



## Balance of Terror: The weaponry for the preservation of International Peace

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### Abstract

This work focused on the Balance of Terror as the weapon for the preservation of International Peace. It endeavours to find out to what extent the Balance of Power prevented the outbreak of the Third World War. This was so because neither the United States nor the Soviet Union would risk nuclear Armageddon to advance territorial or power goals, hence a fearful stalemate ensued. This era heralded the advent of the most destructive instruments in the annals of humans' development – the Atomic Bomb and the Ballistic Missiles. The presence of these instruments in the midst of humanity, gave rational beings something to worry about the study employed the historical methods which emphasise description, thematic presentation, interpretation and analysis of facts. Information for this study was obtained from secondary sources like textbooks, journal articles, magazines, and so on were used. The findings show that the increment in armament and the sophistication of nuclear weapons endangered human existence in this planet. Yet it craved strategies for the preservation of international peace through Balance of Terror.

**Keywords:** Balance of Terror, Weaponry, Preservation, International Peace

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### Introduction

The World War II, ended with the emergency of two opposing ideological blocs in international system led by the United States of America on one hand and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) on the other hand. The Cold War, a brain-child of the Second World War, originated from the war-time illusions of the Western Statesmen. These actors notably, Winston Churchill Prime Minister of Britain and President Truman of America, anticipated a post war co-operation of Soviet Union, but the post war development disillusioned them. This is aptly stated by Fleming D., *The Cold War, originated in the chagrin of Western leaders, notably Churchill and Truman, over Soviet control of central and Eastern Europe after World War II* <sup>[1]</sup>.

The Cold War has been boiling between Western and Eastern bloc nations since 1949, with brief diplomatic rapprochement until 1975. The years in between were tension – ridden. Mankind lived under the perpetual fear of nuclear holocaust, with every stage of the Cold War, the world stood like a status waiting for Armageddon to come. The question uppermost in men's mind was, when will the Third World War occur? What nature will it take, and probably who will trigger it off. By 1970, following the imperative imposition of détente on international system, it became obvious that World War, the third in the history of mankind, is not likely to occur, because of this, some analysis argued that the Cold War did not violate international peace. Our concern here is to know what roles the Cold War played in aggravating the global tension on one hand and at the other, the ways it embraced the peaceful resolution of international conflicts.

The Soviet violation of the allies post war peace treaties at Teheran, Yalta, and Potsdam, her outright blockade of her portion of Berlin from the West, the communist expansionism in East Europe, and the Soviet's frustration of free election in Eastern Europe alarmed the Western leaders. "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, Sir Winston Churchill warned, an iron curtain has descended across the continent" <sup>[2]</sup>.

The Second World War ended in a most spectacular way – the emergence of the two super-powers and the birth of the atomic bomb.

This destructive instrument was used by the United States to end the war with Japan. Britain having secretly possess the atomic bomb, took steps to conceal it from Soviet Union and other actors of international political system. In his iron curtain speech on May 3, 1946, Winston Churchill of Britain said:

It would nevertheless be wrong and impudent to entrust the secret knowledge or experience of the atomic bomb, which United States, Britain and Canada now shares, to the World Organisation, while it is in its infancy. It would be criminal madness to cast it adrift in this agitated and unratated world. No one in any country has slept less well in their beds because this knowledge and the method and the materials to supply it, are at present retained in American hands. I do not believe, we should all have slept so soundly, had the position be reversed, and if some communist or neo-fascist state monopolised for the time being these dresded agencies <sup>[3]</sup>.

The monopoly of the atomic bomb by the West and the war time strategy of the western allies nations whereby they delayed the opening of the second front for lack of sufficient barges for such enormous undertaking and which the Soviet's interpreted as a "delibrate attempt by the World's two leading capitalist powers to destroy both of their two major ideological opponents one and the same time" <sup>[4]</sup>, naturally led to mutual suspicion of Western powers by the Soviet Union. She saw her Western allies, war time delay in opening the second front as a calculated attempt by the West to expose the Red Army to massive onslaught of the Nazi's. during the war-time and post war-time peace conferences, the allied powers laid down modalities for post war settlement. Hence the end of the World War II, heralded the division of Europe between the victor powers – Britain, America, Soviet Union and France.

The Balance of Terror had meaningful impact on international peace. These can be seen in the areas of the preservation of international Peace, To this end, this work is devoted to finding out how the balance of terror between United States of America and Soviet Union relations helped to preserve International Peace and prevent the advent of the third world war.

