

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF MAJOR ARMS RACES IN PRE-21ST CENTURY INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract

Over the past century, the struggle for the acquisition of arms amongst states had assumed a prominent place in political, military, and diplomatic affairs, often leading to international rivalries. The aim of this study therefore is to highlight a historical overview of major global arms races during the pre-21st Century. The study would serve as a prerequisite for understanding the rationale behind arms races amongst states and the key actors involved as well as its consequences in attaining global peace and stability. From the basic assumptions of realism, theoretical frameworks in this study namely deterrence theory was derived and applied to arms race. Prior to the First World War in 1914, naval arms race on shipbuilding was the commonest. But, a combination of shipbuilding and aircraft arms races became prevalent between the two World Wars. Nuclear arms race erupted after the Second World War in 1945 and it was mainly between the USA and the USSR. Furthermore, regional arms races were experienced amongst countries of the same region. This study revealed that Cold War was the turning point into the in-depth study of arms race by relevant stakeholders. Historically, it was found that arms races between rival states did lead to war in most cases like the First and Second World Wars. Where arms races did not lead to war, it could serve as manifestations of other underlying causes of war.

Keywords: Arms Races; Arms Struggle; Deterrence Theory; Pre-21st Century

Introduction

Over the past century, the struggle for arms amongst states had assumed a prominent place in political, military, and diplomatic affairs, often leading to international rivalries (Anderton, 1985). Arms race between states is often driven and governed by political interest. The political considerations that initiate and control the pace of the arms race remain unclear (Fairbanks Jr & Shulsky, 1987). Whilst action states initiate arms race when seeking to change the political status quo, reaction states content with the status quo promptly (Brito, 1972). In most cases, arms race aggravated a sense of rivalry and seldom even determined break out of war. Arms races have often been de-escalated by the decision of one state to moderate its build-up or through a political negotiation between rival states (Fairbanks Jr & Shulsky, 1987). Cowley and Parker (1996) define arms race as a massive and competitive increase in the quantity or quality of instruments of military power by rival states in peacetime.

The aim of this study therefore is to highlight a historical overview of major global arms races during the pre-21st Century. The study would serve as a prerequisite for understanding the

rationale behind arms races amongst states and the key actors involved as well as its consequences in attaining global peace and stability. Specifically, this study will assist political leaders, policymakers, military officials, security experts and relevant stakeholders to have a background knowledge of the past arms races which will guide them in taking the necessary measures in tackling the current 21st Century arms races and beyond. This research is limited to 20th Century arms races where global arms struggle amongst states and its consequences on global peace were discernible.

Theoretical Framework

One of the theories of International Relations most applicable to arms race is realism (Booth, 2011). The theory of realism formalised the Realpolitik statesmanship of early modern Europe. In realism, it is believed that world politics ultimately is always and necessarily a field of conflict among actors pursuing power. Priorities of realists have been described as "Machiavellian", with the primary focus being increasing the relative power of one's own nation over others. Generally, realists are of three kinds in what they take the source of ineliminable conflict to be. These are classical (human) realism, neorealist (structural) and neoclassical realism.

Irrespective of the types of realism, there are four common assumptions, upon which realism is based. Firstly, the international system is anarchic. In this case, no actor exists above states, capable of regulating their interactions. The second assumption is that states are the most important actors in international relations and this makes non-state actors less relevant in world politics. Thirdly, all states within the system are unitary, rational actors thus seeking for no cooperation of one another. States only tend to pursue self-interest and strive to attain as many resources as possible. Finally, the primary concern of all states is its own security and survival. This enables states to build up military to survive and this might lead to a security dilemma. From the basic assumptions of realism, theoretical frameworks mostly applied to arms race include prisoners' dilemma (based on non-cooperation of states), security dilemma and deterrence theory. However, this study is limited to deterrence theory only.

