

Global Balance of Power Relations to Balance of Terror: from Westphalia to Warsaw Implications for International Peace and Security

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Abstract

The balance of power is not a new concept in historical writings or diplomatic arena, from the time of Thucydides, balance of power amongst the ancient Greek city-states had already been established. In the same vein, several treaties such as Westphalia (1648); Triple Alliance (1882) and Triple *Entente* (1891-1907), emerged at various era to checkmate balance of power and equilibrium. The aim of this paper is to examine the utilization of the balance of power whether or not it was able to prevent an outcome of war in the international system, or has it been able to achieve real power equilibrium and parity among the contending super heavy weight global players, nor has it introduced a new treat of reciprocal annihilation and mutual deterrence? All of these would be examine in the context renewed cold war rivalry and antagonism through the pattern of vetoes among the big brothers of permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. The methodology adopted by this article is qualitative, utilizing only secondary sources of data for its analysis

Keywords:

Balance of power,
Balance of terror,
Mutual deterrence,
Reciprocal
annihilation

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Background to the Study

Cold war episode was an era in the international system classified by intense rivalry in ideological pursuit, alliances, military build-up and above all, pursuant of nuclear armament in the international arena. A period known as the bipolarity, meaning occupation of the international political space by two contending hegemon. That is, the United States with its Western European allies, and the Soviet wielding power in Eastern Europe and Eurasia peninsula. This paper examines the growing threat to global peace and security, from balance of power to balance of terror in an unhealthy atmosphere of antagonism and mutual distrust among global super heavy weight contenders, each with the capacity for mutual destruction.

There seems not to be a consensus among historians to situate the actual origin of cold war; some traced the origin to the 1917 Russian Revolution, whereas, others seem to situate it immediately after the end of the Second World War. Scholars who considers cold war immediately after world war II, points out to the fact that the deployment of nuclear war heads in warfare changed the strategic dynamics in the international system. The discovery and used of weapon of mass destruction by the United States on Japan, instigated the Soviet to embarked space mission. In the aftermath of world war II and the struggle for world's leadership and the frightening pattern of the new strategic thinking, nations sought to form alliances and sign military pacts for purpose of deterrence in the impending nuclear build-up.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is a military alliance of twenty-eight North American and European countries. The role of the organization was to safeguard the freedom and security of its member countries by political and military means. North Atlantic Treaty Organization was established by the North Atlantic Treaty (also called the Washington Treaty) of April 4, 1949, which sought to create a counterweight to [Soviet](#) armies stationed in central and Eastern Europe after [World War II](#). Its original members were [Belgium](#), [Canada](#), [Denmark](#), [France](#), [Iceland](#), [Italy](#), [Luxembourg](#), the [Netherlands](#), [Norway](#), [Portugal](#), the [United Kingdom](#), and the [United States](#). Joining the original signatories were [Greece](#) and [Turkey](#) (1952); [West Germany](#) (1955; from 1990 as [Germany](#)); [Spain](#) (1982); the [Czech Republic](#), [Hungary](#), and [Poland](#) (1999); [Bulgaria](#), [Estonia](#), [Latvia](#), [Lithuania](#), [Romania](#), [Slovakia](#), and [Slovenia](#) (2004); [Albania](#) and [Croatia](#) (2009); and [Montenegro](#) (2017). France withdrew from the [integrated](#) military command of NATO in 1966 but remained a member of the organization; it resumed its position in NATO's military command in 2009. The heart of NATO is expressed in its (Article 5, 1949, pp.3), in which the signatory members agreed as thus;

an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or [North America](#) shall be considered an attack against them all; and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or [collective](#) self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.

It would of a general consensus that the growing Soviet's military capabilities and military industrial complexes necessitated the formation of NATO. Some scholars are of the opinion that European countries who are Soviet's neighbours, more than the North American countries canvassed for the establishment of NATO. Both in personnel and weaponry, Soviet amassed none to any country in the world. The growing fear annihilation and treat of conquest necessitated for a balance of power parity; hence the Soviet owing to mutual suspicion and treat formed the Warsaw Pact.