The paper is divided into five parts. The first part is introduction. The second section deals with the conceptual clarification. This was followed by the theoretical framework which was the tool used for the analysis of this work. The fourth was the discussion on the balance of terror the weapon for the preservation of international peace. The last part is the conclusion. The argument tends to suggest that the arms race, a grandchild of Cold War, led to balance of terror in the international system; thus balance, prevented instead of voilating international peace.

### Conceptual Clarification

The study engages a few words or concepts which may seem quite ambiguous. These concepts require some clarifications. It is my intention to define them in brief to enable readers to understand and digest the work without racking their brain.

**Cold War:** This is a state of intensive competition devoid of armed conflict between states – a policy of making mischief by all methods short of War between nations <sup>[5]</sup>.

**Balance of Power:** This is a theory of international relations which according to Isaak, "Balance of Power system is an equilibrium made up of approximately equal power or

nations set against each other so that no one power can predominate" <sup>[6]</sup>.

**Iron Curtain:** Is an ideological barrier separating the Soviet Union and the communist countries of East Europe from the Western countries, which hindered trade and communication <sup>[7]</sup>.

**International System:** In the words of Stanley Hofmann, "is a pattern of relations between the basic units of world politics, who is characterised by the scope of the objectives pursued by these units and of the tasks performed among them, as well as by the means used in order to achieve those goals and perform these tasks" <sup>[8]</sup>.

**Deterrence:** Deterrence "is persuading an enemy that attacking you will not be worth any potential gain" <sup>[9]</sup>.

**Balance of Terror:** Is a state of equilibrium in the possession of nuclear weapons by which both ideological powers could destroy each other <sup>[10]</sup>.

**Diplomatic Rapture:** this is a situation of severance of diplomatic or formal political relations between nations who hitherto were enjoying cordial relations <sup>[11]</sup>.

**Western Powers:** The term western powers is used to indicate the capitalist nations of Europe led by the United States <sup>[12]</sup>.

### Theoretical Framwork

Cold War is a research field that poses serious problem of choice in adopting a theoretical framework for its analysis. This is because of the abundance of contending frameworks. There are System Theory, Mutual Aid Theory, Conflict Resolution, Centre Periphery, Marxist and Game Theory <sup>[13]</sup>. These theories can equally provide a perfect theoretical mould for the analysis of the Balance of Terror as the weapon for the preservation of international peace.

In evaluating balance of power as the weapon for the preservation of international peace, it is my intention to use the Deterrence Theory as my tools of analyses because, it seems to be most relevant to the topic under investigation. The proponent of the theory was Huth. Deterrence theory is based upon the concept which can be defined as the use of threats by one party to convince another party to refrain from initiating some course of action <sup>[14]</sup>. The doctrine gained increased prominence as a military strategy during the Cold War with regard to the use of nuclear weapons and is related to but distinct from the concept of mutual assured destruction, which models the preventative nature of full-scale nuclear attack that would devastate both parties in a nuclear war <sup>[15]</sup>. Deterrence according to Chukwu, "Is a strategy intended to dissuade an adversary from taking an action that has not yet started by means of threat of reprisal, or to prevent it from doing something that another state desires" <sup>[16]</sup>. Chukwu further opined that, "A threat serves as a deterrent to the extent that it convinces its target not to carry out the intended action because of the costs and losses that target would incur" <sup>[17]</sup>. In international security, a policy of deterrence generally refers to threats of military retaliation directed by the leaders of one state to the leaders of another in an attempt to prevent the other state from resorting to the use of military force in pursuit of its foreign policy goals <sup>[18]</sup>.

A policy of deterrence can fit into two broad categories: preventing an armed attack against a state's own territory (known as direct deterrence) or preventing an armed attack against another state (known as extended deterrence). Situations of direct deterrence often occur if there is a territorial dispute between neighboring states in which major powers like the United States do not directly intervene. On the other hand, situations of extended deterrence often occur when a great power becomes involved. Building on the two broad categories, Huth goes on to outline that deterrence policy may be implemented in response to a pressing short-term threat (known as immediate deterrence) or as strategy to prevent a military conflict or short-term threat from arising (known as general deterrence).

A successful deterrence policy must be considered in military terms and also political terms: International relations, foreign policy and diplomacy. In military terms, deterrence success refers to preventing state leaders from issuing military threats and actions that escalate peacetime diplomatic and military co-operation into a crisis or militarised confrontation that threatens armed conflict and possibly war. The prevention of crises of wars, however, is not the only aim of deterrence. In addition, defending states must be able to resist the political and the military demands of a potential attacking nation. If armed conflict is avoided at the price of diplomatic concessions to the maximum demands of the potential attacking nation under the threat of war, it cannot be claimed that deterrence has succeeded.

