

ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT: A PATHWAY TO GLOBAL PEACE AND SECURITY

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Abstract

Wars have become most destructive with increase in science and technology. Considering the uncertainty and hostility emanating from the growing competition that characterize international politics, countries have embarked on constant stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction such as biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons. Drawing from the realist perspectives, in a world where animosity is the reality of existence; countries must amass strong weapons so as to survive and remain relevant in global politics. However, the idea of arms control and disarmament has provided the best option to limit incidences of wars between nations. In this paper, the researchers relied more on secondary (content analysis) data and personal observations as a methodology. The theory of Realism was deliberately adopted because of its capacity to explain why countries amass weapons of mass destruction given that in a competing world only the strong will endure. The findings of the study showed that pursuing global peace has no second option, hence the promotion of arms control and disarmament. It concluded that global peace and stability cannot be achieved in tumultuous and war-ridden system. The paper recommended that international conventions and framework aimed at eliminating weapons of mass destruction be strengthened. Furthermore, more energy should be directed to diplomacy and human security instead of the huge expenditure on military resources. The UN should continue to emphasize peace and disarmament initiatives while at the same time de-emphasizing the production of weapons of mass destruction.

Keywords: Arms, Arms Control, Weapons, Disarmament and Security

Introduction

In a perfect world, it is expected that everyone would act morally, obey international law, and insist that others conduct themselves in a manner acceptable by the international community. Moreover, what is legal and what is not, and what is moral and what is not, would be clear. What this means is that, our decisions would be between good and evil, rather than between greater and lesser evils. What is obtainable in our imperfect world, standards and choices are often gloomier, which leads to many questions regarding the prudence of applying our standards of law and morality (Sislin, 1994).

The international system is characterized by good and evil. In fact, there are individuals or groups that, at least in practice, maintain that what they consider to be lofty goals do justify acts that most other people would condemn as morally abhorrent. A case in point is acts of terrorism. In global politics, there are competing values that must be protected by independent countries. These competing values have often degenerated into full blown wars. However, with the

termination of the Second World War what ensued between the hegemonic powers was cold war. United States of America and Russia were the principal actors in stockpiling weapons of mass destruction, and other countries had to also take adequate precaution if they must survive any devastating attack. This was done through alliance with either of the hegemonic powers. No country can afford to be self-reliant on its military capability.

We may raise the simple but critical question of “why war?” In this sense, there is no single reason why people fight. However, the reasons why wars are fought can be classified into three levels of analysis: system level analysis (Cashman, 1999); state-level analysis (Gerald, 1999; Morgan & Anderson, 1999); and individual-level analysis (Huth, 1996). At this point, we may not be bothered with discussing these levels because this is not the main purpose of the paper.

The need for arms control and disarmament cannot be overemphasized considering the competing nature of states in international politics. States have built strong military as a strategy to survive any military incursion. This national military power adds to a country's ability to prevail in international disputes. This makes it imperative to first consider the nature of military power that provides the sword for policy makers to wield. As a matter of fact, military power is based on several tangible factors, such as spending and weapons level, and intangible factors, such as leadership, morale, and reputation. We must note that military power is not free, and so acquiring it and using it can be expensive in several direct and indirect ways. This means that weak and poor countries are likely to have weak and less powerful military. Based on international law, these weak countries have the right to coexist alongside the most powerful ones, the reason arms control and disarmament must be properly implemented.

International supply of arms is a big business because it generates tens of billions of dollars annually to the supplier. Indeed, the global flow of arms is considered as a form of intervention, because whether intended or not, it has an impact on events within countries and between countries. Arms control deals with the restraints that are imposed upon the use of nuclear weapons, while arms disarmament is the complete abolition or partial reduction of the human and material resources of war (Spanier & Noguee, 1962). Furthermore, arms transfer frequently either supply dissidents using unconventional warfare to confront a government, or they are supplied to government to fight dissidents. Hence, the international flow of weapons is understood as an indirect intervention abroad, and it inadvertently promotes unconventional military action. An example is the case of Boko Haram and Bandits operating in Nigeria, where some security personnel have openly declared that the fire power of the dissidents is more superior to their own. How true these assertions are is left for the military authorities to accept or deny.