Deterrence Theory

Deterrence theory could be traced to the preliminary studies of classical philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham. The theory has passed five major transmuting phases from its inception till date. The initial phase commenced after the invention of nuclear technology where a renowned strategist Bernard Brodie promulgated that the development of atomic bomb had basically changed the nature of war and strategic revolution. In the ambience of intense arms races during the Cold War, the second phase of the deterrence theory emerged. Based on the expanded theoretical notions, a strategic concept of nuclear deterrence was further advanced. The third stage of deterrence theory concentrated on the thoughtfulness of the essential motives that led to crises and the mechanisms to prevent such crises. Consequently, the fourth stage metamorphosed after the end of the Cold War on the applicability of deterrence. The 21st Century is presently witnessing a fifth phase in which deterrence is experiencing further stress and crisis as a result of multifarious sprouting patterns such as drones, artificial intelligence, supersonic glided vehicles and the likes.

The application of military threats as an avenue to deter global crises and war has been at the centre stage of concern in world security for at least 200 years (Clausewitz, 1976). The notion of deterrence can be defined as the use of threats by one party to influence another party to desist from starting a course of action. A threat serves as a warning to the level that it persuades its target not to carry out the intended action due to the costs and losses that the target would incur.

Huth (1999) outlined two general types of policy of deterrence either as direct or extended. The direct deterrence is concerned with the prevention of an armed attack against a state's own territory whilst extended deterrence deals with preventing an armed attack against another state. Circumstances of direct deterrence usually transpire, when there is a territorial dispute between neighbouring states, in which major powers such as the USA do not directly interfere. However, situations of extended deterrence usually happen, when a great power becomes involved and this has generated more interest in international security than direct deterrence. Additionally, Huth (1999) outlined that deterrence policies can be applied in response to a persistent short-term threat known as immediate deterrence or as strategy to either avert a military conflict or short term threat from arising and this is referred to as general deterrence.

An effective deterrence policy must be considered in terms of both military and political action. In military terms, deterrence success denotes to averting policy makers from using military threats and actions that intensify peacetime diplomatic and military cooperation into a crisis or militarised hostility which threatens armed conflict and probably war. The avoidance of crises of wars however is not the sole purpose of deterrence. Additionally, defending states must have the capacity to resist both military and political demands of a probable attacking nation. It could be viewed that deterrence is not achieved if a war is averted at the expense of diplomatic concessions to the peak demands of the likely attacking nation under the threat of war.

In deterrence theory, anything a nation does in terms of defence such as accumulation of arms, decreases the security of a neighbouring nation and will be viewed with inimical intent. This will necessitate the neighbouring nation to respond by acquiring weapons to deter a perceived threat and by so doing, arms race between the two states has been built.

Deterrence theory is mainly disparaged for its assumptions about opponent rationales. It is argued that psychotic or suicidal opponents may not be deterred by either forms of deterrence. This was evident with key events like September 11 which altered the conventional nature of warfare to asymmetric type. This did not only expose the USA's inability to protect itself but also demonstrated that deterrence strategy mostly employed by the Western world could not protect states against the contemporary challenges of the 21st Century which are mostly asymmetric.

An Appraisal of Major Arms Races in History

Arms races among states have been in existence for over 100 years and it has been part and parcel of international relations and politics till date. Prominent arms races in history which are covered in this Section are the arms races of pre-1914 (World War I), between the two World Wars (I and II), the era of the Cold War, and Regional Arms races.

For the Pre 1914 (World War I), the main competitors in arms race were mostly Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria, Russia and Turkey. While the first three states were considered very powerful, states like Russia and Turkey were trying to be at par with the perceived very powerful states (Bros, 2005). Prior to 1914, two major arms races were witnessed in history and these were the Anglo-French naval competition between 1840 and 1860 and the Anglo-German naval competition from 1906 (Mahnken, Maiolo, & Stevenson, 2016).

