



# ARMS CONTROL

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# Introduction:

- The problem of controlling the arms is regarded as an important measure to bring about international peace and stability.
- The arms race began in modern history with the development of standing armies in the 17<sup>th</sup> century after which the state was regarded as a military power unit.
- The arms race led to a devastating effect on the world community so that the idea of arms control assumed much significance.

# Meaning and definitions:

- The term arms control was first coined by USA and denoted mutually agreed rules to limit the arms.
- “Arms control is the cooperative agreements between the states designed to regulate arms level either by limiting their growth or by placing restrictions on how they might be used.” Kegley & Wittkopf.
- “Arms control includes any kind of cooperation with respect to armament which could curtail the arms race, reduce the probability of war or limit its scope and violence.” Schleicher.

# Dimensions of arms control:

- Arms control may have three dimensions
  1. Control of production of arms & ammunitions,
  2. Control or restraint over the sale of arms,
  3. Control over the usage of these arms.
- In arms control, whatever dimensions may be nations tend to cooperate & reciprocate the common desire to limit arms.

# Methods of arms control:

- Arms control can be attained by –
  1. Limiting production of nuclear weapons and delivery systems by unilateral action.
  2. By tacit agreement of one side action predicated upon another as an example and
  3. By formal agreement.
- Arms control aims at reducing military capabilities and the damaging impact of war.
- Arms control adopts two basic strategies like arms limitations & arms reduction.
- Arms can be limited or reduced through many methods – like, unilateral and bilateral methods.

# I. Unilateral method:

- Nation-states announce unilaterally the policy decisions to reduce or limit arms.
- E.g. the end of the cold war led to a series of announcements of unilateral force reduction from President Gorbachev in 1988, 5 lakhs Soviet troops by 1991, and withdrawal of significant military hardware from Eastern Europe.
- This was followed by a unilateral force reduction by Warsaw Treaty organization.
- Russia and France also put a temporary ban on all nuclear testing, etc.

## 2. Bilateral/multilateral method:

- Many significant agreements which were bilateral between USA & Soviet Union have the objective of arms control.
- E.g. SALT-I(1972), ABM Treaty(1990, 1992), NPT(1968), Nuclear test ban treaty(1963), etc.

# Disarmament & Arms control:

- These two terms are different in meaning.
- These two terms may be differentiated as follows –
  1. In the first place, disarmament stands for the elimination or reduction of existing arms whereas arms control suggests imposing restrictions on the use of existing arms.
  2. Arms control is a condition favorable to disarmament.
  3. Arms control is less ambitious than disarmament since it seeks not to eliminate weapons but regulate their use.
  4. Efforts to control arms have been more successful than have efforts to disarm because the former puts limitations & the later aims at total elimination.
  5. The possibility of total disarmament has been dismissed as utopian but arms control has become a nation's policy in international relations.

# Need or importance of arms control in the present context:

- Arms control is very significant due to the following reasons –
  1. To maintain peace,
  2. Economic factor,
  3. Moral factor,
  4. International prestige,
  5. Political/military factor,
  6. Protection of physical or mental health of society, etc.

# I. To maintain peace:

- The main rationale behind arms control is maintenance of peace.
- The possession of arms increases the probability of its use.
- Instant availability of arms tempts the statesman to plunge into war.
- Thus arms control is necessary to promote peace in the world.

## 2. Economic factor:

- A reduction in arms saves funds to be diverted for developmental activities of the country.
- The billions of dollars which are spent on arms can be utilized for the economic development the country.

### 3. Moral factor:

- Arms control is important as it is based on the belief that war is morally wrong.
- The very use and possession of weapons is considered as immoral.
- The concept of immorality of war has been emphasized in all periods of history.
- Unilateral as well as multilateral arms control can help in reducing international tensions.

## 4. International prestige:

- By practicing arms control and disarmament nations gain world public opinion in their favor and which will help them to gain prestige in international politics.
- Thus, being parties to various treaties on arms control necessarily helps them to gain sympathy.

## 5. Political, military factor:

- Armament increases fear, suspicion leading to increase political differences whereas arms control and disarmament support the spirit of peace and democracy.
- Armaments cause war but arms control surely bring about peaceful coexistence of nations of the world.

## 6. Protection of physical & mental health of the society:

- Armaments used during war are usually destructive to the physical and mental health of the society.
- The case of Chernobyl nuclear plant explosion in 1986 is an example of the hazards caused to the society due to armaments.

# Conclusion:

- Thus, arms control is the very need of the present day international politics.
- But the problem of arms control lies in the fact that there is no effective machinery to impose restrictions.
- No punitive action can be taken against a nation for violating the treaty of arms control.
- Thus arms control can only reduce the threat but cannot eliminate the risk of war altogether.