Several reasons have been advanced on why countries sell and give weapons to other countries or to insurgent groups. Supporting allies during peacetime is one motive, and intervening in a conflict is another reason a country supply weapons. Take the case of Russia and Ukraine where NATO has bolstered its eastern defenses, deploying additional troops and enhancing readiness in response to Russian aggression (<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/article/west..>). It is believed that the U. S. is involved in the war in the Middle East, especially between Israel and the Hamas. The United States of America has been accused by Iran in the exchange of hostilities between it and Israel in most recent times. Finally, striving for diplomatic influence over the recipient is another motive for arms supply. This is done by befriending the recipient country or by creating a dependency relationship (Sislin, 1994).

Countries build strong military reputations for several reasons, among them are for defense against external aggression, control and independence. Countries with strong military capabilities like the U.S. dictate most international happenings in international affairs. The U.S. has confidence in its military because its Air capability is as excellent as the land troops and of course its water capability. Only few countries in the world can dare the U. S. although new powers are emerging in global politics; and time shall tell. Thus, the paper entails that in a world highly motivated by growing technology, and in the face of constant animosity between nations; arms control and disarmament is crucial.

The Concept of War

Scholars have conceptualized war in various ways ranging from cold war, hot war, limited war, total war, conventional war, unconventional war, civil war, guerrilla war, preventive war, political warfare, propaganda war, psychological warfare, and so on. According to Carl von Clausewitz (1976), war is a political instrument, a continuation of political activity by other means; politics is also defined as the trustee and the representative of all the interest of the community. In fact, Clausewitz insists that politics permeates all levels of military action. The definition adds that, war is the final argument of kings and that it is the adjunct of politics. This is quite apt because where dialogues or arguments fail to broker peace, war becomes the last option for settlement between the competing parties.

Simply, war refers to several kinds of hostilities besides the direct use of armed force, thus making the borderlands between war and peace becoming slimmer (Palmer & Parkins, 2005). This definition fits in properly in the context of this paper because it captures why there is need for arms control and disarmament. War involves a larger proportion of the belligerent states' population and resources and, while less frequent, to be more intense, more extended, and more expensive (Coker, 2022). However, in the context of this paper, war refers to the senseless killings and destruction of lives and property using various kind of destructive weapons for the purpose of enforcing power.

The Concept of Arms Control and Arms Disarmament

According to Hedley Bull (1961), disarmament is the reduction of armaments. This can be unilateral or multi-lateral; general or local; comprehensive or partial; controlled or uncontrolled. He stated that, arms control on the other hand involves restraint internationally exercised upon armaments policy, whether in respect to the level of armaments, their character, deployment or use.

In a similar manner, John Spanier and Joseph Noguee (1962) refer to disarmament as the complete abolition or partial reduction of the human and material resources of war. They see arms control as dealing with the restraints to be imposed upon the use of nuclear weapons (Spanier & Noguee, 1962). Gathered from the above definitions are vital distinction between reduction and restraint. Arms control can overlap disarmament because it involves reductions in armament and it can also involve increases in military capability if it becomes necessary for achieving restraints between adversaries. Arms control and disarmament are sometimes used interchangeably although there is a thin line between the two.

Arms control is the deliberate restraining of weapons of mass destruction (biological and chemical weapons) to a lesser degree. Advocates of arms control argue that weapons create insecurity and tensions that can lead to war. However, skeptics of arms control posit and emphasize that, nations should arm themselves and fight because the world is dangerous. They believe that political settlements should be achieved before contemplating control or reduction.

However, the idealists concur with Homer's observation that the blade itself incites violence. In a nutshell, empirical research has not confirmed why the arms races always occur (Koubi, 1999). Homer is absolutely right, because if countries lack the military capability to defend themselves, they will be most willing to accept peace deals without question. Every country wants to continue to survive and exist no matter the level of technological and military weakness.