Great Britain and France had established political systems that separated them from governments. The two states were in relative peace with each other for two decades after 1815, however, the Middle East crisis of 1839-40 triggered an unpleasant relationship between them (Hamilton, 1993). This coincided with the France's evolutions in warship design from sail to steam propulsion and from wood to steel hulls as well as Napoleon's first decade in power. Britain perceived that France could use its new steam-powered ship to deploy an army across the English

Channel anytime at will. In 1850, France commissioned a Napoleon Ship with a significant speed of 13 knots, although Great Britain immediately produced a ship superior to the Napoleon Ship in order to remain as the master of the sea (Military Factory, 2019). Nine years later, the French launched an ironclad ship, the Gloire, fortified with 12-inch armour plate. However, the British in 1861 responded with a more heavily armoured and faster warship, the Warrior (Hamilton, 1993). With this development, and coupled with more manpower, finance and bigger steel industry, Great Britain had continued to thrive over France in the naval arms race (Mahnken, Maiolo, & Stevenson, 2016).

The Anglo-German arms race was due to the completion of Great Britain's warship, Dreadnought, in 1906, which gave it an edge over Germany on naval power capabilities (Seligmann, 2012). Germany in 1910 produced four heavier Dreadnoughts, a bit slower than but as powerful as that of the British. In the same year, Germany launched its first battle cruiser, which was slightly superior to Britain's Invincibles in terms of armament, armour, and speed (Massie, 1991).

As the shipbuilding race continued, Great Britain in 1914 laid down an extra seven battle cruisers and twenty-three dreadnoughts, which were both more powerful, faster and larger. In a quest to keep up with the struggle, Germany produced fifteen new dreadnoughts and six battle cruisers which were both similar to the British in relation to size, speed and power (Massie, 1991). With the conviction that sea power could be the determining factor the allies of Britain and Germany entered the frantic naval race too.

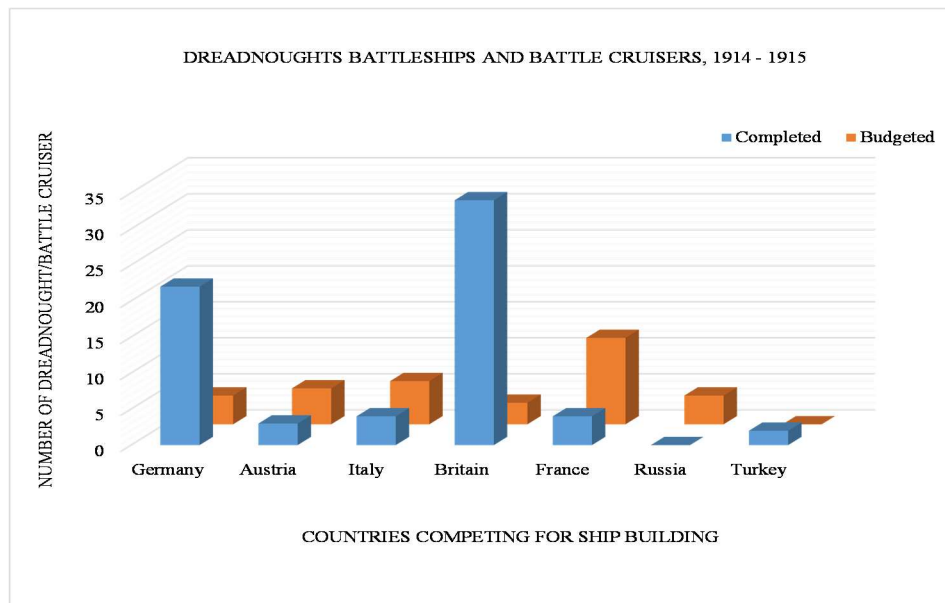


Figure 1. Naval arms races on shipbuilding prior to 1914 World War.

Source: Harpen (1971), Stevenson (2000) and Herwig (2014).

Figure 1 shows the number of dreadnoughts and battle cruisers built as well as the ships budgeted for production against countries involved in the naval arms race between 1914 and 1915. Within the period, Britain built 34 ships and became the highest manufacturer followed by Germany which produced 22 ships. Turkey produced only two ships, which was the lowest number, while Russia produced none. For the number of ship budgeted for, France earmarked for the highest number of ships to be built, 12 ships followed by Italy which had six and Britain at

the bottom had projected for only 3 ships to be built. The raw data is obtained from Harpen (1971), Stevenson (2000) and Herwig (2014). A total sum of 59 Million Pounds Sterling was spent by Germany, Britain, Italy, Turkey, Russia and France. Figure 2 shows a percentage expenditure from the total amount spent by each country in its shipbuilding project in 1913. Britain had the highest expenditure on the ship building project accounting for 29 per cent of the total expenditure by all the world's Great Powers followed by Russia and Germany accounting for 19 and 18 per cent respectively.

