the region against Iraq as at 1981. It did the same to Syria in 2007 and is now considering similar action against Iran. But the very acts that have allowed Israel to maintain its nuclear edge in the short term have prolonged an imbalance that is unsustainable in the long term. Israel's proven ability to strike potential nuclear rivals with impunity has inevitably made its enemies anxious to develop the means to prevent Israel from doing so again.

Deterrence is the term for such action, In this way, the current tensions are best viewed not as the early stages of a relatively recent Iranian nuclear crisis but rather as the final stages of a decades-long Middle East nuclear crisis that will end only when a balance of military power is restored[22].

We may ask, why is there so much concern for arms control? First, on the 6th of August 1945, US President Harry Truman, during World War II (1939-45), gave orders after the testing of bomb made with key materials for nuclear fission—uranium-235 and plutonium (Pu-239) in Mexico; an American B-29 bomber dropped the world's first deployed atomic bomb over the Japanese city of Hiroshima. The explosion wiped out 90 percent of the city and immediately killed 80,000 people; tens of thousands more would later die of radiation exposure. Three days later, a second B-29 dropped another Atomic-bomb on Nagasaki, killing an estimated 40,000 people. Japan's Emperor Hirohito announced his country's unconditional surrender in World War II in a radio address on August 15, citing the devastating power of "a new and

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most cruel bomb”[23]. In 1961 East Germany built the Berlin Wall separating East from West Berlin. It symbolized the division of Europe by what Winston Churchill had called the “ iron curtain”[24]. Despite the hostility of East-West relations during the Cold War, a relatively stable framework of relations emerged, and conflicts never escalated to all-out war. In 1989, the wall fell symbolizing the end of the cold war, while 2007 marked the start of global economic crisis[25].

In contemporary times, we take a closer look at Iran- if it obtains a/the bomb, other states in that region will follow suit, leading to a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. But the nuclear age is now almost 70 years old, and so far, fears of proliferation have proved to be unfounded. Properly defined, the term “ proliferation” means a rapid and uncontrolled spread. Nothing like that has occurred; in fact, since 1970 as report states, there has been a marked slowdown in the emergence of nuclear states[26]. Consequently, millions if not billions of dollars were spent on the procurements of their strategic arsenals and nuclear weapons; these monies could have been spent on something more productive instead of the arms race[27].

In summary, ‘ Nuclear weapons, ‘ Robert McNamara wrote in the September 1983 issue of Foreign Affairs, ‘ serve no military purpose whatsoever. They are totally useless – except to deter one’s opponents from using them.’ The stark reality of ‘ mutual assured destruction,’ grounded on recognition of nuclear parity, led to an informal nuclear weapon taboo[28]they claim that nuclear weapons are deterrents that prevent the world from breaking out in total war. Researchers are supporting this argument by declaring how nuclear weapons have been keeping peace. However, other researchers and <https://assignbuster.com/origins-of-the-accumulation-of-armaments/>

scientists deny the effectiveness of nuclear weapons as deterrents and declare that nuclear weapons will lead the world into total devastation[29]. National Treaty Means (NTM) of verification are individual methods used by individual parties to monitor treaty compliance[30]also the Strategic arms reduction talks (START) as well as some embargos such as Intermediate nuclear forces (INF) agreement, plus negotiations as well as limits on strategic nuclear delivery vehicles (SNDV) and compliance with antiballistic missiles (ABM) as well as non-proliferation treaty has been effective in curtailing the spread of armaments.

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