Methodology

For the purpose of this paper, the researcher relied strongly on content analysis where secondary data was employed. However, the researchers' personal observations also contributed to the data required for analysis.

Military Power: The Dangers of Overemphasis

We cannot be talking of arms control and disarmament without necessarily mentioning military might; however, there are dangers of overemphasis. Given the significance of military power as a tool of national defense and diplomacy, it is not uncommon for people to assume that the phrase "too much military power" must be an oxymoron. There is certainty that there are vivid dangers connected with overemphasizing military power. Worthy of note or special mention is that, there are three such dangers and they include: Insecurity, temptation and cost. No wonder, the idealists chose the path of peace if the world must continue to enjoy the security of lives and property.

In the first place, arms control and disarmament is an important factor in international politics because ordinarily military power creates insecurity. In fact, one basic reason countries acquire power is the spiral of insecurity, which is to say, attempts to amass power is to achieve security or gain other such ends that are consistently perceived by others as danger to them. Once this perception is upheld, they then seek to acquire offsetting power, which others see as threatening, arousing the desire to acquire even more power. The quest to acquire more power by countries for the purpose of self-defense is infinitum, and in an escalating spiral. Indeed, arms race is a complex phenomenon, but the interaction of one country's power and other countries' insecurity is an important factor in world politics.

Second, amassing excess military power is the temptation to use it in a situation that is peripheral to the national interest. Countries that have acquired military might usually would be tempted to claim supremacy in world politics. America is a good example because on several occasions American military are all over the place in the name of peace operations simply because of their superiority in weapons of mass destruction. The point here is that, one can never be sure, but it is an established fact that it is hard to shoot someone if you do not own a gun.

Third, acquiring military power is an expensive endeavor for its own sake. Beyond short-term budget decisions about expenditure (domestic or defense programs) and how to pay the bills, there is a more long-range concern. A particular military strategist once stated that, imperial overstretch was the reason for their degeneration (Kennedy, 1988). The point is that, super powers of the past put in so much resources into military power that, ironically they weakened the country's capacity by siphoning off resources that should have been used to maintain and improve the country's infrastructure. Contributing in the argument, declinists warn that United States of America is guilty of imperial overstretch and could go the way of other great powers that rose, dominated, then collapsed from the peak of power. Although imperial overstretch has been criticized (Knutsen, 1999), the thesis is still valid in explaining why powers lose relevance considering recent technological developments.

Literature Review

For scholars of arms control, all that can be hoped for is the reduction of the risk of war by limiting the outcomes if it occurs, and thus contributing to peaceful change. Arms control entails adjustments in military postures and doctrines that induce reciprocal adjustments by a potential opponent. This can be mutually beneficial if they reduce the danger that neither side wants, or contain its violence or otherwise serve the security of the country. On the other hand, contributions on disarmament suggest that it is possible to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. Scholars of this approach assume that tensions between states can be overcome through a process of liberal education. They further stated that, education can create greater understanding thereby helping to overcome the kind of belligerent attitudes that motivate leaders to acquire weapons. Others used the political divisions between states to explain the need for disarmament. They believe seeking political settlement between hostile states will erode the need for armaments (Schelling & Halperin, 1961). These arguments may be difficult to comprehend because there is no permanent friend or enemy in international politics. This has made countries to take extra precautions in whatever decisions they make concerning their security.

Since arms control lays emphasis on restraint rather than abolition, distinction is drawn between structural and operational arms control. Structural arms control is often regarded as the more significant because it addresses the quantity and quality of armaments themselves. The objective is to make efforts to achieve parity and or stability in the balance of armaments between hostile states, this could be achieved through small strategic arms limitation talks (SALT) and strategic arms reduction talks (START) agreements. Conversely, operational arms control aims to contain the behavior of armed forces by preventing military deployments and proactive actions that are capable of increasing the chances of war. These kind of arms control measures usually help in ameliorating crises each time they occur and help in building confidence between potential enemies. From the above stance on both arms control and disarmament, the scholars built their arguments on assumptions that states would jeopardize their interests, existence and survival by mere agreements that could be violated. Considering the competing and anarchic nature of the world, states will continue to develop weapons for self-defense and internal control; as such this is not practically achievable no matter how much this is desired.