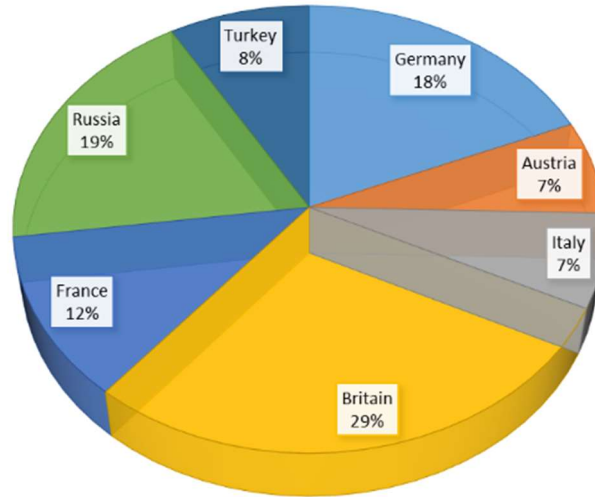


Figure 2. Expenditures (£ 59 Million) on shipbuilding among world's great powers in 1913.

Source: Harpen (1971), Stevenson (2000) and Herwig (2014).

For the arms races between the two World Wars, the First World War was fought between Great Britain and its allies on the one side and Germany and its allies on the other side from 1914 to 1918. Germany lost the war and this changed the perception in the way military strategic planners think about war. The definition of armament was extended to comprise the readiness and the capability of entire economies and societies to wage total war in addition to front-line forces (McDonough, 2011). This necessitated the League of States in 1920 to convene a Technical Committee to find a way to reduce global weapons to the barest minimum (Abbott, 1922). Whilst efforts were ongoing, Japan, Germany, USSR, and Italy planned to produce weapons enmass due to their economic power. There were two major arms races in the inter war years, these are the US and United Kingdom (UK) against Japan arms race as well as the aircraft arms races.

The US Naval Construction Act of 1916 was aimed to position the US Navy superiority to other world's advance navies like the UK, Germany, and Japan. Under the Bill, ten new battleships, six submarines, destroyers, battle-cruisers and support ships each were proposed for construction. The USA's commitment to build more ships drew the attention of the UK and Japan and their subsequent plans for naval constructions. In 1917, the UK commenced its construction of four battleships and four battle cruisers, whilst Japan continued with its plan for the building of eight battle cruisers and eight battleships (Van Tol, 2017). Thus, the action and reaction of the three world's great navies plunged the world into a new arms race.

Due to the global anxiety in the naval races, a limitation on the types of ships and the total tonnage each country could produce was established through the Washington Treaty of 1922

(Office of the Historian, 2019a). The Treaty sets the limitations to a ratio of 5:5:3 for the USA, UK and Japan respectively and this outcome was not welcomed by the Japanese (Van Tol, 2017). As the naval race continued, it became glaring in 1937 that the UK could not maintain its naval capabilities in the Pacific (Mawdsley, 2014). This was in addition to the challenges it was facing with Germany. Japan then covertly continued with its ship building programme and got an edge over the USA in the Pacific. The sinking of an American gunboat, Panay in 1937 by the Japanese finally revealed its intent in the naval race (Lyons, 2019). This enabled Japan to accelerate its naval construction from 1938 to 1941, where it attained full parity in the Pacific with other powerful navies of the world. The USA and its allies devised a means of blocking the supply of fuel and raw materials getting into Japan. Affected by this blockade, Japan took drastic decision to attack the USA on its soil on 7 December 1941 at Pearl Harbour Naval Base and this formally drew the attention of the USA into the World War II (National Museum, 2019).