Deterrence theory holds that nuclear weapons are intended to deter other states from attacking with their nuclear weapons, through the promise of retaliation and possibly mutually assured destruction. Nuclear deterrence can also be applied to an attack by conventional forces. For example, the doctrine of massive retaliation threatened to launch US nuclear weapons in response to Soviet attacks. A successful nuclear deterrent requires a country to preserve its ability to retaliate by responding before its own weapons are destroyed or ensuring a second-strike capability. A nuclear deterrent is sometimes composed of a nuclear triad, as in the case of the nuclear weapons owned by the United States, Russia, the China and India. Other countries, such as the United Kingdom and France, have only sea-based and air-based nuclear weapons.

The Balance of Power provides important empirical evidence for re-examining theories of nuclear deterrence and crisis behaviour developed during the Cold War, and offers new insight and lessons for current and future nuclear challenges. Balance of Power sheds new light on the behaviour of new nuclear power, the behaviour of major nuclear powers towards new nuclear states, the dynamics of crises in vastly asymmetric nuclear relationships; and the role of strategic culture in deterrence behaviour.

### **Balance of Terror and the Preservation of International Peace**

It will be interesting to note here or remind ourselves once more that the demise of the Western monopoly of atomic bomb in August 1949, sparked off a chain of reactions that eventually culminated in a cut – throat competition for the Manufacture and perfection of the nations. Before the advent of Soviet A- bomb, the popular notion in the West was that the Soviet will not initiate military aggression against the United States and her allies for to do so meant suicide for the Soviet. The notion was best illustrated by the Churchillian

dictum – “before Nato, only united States monopoly of atomic bomb stood between Western Europe and Soviet conquest”.

When the Soviet punctured the atomic secrete, the West reacted by their intensification of efforts in manufacturing and stock pilation of nuclear weapons. The Soviet responded by stock piling their own nuclear devices. This state of affair could not have led to any other thing, other than nuclear stalemate. The mad rush for the production of nuclear weapons resulted in a super-balance in the power equation of international actors. This balance situation arose in which none of the antagonist will dare attack the other, because such initiative will spark off nuclear war, which will lead to complete annihilation of mankind. This is known as deterrence. Molenkov quoted by Dnerstein perceived the situaion very vividly:

The newest weapons – the atomic and hydrogen bomb which are the means for unleashing wars in the hands of the aggressors, in our hands are the best means for safe-guarding the peace, because they tie the hands off those who would like to fight <sup>[19]</sup>.

Dinerstein further argued “That the destructiveness of nuclear weapon seemed to promise that at least, war had become so fruitless, that all must avoid it” <sup>[20]</sup>. In his opinion, Khrushchev stated,

In addition to immediate destruction, the employment of nuclear weapons will poison the atmosphere with radioactive fall-out and this could lead to the annihilation of almost all life, especially in countries of small territory and high population density. There, all will be literally wiped off the earth <sup>[21]</sup>.

Eventually arms race imposed its lasting influence, the Curchillian “balance of terror”. This is a term used by Winston Churchill to described a situation where the nuclear giants had stock piled and perfected the nuclear weapons under their control, in such a way that an equilibrium is attained in their military strengths. In a balance of terror, both side had got enough missiles to deter themselves from unleashing nuclear attack on one another.

In fact, a balance was struck in the power equation of contending nuclear powers that non will dare threaten or militate a nuclear attack on the opponent with nuclear weapon. Spanier opined that:

It was the increasing awareness of the danger of bipolar confrontations and nuclear warfare that most moderated the Cold War and changed the behaviour of the United States and the Soviet Union. Both super powers drew the same conclusion from their common fate of being... <sup>[22]</sup>

Winston Churchill observed that “It may be that we shall by a process of subline Irony, come to a point where safety will be the study child of terror and survival the twin brother of annihilation” <sup>[23]</sup>. The fear and counter fear was also evident in the United States and Soviet Union which atomic scientist J. Robert Oppreheimer wrote, were like, “Two scorpions in a battle, each capable of killing the others” <sup>[24]</sup>.

Strauss’s was tartly in agreement, by affirming that, The effect of the nuclear balance, between the two giants now rests solely on the fact that both the Russians and the Americans are in possession of adequate “second strike capability both in terms of quantity and quality, with the result that their arsenal of intercontinental missiles is safe from a first strike” by the enemy. They are therefore in a position to retaliate against that of the enemy <sup>[25]</sup>.

Strauss seems to be stressing that both powers are destined to

co-operate rather than antagonise each other because nuclear forces and its delivery system had made war which will not need the actual mobilisation of troops but more pressing of buttons uncalled for. Continuing, he emphasised on his earlier assertion:

It follows, he said, from this each of the two super-powers now has its finger, not only on its own nuclear trigger, but in effect also on that on the other side. Neither dares fire the first shot since, by so doing, it would automatically trigger off the second round, by which it would itself be hit. Since any decision to kill the enemy now virtually amounts to suicide, a position of mutual paralysis has emerged as between the USSR and the U. S. A. Although, this situation owes its existence to mutual fear, it nevertheless provides the two countries with security from attack by one another <sup>[26]</sup>.