Arms control is necessary considering the breakthrough in technology and its impact on arms dynamic and deterrence strategies. However, arms control is less ambitious and more sophisticated than disarmament because it attempts to manage the arms dynamic. This can be done unilaterally or by negotiation, in such a way as to restrain arms racing tendencies and reduce instabilities within a relationship of mutual deterrence. For arms control, arms dynamic, or deterrence, or weapons are not problems in themselves. The actual challenge is the failure of political legitimacy and trust among states and actors. This has been worsened by economic interests among and between competing states, and of course the complexity of modern security challenges. The consequence of this is that, non-state actors and diverse geopolitical interests have combined to perpetrate global insecurity (James, 2018). Countries have continued to exhibit mutual distrust because of the failure of political legitimacy amongst them and the rising activities of non-state actors.

The spread of military technology is a broad-based phenomenon although the major literature on it is narrowly discussed in terms of the arms trade. It is clear that, arms trade does not only refer to international sales of weapons, but also to transfers of weapons on a

political basis, and to the international operations of the arms industry. Several scholars have written on the interests, motives, and policies of both suppliers and recipients (Lewis, 1969; Robert, 1982; & David, 2007). There is a whole world of covert transfers several of which never surface into the public domain. These undisclosed transfers otherwise illicit arms trade can pose serious challenges to international security and control. This is strategically referred to as grey and black market in arms deal. Without the arms trade, there would be a tremendous disparity in military power between those states able to produce modern weapons, and those that are not able.

The existence of the trade allows non-producers to narrow, if not to close the gap between their own military standing and that of producer states. Despite the strong support for it from both suppliers and recipients, arms trade causes intense controversy which in part reflects that the interplay of geopolitical interests, economic motivations, and the potential for violence shapes the dynamics of arms transfers. In fact, such practices have not only heightened global conflicts, but have led to unprecedented humanitarian violence and the violation of international law especially by non-state actors (Krause, 1992).

In a world filled with uncertainty and fear, confusion, hate, competition, conflict over resources, rivalry, suppression and oppression, is it possible for disarmament to be fully operational in international politics? The question to answer will be who disarms who and how? In fact, within the disarmament process, there are factors that might well tend to sustain the action-reaction dynamic. It is obvious is the fear of cheating by other states. Practically speaking, disarmament is not feasible at the domestic level where a lot of coercion is needed for internal purposes (Krause, 2021). This was why the concept was replaced by arms control which the idealists believed it contributed to keeping the Cold War. However, skeptics believe that the concept of arms control is fatally flawed, because agreements did not help avoid war or help bring the Cold War to an end. Their argument is tied to the fact that; political relations have improved making post-Cold War very irrelevant. However, this perception is subject to debate because in as much as there is improvement in political relations; there is conversely technological leap.

The idea of disarmament was conceived from the fact that since weapons create the problem, the immediate solution would be to get rid of them. The logic of disarmament could involve all categories of weapons or some specific weapons considered to be particularly dangerous, for instance nuclear bombs and biological warfare agents. The concept also refers to the reduction of both the process of military capabilities and to the end condition of being disarmed. Historically, the logic of disarmament has achieved little or no results at all. Disarmament negotiations in the United Nations after the Second World War were mostly propaganda exercise between the superpowers. It was for this lack of success that arms control largely replaced disarmament as the organizing concept for negotiations. The concept disarmament became simply an aspect of arms control basically to reduce the size of strategic arsenals globally (Buzan, 1987).

The basic response of disarmament is to seek solution in the reduction and abolition of weapons. This process is contrary to that of the arms dynamic, thereby contradicting the logic of deterrence as a means of preventing war. The goal of disarmament is to render arms racing and deterrence both unnecessary and impossible. Judging by the objective of disarmament, it is not possible that countries powerful or less powerful would allow themselves to submit to such treaty (Colin, 1993). It is evidently clear, that the idea of disarmament in the first place was a mere rhetoric in all sense of the word.