The advancements in technology and operational innovation started with the advent of military aircraft in the 1st World War. The aircraft mainly made of canvas, wood and wire were used for military roles such as reconnaissance, bombing, artillery spotting, and fighter interception (McLean, 1993). As technology developed, both Allies and Axis shot down each other's planes from the ground with the aid of artillery, machine guns, rifles, and even pistols. Also, due to lightweight and manoeuvrability, high-tech fighter aircraft attacked each other in a wild air battles known as dogfights. For instance, Germany used its fleet of huge Dirigibles, Zeppelins and large bomber aircrafts to drop bombs on British and French cities. There were equally retaliatory attacks by Britain on German cities.

In the inter-war years, the aerial arms race among states continued alongside the formulation of air doctrine. Germany and Britain prioritised their air operations and envisaged that powerful air forces would deter a prospective enemy. In the air arm races, the capability of a country to be ahead was basically dependent on the ability of its aviation industry to swiftly respond to changes in aircraft and weapons design (Mahnken, Maiolo, & Stevenson, 2016).

After leaving the League of States in 1933, Germany began to rearm at great speed, introduced conscription and unveiled its Luftwaffe aircraft (Peters, 1933). Subsequently, Britain and its Allies countered Germany by producing superior weapons. The military aircraft production of the Great Powers from 1935 to 1941 is as shown in Figure 3.

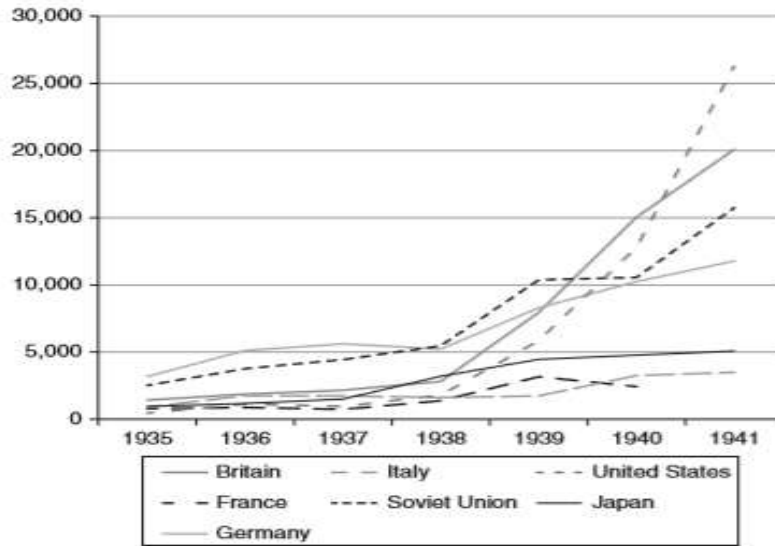


Figure 3. Military aircraft production during the World War II.

Source. Mahnken, Maiolo, & Stevenson (2016).

During the Cold War, the study of arms race assumed a focal point by strategic, military, and even political researchers globally during the Cold War between the USA and the USSR which lasted for nearly five decades from 1945 to 1991 (Stoll, 2017).

The USA after the Second World War in 1945, decided to embark on a massive arms build-up in order to contain a perceived USSR's communist expansionist agenda. The use of atomic bombs, similar to the ones used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, was considered (BBC, 2019). This action began a deadly nuclear arms race as the USSR in 1949 responded by testing her own atomic bomb (Long, 2007). In a counter measure, the USA built a hydrogen bomb thereby exposing the world to more dangers of nuclear wars (New York Times, 2011). The arms race was considered asymmetrical since the USA used its nuclear weapons to compensate for the Europe's conventional weaknesses whereas the USSR utilised its missiles to cater for its lack of long range aircraft (Mahnken, Maiolo, & Stevenson, 2016). Also, the two competitors used the same submarine missiles to perform varying functions.

Technological advancement of the two states enabled them to develop new delivery systems such as Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), Submarine Launch Missile (SBLM) and aircraft, active air defences and warheads (Swift, 2009). On delivery systems for example, the USA from 1950 had an increase in ICBM launchers and reached a maximum number of slightly over 1,000 in 1965. It retained these numbers of launchers till 1990 where it began to decline drastically to about 500 launchers in 2002. A similar pattern was discernible with USSR launchers but attaining its maximum launchers of nearly 1,500 in 1970 and minimum number of about 700 in 2002 (Mahnken, Maiolo, & Stevenson, 2016). The number of ICBM launchers were further reduced to nearly 450 and 500 in 2008 for the USA and Russia respectively (Norris & Kristensen, 2009).