Warsaw Pact so name because the treaty was signed in Warsaw included the Soviet Union, Albania, Poland, Romania, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria as members. The treaty called on the member states to come to the defense of any member attacked by an outside force and it set up a unified military command under Marshal Ivan S. Konev of the Soviet Union. The introduction to the treaty establishing the Warsaw Pact indicated the reason for its existence. This revolved around "Western Germany, which is being remilitarized, and her inclusion in the North Atlantic bloc, which increases the danger of a new war and creates a threat to the national security of peace-loving states." This passage referred to the decision by the United States and the other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on May 9, 1955 to make West Germany a member of NATO and allow that nation to remilitarize. Based on the development of continuing armament and configuration of boundaries by Soviet, in which in a statement that In one of the most famous orations of the Cold War period, former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill condemns the Soviet Union's policies in Europe and declared in a speech in Fulton, Missouri United States on May 6, 1946. Churchill's speech is considered one of the opening volleys announcing the beginning of the Cold War. However, since the collapsed of Communism, the tension that got Churchill shivered had been doused down, but not without Russia and China swimming together in the Security Council and the United States, Britain and France on the other synergizing with an unstoppable coherence.

Quest for Global Hegemon

Rivalry between great powers has long characterized world politics, and there is a strong probability that this historical pattern is cyclical and unfolds through a series of distinct phases. According to long-cycle theory, over the past five centuries, periods of global war have been followed by periods of international rule-making and institution building. Shifts in the cycle have occurred alongside changes in the major states' relative power, changing their relations with one another (see Chase-Dunn and Anderson 2005), (cited in Kegley and Blanton, pp. 100-3). Each past global war led to the emergence of a hegemon. With its unrivaled power, the hegemon has reshaped the rules and institutions of the global system to preserve its preeminent position. Hegemony always imposes an extraordinary burden on the world leader. A hegemon must bear the costs of maintaining political and economic order while protecting its position and upholding its dominion. Over time, as the weight of global engagement takes its toll, every previous hegemon has overextended itself. As challengers have arisen, the security agreements so carefully crafted after the last global war have come under attack. Historically, this struggle for power has set the stage for another global war, the demise of one hegemon and the ascent of another. Table 3.1 as presented by (Kegley, and Blanton, 2010, pp. 100-2), summarizes five hundred years of the cyclical rise and fall of great powers, their global wars, and their subsequent efforts to restore order in global system to preserve its preeminent position.

Theoretical Postulate

For a true understanding of the nature of power politics and hegemonic pursue in the international system, two theoretical approaches would be adopted here for lucid analysis.

These are the *Long-Cycle theory* and *Hegemonic Stability Theory*.

Long-Cycle Theory

A theory that focuses on the rise and fall of the leading global power as the central political process of the modern world system. Critics note that long-cycle theorists disagree on whether economic, military, or domestic factors produce these cycles. They also express frustration with the deterministic tone of the theory, which to them implies that global destiny is beyond policy makers' control. Must great powers rise and fall as if by the law of gravity—what goes up must come down? Still, long-cycle theory suggests you should consider how shifts in the relative strength of great powers affect world politics. It rivets attention on hegemonic transitions, the rise and fall of leading states in the global system, and in so doing provokes questions about whether this long cycle can be broken in your future. Long-cycle theory also forces you to evaluate hegemonic stability theory and that theory's predictions. Is the theory correct that a future stable world order will require a sustained global leader dominant enough to punish aggressors who challenge the global status quo in their pursuit of hegemony? Observed (Kegley, and Blanton, 2010, pp. 103)

Hegemonic Stability Theory

A body of theory that maintains that the establishment of hegemony for global dominance by a single great power is a necessary condition for global order in commercial transactions and international military security

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NATO and Warsaw Pact Alliances in the Cold War Era

The quest for global hegemon, balance of power and counter- weight and military security necessitated the post war treaty, alliances and pact during the post war era. All these couple with ideological pursue and contestation reduced the global political atmosphere into an all tension frenzied. This sub heading would analyse the use of military pact and alliances to fur stall any occurrence of war through deterrence, mutual terror and balance of power parity, hence the fear of first strike and the retaliative aftermath, never put the arsenal in used. In one of the most famous orations of the Cold War period, former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill condemns the Soviet Union's policies in Europe and declares, "From Stettin in the

Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent.” Churchill's speech is considered one of the opening volleys announcing the beginning of the Cold War.