There is no gain-saying that the balance of terror contributed immensely in preserving international peace vis-à-vis. This can be ascertained from the change of attitude of chief protagonists of cold war towards one another. President Eisenhower was reported to have proclaimed that there was “no alternative to peace” <sup>[27]</sup>. In 1955, Khrushchev echoed Eisenhower’s conviction by proclaiming his proverbial “peaceful co-existence” and decisively declared that “Lenin’s prophecy of an inevitable war between communism and capitalism had become out model through modern technology” <sup>[28]</sup>.

Nonetheless, one of the undisputed impact of the cold war on international peace was its preservation. The crash stock piling of nuclear weapon, arms race, had significances, according to the evidence in President Ronald Reagan’s Mantra, “peace through strength” <sup>[29]</sup>. Dinerstein opinion was imperative and conclusive, “the destructiveness of nuclear weapons, he said, seemed to promise that at last war had become so fruitless that all must avoid it” <sup>[30]</sup>.

The enduring impact of the cold war on international peace, is that first, it put man’s hands instruments with which to destroy one another then it generated on international actors need for pacific resolution of international conflicts and the need for the reduction of nuclear weapons in their possession and finally culminated in the balance of terror which imperatively ruled out the use of force in settling conflicting demands on international system. In other words, humankind owe their continued existence today to the deterrence which led inexorably to balance of terror which unequivocally ruled out the resort to armed aggression in inter – state diplomacy, for according to Russell, “The immense destructive power of nuclear weapons made world war untenable and the death of Stalin made co-existence possible as well as necessary” <sup>[31]</sup>.

To this, Strauss was of the opinion that:

The policy of deterrence by permanent threat is now being abandoned in favour of a policy aimed at maintaining peace through a sort of understanding among accomplices – in this case the two nuclear giants <sup>[32]</sup>.

To this end, I wish to round up with an observation that Arms Race vis-à-vis its proliferation preserve international peace.

## Conclusion

This research has tried to examine of Terror as the weaponry for the preservation of international peace. Efforts were made in examining the influence of the Cold War on international peace. In the process of analysing the Cold War, it was proven that the relationship of the era, is one that triggers nuclear weapon proliferation, which kindled the desire for peace amongst international actors.

In this wise, it is clear that the increment in armament and the sophistication of such weapons endanger human existence in this planet. Yet it craves strategies for the preservation of international peace through Balance of Terror. The actual influences of the psycho-ideological struggle between the Eastern and Western bloc-nations on international peace, and also find out the extent the brain-child of Second World War (Cold War) had encroached on the peaceful coexistence of actors in international political system.

Paradoxically, the Cold War which gave birth to the nuclear arms race preserved international peace because the destructiveness of nuclear equipment – to be precise, made global war useless, knowing that its usage will herald the extermination of all lives on earth including the deployer of such dreaded instrument this was shared by Essan Gala:

It is considered likely by many that the system of security which is inherent in the strategic relationship between the superpowers based as it is on a balance of terror, has discouraged them for over three decades from initiating military conflicts directly with each other. It is also assumed that it has prevented regional conflicts in which either side might be involved to escalate to global conflict <sup>[33]</sup>.

In order to end the Cold War, which theoretically has ended with the death of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, but practically as a student of international politics, believe that it is still going on between the major powers. The nuclear giants should change their aggressive policies. They have to pursue the arms control measures, and the disarmament programme religiously and ought to replace Arms Limitation Talks with Disarmament. It is only when the super powers are fully disarmed, that they will become vulnerable to nuclear or conventional aggressions like the Lilliputian actors of global politics. In the wise, they will really be compelled to see peace as the actual ends of humankind.

Finally, peaceful atmosphere has to be created to enable actors interact without threatening the world with global conflict. This can be accomplished through the replacement of bipolarity with multi-polarity as well as collective security in the inter-state relations in international system. This will go a long way in neutralising bipolar system of international politics which will drastically curtail the colossal strength of nuclear mega-powers. Or in alternative, since armament led to “balance of terror” and the consequence preservation of global peace, all nations have to arm themselves with nuclear warheads to safe-guard themselves. With all nations armed to the teeth, none will dare strike the other. This will hold water, if national and God-fearing actors are to occupy strategic roles in international political system or else a Hitler will resurrect to shake the global and inexorably destroy the world.

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