Kristensen & Norris (2019) gave an estimated global nuclear inventories from 1945 to mid-2018 as indicated in Figure 4. The number of global nuclear warheads mostly dominated by the USA and USSR was on the increase from 1945 and attained its peak of about 70,300 in 1986 to the current value of about 14,485 in June 2018. However, the sharp decline in world's nuclear

warheads began in the 1990s after the collapse of the USSR as well as the arms control measures put in place.

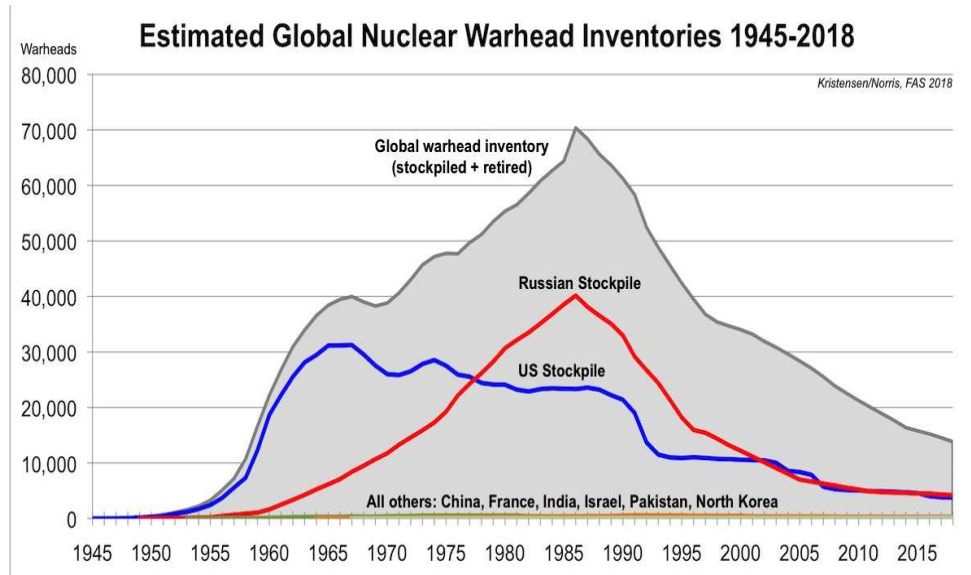


Figure 4. Estimated global nuclear warheads inventories from 1945 to 2018.

Source: Kristensen & Norris (2019).

In 1957, the Cold War shifted to space exploration with the USSR launching its R-7 ICBM, Sputnik, the world's first artificial satellite and man-made object to be in the Earth's orbit (Sputnik , 2014). The USSR's dominance in space and its ability to spy and attack its enemies prompted the USA to launch its own satellite, Explorer I in 1958 (Howell, 2017). Also in 1958, the USA established National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA), as an agency responsible for space exploration (NASA, 2008). Subsequently, the USSR launched the first man into space in April 1961 and two months later, the USA followed suit (History, 2019). The USA in 1969 went ahead of the USSR in the space race to send the first man on the moon (Brueck, 2018).

The first military action of the Cold War was in 1950 when the USSR backed the North Korea in invading Southern Korea, a pro-USA nation. Subsequent deployment of the USA's military to the Korean Peninsula to challenge the invasion led to the Korean War which ended in 1953 (Wolfe, 2017). The Cuban Missile crisis of 1961 was another consequences of the Cold War, which nearly led to a nuclear war (The Week, 2015). Spector (2019) highlighted the Vietnam War from 1955 to 1975 as another external action of the Cold War between the USA and USSR.