Churchill, who had been defeated for re-election as prime minister in 1945, was invited to Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri where he gave this speech. President Harry S. Truman joined Churchill on the platform and listened intently to his speech. Churchill began by praising the United States, which he declared stood “at the pinnacle of world power.” It soon became clear that a primary purpose of his talk was to argue for an even closer “special relationship” between the United States and Great Britain—the great powers of the “English-speaking world”—in organizing and policing the postwar world. In particular, he warned against the expansionistic policies of the Soviet Union. In addition to the “iron curtain” that had descended across Eastern Europe, Churchill spoke of “communist fifth columns” that were operating throughout western and southern Europe. Drawing parallels with the disastrous appeasement of Hitler prior to World War II, Churchill advised that in dealing with the Soviets there was “nothing which they admire so much as strength, and there is nothing for which they have less respect than for military weakness.”

Truman and many other U.S. officials warmly received the speech. Already they had decided that the Soviet Union was bent on expansion and only a tough stance would deter the Russians. Churchill's “iron curtain” phrase immediately entered the official vocabulary of the Cold War. U.S. officials were less enthusiastic about Churchill's call for a “special relationship” between the United States and Great Britain. While they viewed the English as valuable allies in the Cold War, they were also well aware that Britain's power was on the wane and had no intention of being used as pawns to help support the crumbling British Empire. In the Soviet Union, Russian leader Joseph Stalin denounced the speech as “war mongering,” and referred to Churchill's comments about the “English-speaking world” as imperialist “racism.” The British, Americans, and Russians—allies against Hitler less than a year before the speech—were drawing the battle lines of the Cold War.

Power and International Relations Praxis

Ever since Machiavelli produced his masterpiece on political treaties, *Prince* (1513) and Hobbes his *Leviathan* (1651) the concept of 'power' has become the foundational pillar of national and international politics. Leading proponents of power school such as Schuman, Morgenthau and Kennan view power to politics as what energy is to physics and wealth to economics. Power is so essential in politics as Marx Learner assert; cannot live without it in spite of the fact that to live by it becomes brutal and sterile. In view of the fact that power is the raw material for the emergence of state control in international affairs, what then is power? Many statesmen view power from a divergent of ways, some sees it as control, domination, whereas others view it in terms of exercise of sphere of influence, authority as the case may be.. Arising from the foregoing, attempt would be made to consider some definitions as presented by social theorists; to (Schwarzenberger 1951, pp. 14), power means “the capacity to impose one's will on others by reliance on effective sanctions in case of non-compliance. According (Morgenthau, 1966, pp. 25), “when we speak of power, we mean man's control over minds and action of others. Power to this end, can be defined as the capacity to direct and control the activities of others whether by whims or compulsion.

Balance of Power

The growing technological advancement is offering some nation-states some kind of advantage over others with sweeping political and military might to enforce its will, using its coercive apparatus to elicit compliance. Base this some lesser powers enter into military pact, alliances and non-alignment as was the experienced during the Napoleonic wars, triple alliance, triple Entente, axis and allied powers, formation of NATO and Warsaw pact as well as non-alignment to counter-weigh and balance the power parity.

The term balance in itself had a old usage, tracing its roots to the Greek city-states; but in the new world order, it is frequently being used by statesmen of Britain, France, Austro-Hungary, Spain, Prussia Germany and Russia. It remained the hallmark of European diplomacy for more than a century after Vienna peace settlement of 1815. Britain pursue the doctrine until the outbreak of world war II in 1939, (Fay, 1937, pp. 1937). Even in the period after the Second World War, it is being used in relation to the 'balance of terror' as there emerged a new pattern strategic thinking, the is the age of nuclear warfare in the international system. According to Casterleagh, it means "the maintenance of such a just equilibrium between members of the family of nations as shall prevent any one of them to sufficiently strong to impose its will on upon the rest". To (Wright, 1942, pp., 245), it is a system designed to maintain a continuous conviction in any state that if it attempt aggression, it would encounter an invincible combination of others. (Johari, 2010, pp. 204) highlighted illustrative synthesis offered by (Palmer and Perkins, 2007, pp. 201) as thus:

- i. As the term itself suggests equilibrium or balance, almost the only certain thing about history it is subject to constant, ceaseless change, shifting political pattern and power relationships--in short, to disequilibrium.
- ii. It is established by active intervention of man. The state cannot afford to wait until it happened. They may go to war to preserve the balance. Therefore it is the case of diplomatic contrivance, not a matter of historical causation.
- iii. Though balance of power desire a *status quo* to be maintained, a policy which regards which regards the forces making is doomed for eventual failure. To be effective, a balance of power policy must be changing and dynamic.
- iv. A real balance of power can seldom exist, and it probably would not be recognized if it did not exist as such. The only real test, presumably, is that of war, and resorting to war not only upset the balance but also creates the very conditions which a balance of power policy is supposedly designed to prevent.
- v. It offers both subjective and an objective approach. The state of balance coextensive with the interest of the country. Hence, nations which play the balance of power game, seek not a balance, but an imbalance in their favour.
- vi. The balance of power seems to be a policy that is suitable neither for democracies nor for dictatorship. Unlike the geographical, political, military and other considerations are peculiarly favourable, a democracy is a reluctant player and poor leader in the balance of power game. It is deeply concern with power politics only in the period of crises. On the other hand, a dictatorship is usually interested in dominating the continent, to establish rules to suit its own convenience and in gathering all the reward.

- vii. The balance of power game is obviously one for the great states of the world. Although small or smaller states are vitally concerned in the outcome, they are more often victims, or best spectators, rather than players.

Balance of Terror

The period of cold war characterized by immediate invention of nuclear weapon, whereby strategic thinking had changed the vortex of power relations among states as the game players. From this moment, concern had been shifted from limited and traditional weapons of warfare. Balance of terror, the concept which assures mutual deterrence and reciprocal (Hammarskjold, 1960, pp, 65), annihilation what has kept the world from an inevitable outcome of a global crises. Commenting on the “summit” at Geneva in the summer of 1955, shortly before the conference took place, Max Ascoli wrote:

The trouble with the balance of power with which the democracies as well as the Communists are stuck is that it is actually a balance of terror not of power. It does not lend itself to registering shifts and changes in the international equilibrium. Therefore it stand to reason that the first objective of the negotiation should be that of moving steadily from balance of immeasurably terror to one of usable power. It is to be expected that both sides will earnestly engage in the search for practical ways to reduce armaments, for each is pursuing aims compatible with constant treat of reciprocal annihilation, (Geneva, 1955, pp. 8.)

And also,

“a situation in which the threat of mutual annihilation by nations with the capability to wage nuclear war serves as a deterrent against military aggression and the use of nuclear weapons *Change, unfamiliarity, and the disconcerting potentialities of technology make balance of terror constantly precarious*.” — Henry T. Nash, *Nuclear Weapons and International Behavior*, 1975.

Summary and Conclusion. The notion of balance of power had been historic one, dating to the writings of Thucydides. It assumed a more organized pattern during the Middle Ages, starting from the treaty of Westphalia up to the Versailles, European nation had always sought to maintain equilibrium and balance in the vortex of power relations among states.

Social theorists such as Machiavelli, Bordin, Montesquieu, and Hobbes had inspired the realist approach of international relations. Their works influenced state behaviour immensely on relations with one another. Following the advent of nuclear age into warfare shortly before the end of Second World War, the global strategic environment swiftly adjusted to the changing dynamics and nations immediately began to pursue nuclear armament. From this moment onward mutual deterrence characterized by reciprocal annihilation and balance of terror as well as alliances climate the international system, heralding the beginning of a new world order, which was the cold war era.

Certain fundamental issues arose here, the introduction of Communism by the eastern bloc and Counter-containment efforts by capitalist western bloc, brought the world into a bipolarity with contestation for global hegemon. Finally, the super heavy weight contenders never engaged themselves in any war despite polarized ideological differences, but

manifested their power vortex through proxy wars in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Even though the Korean War and Cuban Missile Crises almost brought the United States and Soviet Union into near confrontation, they remained mutually deterrent with and assured capabilities of reciprocal annihilation, a balance which offered the global community an outcome of relatively but unstable global peace and security following a renewal of distrust and antagonism in recent times, in the United Nations Security Council Vetoes.

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