Theoretical Review

For the purpose of this research, the researcher considered one theory, the theory of arms control so as to gain understanding of arms, their usage and control. The theory of arms control hinges on limiting the development and use of weapons of mass destruction so as to reduce the likelihood of war. Human beings by nature are self-seeking, bias, and selfish in pursuit of their goals. This is more especially where power plays a significant role in goal attainment. The theory was propounded by Halperin and Thomas (1961). This is true considering the adage that says, power is might.

The central argument of the theory of arms control states that, arms control has the capacity of stabilizing the international relations by managing military competition thus preventing the escalation of war between and among countries, especially in an anarchic world. The central thesis of the theory suggests that effective arms control can enhance global security and stability by establishing mutual restraints on armaments between hostile countries, such as was the case between Russia and United States of America. However, the point to note is that, can there in real terms be mutual restraints between hostile countries? The suspicion will always continue to mount by both countries.

The basic assumptions of the theory include among others: states can act rationally so as to avoid mutual destruction, they can do this through cooperation even among hostile countries, and that this is necessary because certain weapons create instability and increase the risk of war. The strengths of the theory are in its ability to promote stability, reduce arms stockpiling, and mitigate the risks of accidental war. However, the theory is not without its weaknesses. Some of these weaknesses are that: the theory relies so much on trust and verification not taking into cognizance what conflict may cause in a competing world. The theory does not have the capacity to address underlying conflicts or motivations of war (Kenneth, 1986). In the context of this study, the theory of arms control and disarmament provided the framework that aimed at minimizing the risk of war and reducing arms race such that global peace and security will be enhanced.

Arguments Advanced on Arms Control and Disarmament

Scholars have added their voices on arms control and disarmament. Some of them opined that it would reduce the risk of conflict in the international community. According to them, the logic of arms control and disarmament has the capacity to reduce likelihood of war by limiting military capabilities. This is most imperative in the contemporary world where various violent conflicts occur on a daily basis. They averred that through arms control and disarmament, the root causes of such conflicts would be addressed. Furthermore, disarmament would allow resources to be redirected from high spending on military to social and humanitarian needs, thereby promoting global stability and justice. It has the potential of weakening military-industrial complexes that promote conflict. Some of the scholars asserted that, disarmament initiatives may disregard existing political tensions. It is for this reason that such adventures have failed to prevent major conflicts in the past. As a matter of fact, disarmament erodes national security by tampering with essential deterrent capabilities, thus exposing several states to vulnerability of aggression (<https://www.warpp.info/en/m7/articles/m>).

Conclusion and Recommendations

For the sustenance of peace and stability in a chaotic and competitive world, the logic of arms control and disarmament is ideal. Arms control and disarmament can only be feasible through purposive cooperation amongst the super powers in the international system. It is clear that global peace and stability cannot be achieved in tumultuous and war-ridden system. Arms

control and disarmament can be hampered if countries that supply and transfer arms of mass destruction are not de-motivated by UN Security Council. It is clear that frequent flow of weapons and diffusion of war-making material in less developed countries have increased the tempo of global violence. There is the urgent need for the UN to deliberately strengthen international conventions and framework aimed at eliminating weapons of mass destruction. In the same vein, diplomacy and human security should be prioritized by countries against huge expenditure on military resources. The UN should continue to emphasize peace and disarmament initiatives while at the same time de-emphasizing the production of weapons of mass destruction globally. It is true that, the UN serves more or less as an advisory body in these issues since it does not have any reserved power to compel obedience. The superpowers are eventually members of the UN and so unless they show willingness in promoting global peace via arms control and disarmament. Finally, the flow of weapons especially to the Less Developed Countries should be properly checked by UNs Security Council, because most violent conflicts across the globe are situated in these areas. This could be achieved by invoking Resolution 1540 of 2004. Since most of these countries do not manufacture the weapons, arms control and disarmament would reduce drastically the killings in these countries.

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