The USA and the USSR, in a way to douse the global tension of the Cold War, signed for the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) in 1972, which prohibited the manufacture of nuclear weapons missiles (Lever, 2014). Severe economic problems and rising political upheaval in the USSR led to a re-direction of economic and international relations policies. The Berlin Wall, which served as a visible sign for the Cold War, was destroyed and at the same time, other communist states in the USSR replaced their government. By 1991, the USSR had fallen apart thereby signifying the end of the Cold War.

On the regional arms races, regional dynamics, part fuelled by the Cold War, kept the arms race going in most regions of the world, in spite of the demise of the Cold War. Prominent regional arms races in 21st Century are the Arab-Israeli, India-Pakistan and East Asia arms races.

The Arab-Israeli arms race is a regional struggle for arms build-up which has been influenced by external and internal factors (Mahnken, Maiolo, & Stevenson, 2016). One of the external factors was the great-power arms sales between USSR and Israel through Czechoslovakia in 1948 and the 1955 USSR-Egypt arms supply as well as France and Israel in 1960. In 1967, USSR supplied arms to Egypt and Syria (Golani, 1995). In the same year, the USA supplied arms to Israeli (Bialer, 1985). Regional rivalry is the second external factor, it was mainly due to Iran's military build-up and nuclearisation in a quest to becoming a regional power. This stimulated Israel and other Arab states to as well go for arms build-up (Mahnken, Maiolo, & Stevenson, 2016). The third external factor is the security dilemma between Israel and Arab states. Famous instance was the Egyptian military build-up after the 1956 Sinai War and the subsequent response by Israel to beef up its arms build-up. Also, further accumulation of arms by Israel after the October 1973 War triggered arms build-up by the Arab states. Syria, in particular, threatened Israel by deciding to develop a missile capability to attack Israel. In return, Israel developed and deployed anti-missile systems to guard against intending missile and rocket attacks from Syria and other Arab states (Stahi, 2019).

Revisionism is one of the internal factors that fuelled the Arab-Israel arms race. This started when a coalition of Arab states in a bid to resist the establishment of a Jewish state attacked Israel between 1948 and 1949. During the struggle, Israel embarked on accelerated arms build-up which were superior to the Arab states. Another internal factor responsible for the Arab-Israeli arms race is the perceived Israeli expansionism by the Arabs on one side, and the Israelis' belief that the Arabs were attempting to force Israel to withdraw from the pre-1967 borders. Technological advancement also played a key role in the arms race struggle between the Arabs and Israelis in the 1970s. Israel's technological advantage over the Arabs served as its force multiplier against the Arabs combined military might. Also, since Israel was unable to sustain a conventional arms race with the Arab states in the long run, it decided to go nuclear (Mahnken, Maiolo, & Stevenson, 2016). Even though Israel has not officially admitted to possessing nuclear weapons, estimates by Roblin (2018) indicated that Israeli's nuclear warheads ranges from 80 to 300.

The partition of the British India into the independent India and Pakistan states in 1947 served as the basis of rivalry between the two countries. The rivalry culminated into arms race of various conventional weapons and other military might in a bid for each nation to gain strategic advantage in the region. The arms race went nuclear in the 1970s when both countries tested atomic bombs. India and Pakistan have an estimated number of nuclear warheads of 110 and 130 respectively (Chughtai, 2017).

Mahnken, Maiolo, & Stevenson (2016) showed that India-Pakistan arms race has elements similar to the Cold War arms race since it involved long-standing rivalry with significant pauses in the action-reaction cycle. Although, the pace of the nuclear competition between the two states remains milder than that of the Cold War. However, Dalton & Tandler (2012) opined that the India-Pakistan nuclear arms race are largely decoupled and contrary to what is expected in the conventional arms race. This is evident with the types and ranges of missiles being developed by each nation despite that the nuclear arms race was for their national security objectives. Whilst Pakistan's objectives were to deter India from conventional military operations beneath the nuclear threshold, India is mainly developing its nuclear weapons to reinforce its strategic deterrence against China.

The combination of Asia's economic growth and restraint of the Western Military budgets had stirred the world's attention on arms race from the Atlantic to East Asia.

China's defence expenditure has increased to 8.1 % in 2018. Chinese military expansion was geared towards national pride, territorial integrity, and securing trade routes as well as to instil fear among its regional neighbours. China has added in its inventory a set of conventionally-armed ballistic and cruise missiles as well as beefing up its surface to air defences. Additionally, the China's 4th Generation aircraft, smart weapon systems and key electronic modernisations have boosted its airpower capability. China's submarine fleet has been expanded by its navy as well as other surface vessels are been procured and boasts for its pioneer aircraft carrier. The USA tagged China as a nation that is qualitatively and quantitatively improving its strategic nuclear missile forces (China File, 2018). China as one of the major NWS currently has an estimated number of 280 nuclear warheads for delivery by ballistic missiles and bombers (Kristensen & Norris, 2018).

On Korean Peninsula, South Korea between 2006 and 2010 was the second major importer of conventional weapons, responsible for six per cent of global sales and a defence budget of \$26.55 billion. South Korea continued to cement its advantage over the North Korea in terms of improved military quality, military communications, shipbuilding, combat aircraft acquisitions and most importantly the development of missile defence programmes amounting to \$214 million (Naval Technology, 2011). North Korea's desire for modern arsenal remains undiminished. Currently, North Korea's economic downturn has substantially eroded its conventional military capabilities over the past decade thereby making it rely only on its vaunted nuclear programmes for deterrence. Open source estimates in 2019 indicated that North Korea possess adequate fissile material to build between 13 and 21 nuclear weapons and it could be capable of producing 50 to 100 by 2020 (RAND, 2019). It demonstrated this by testing seven missiles of varying ranges in 2017 and 2018, some of which are estimated to reach Guam and California.

Japan became demilitarised and a pacifist state after its defeat in 1945 by the USA nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In 1952, USA and Japan signed a treaty highlighting that Japanese forces would be responsible for its internal security whilst the USA would be responsible for the defence of Japan against external aggression including the granting of nuclear defence umbrella (Foreign Relations, 1952). However, Japan is currently pursuing nuclear weapon capabilities by converting its civil nuclear reactors mainly for electricity and other peaceful uses to military roles. With the possession of eight tons of plutonium and about 1,300 kg of high level enriched uranium in 2012 and 2014 respectively, Japan is capable of producing about 100 nuclear bombs (Ofek, 2018). Japan's venture into nuclear weapons could be attributed to two main reasons. Firstly, Japan's neighbour, North Korea is threatening the use of nuclear weapons against Japan, South Korea and even the USA and this could trigger a war in East Asia (South China Post , 2018). Secondly, the remarks made by the US President on Japan to rely on itself for external defence and the American nuclear umbrella is not to be taken for granted (Bandow, 2016). Therefore, this development confirms the realist theory that security of the state is of greatest importance to states and countries embark on arms race in pursuit of self-defence.

Conclusion

States have been engaged in arms race with each other for over a century and it has been an important aspect in international relations and politics till today. Arms races have transformed from shipbuilding prior to the World War I to a combination of shipbuilding and aircraft arms races during the inter-war years. Nuclear arms race otherwise known as Cold War began after the World War II in 1945 and ended in 1991. The authors observed the Cold War was the turning point into the in-depth study of arms race by relevant stakeholders. Also, regional arms races part fuelled by the Cold War were experienced amongst states of the same region. Historically, it was found that arms races between rival states did lead to war in most cases like the First and Second World

Wars. Where arms races did not lead to war, it could serve as manifestations of other underlying causes of war.

The ongoing arms races in the 21st Century is mainly amongst the world's great powers such as the USA, Russia and China as well as developing states like Iran and North Korea. The regional arms race between India and Pakistan is also a thing of concern in the region in particular and world at large. It is opined that advancement in technology in the 21st Century is leading states to modernise their old arsenals and invent new ones that are more precise and lethal compared with the previous century's weapons. This would worsen the consequences of the 21st Century arms race in terms of war should it occur. Consequently, to ameliorate these challenges, it is imperative for the UN which is responsible for ensuring global peace and security to take a concrete step to ensure that the USA, China and Russia change their national policies indicating the use of nuclear weapons and their associated delivery systems as a means of global dominance in international relations and politics.

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