

## **War of Nerves Between United States of America and Soviet Union Relations on International Peace 1949 – 1975**



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**ABSTRACT:** This work focused on the war nerves between United State of America and Soviet Union relations and endeavour to find out, how the ideological war between the United States and the Soviet Union, affected international peace. This is as a result of the significance of the era in the contemporary trends in human civilization. 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 war of nerves between United States of America and Soviet Union Relations violated international peace and polarised the international system.

**KEY WORDS:** War of Nerves, United States, Soviet Union, Relations, International Peace.

### **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 Western, 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 unrated 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>

## War of Nerves Between United States of America and Soviet Union Relations on International Peace 1949 – 1975

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 "deliberate 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 Cold War had had meaningful impact on international peace. These can be seen in the areas of the preservation of international Peace, its violation, the introduction of arms race, its escalation and imposition of highly destructive weapons on international system, the permanent division of the world into bellicose camps and the evolution of neutralist feelings among peace loving people.

To this end, this work is devoted to finding out the war of nerves between United States of America and Soviet Union relations and the influence the Cold War had on International Peace between the period of study.

### 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.

**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>5</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.

**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>6</sup>

**Deterrence:** Deterrence "is persuading an enemy that attacking you will not be worth any potential gain".<sup>7</sup>

**Balance of Terror:** Is a state of equilibrium in the possession of nuclear weapons by which both ideological powers could destroy each other.

**Diplomatic Rapture:** this is a situation of severance of diplomatic or formal political relations between nations who hitherto were enjoying cordial relations.

**Western Powers:** The term western powers is used to indicate the capitalist nations of Europe led by the United States.

**National Interest:** These are those interests and priorities of a nation, for which she could go to war to protect or maintain.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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. These theories can equally provide a perfect theoretical mould for the analysis of the war of nerves between United States of America and Soviet Union Relations on international peace..

It is my intention to use the Game Theory as my tools of analyses because, it seems to be most relevant to the topic under investigation. Though not without blemish, the game theory, has universal applicability to international political system. In this work, I intended to liken the actors of the Cold War to players of various kinds of "parlour games" – draught, chess, chicken, poker, scramble or bridge games. The games are prone to conflict decision – making and co-operation.

Game theory is a mathematical discipline, that is designed to deal with the question of optimum behaviour of participants in games of strategy and to determine the resulting equilibrium. In game theory, each participant endeavour to maximize their advantage in situations where the outcome depends on their actions, and the nature. The interests of participants in the game theory, are often opposed and sometimes parallel, to one another. In other words, conflicting interest and possible co-operation among participants are likely to be there. There is also mutual suspicious among participants because, some of them can forecast with certainty the next action of others.

Games are described by specifying possible behaviour within the rules of the game. In a game, the rules are given by physical and legal environment within which an individual's actions may take place. In the game of international politics, I regard each actors as being rational beings, who has definite objectives and having at their disposal, some resources with which to confront their opponents in conflicts. The actors are expected to act rationally. Game involves moves and countermoves, which tends to explain the unfolding of the moves, the states of information of the players, and the alternative choices available to each actor at each

## War of Nerves Between United States of America and Soviet Union Relations on International Peace 1949 – 1975

encounter. Each actor, unaware of the opponent's choices, choose a single number that identifies a strategy from sets of strategies allowing for all contingencies.

In game theory, the player's is also expected to have perfect knowledge of the strategies open to him in pursuit of his aims. The players should also be able to design a strategy that covers all contingencies and ensure minimum risks and maximum – pay-off. In all game, there are outcomes – the pay-off. It is the relationship between player and the price of objective, they aim at – a win, a loss, or draw. In game theory, theorists are interested in analysing the strategies that will enable the players to maximise their outcomes, and the prospect being usually small in range, requires careful study of the alternative course of action. The rules of the game is simply the distribution of resources and the employment of these resources. In Cold War, players, are expected to know that nuclear missiles are not to be used – they are not part of the rules of international game.

Alliances are often formed in international politics. In game theory context, alliances means, the combination of resources for the best advantage of the players. This is an indication that the players are many. Consequently, those who have common objectives, pool their resources together to enable them achieve their objective interests. This co-operation among actors is known as the variable – sum game which assumes that two or more parties can gain more individually by co-operating, especially in the long run, for according to Isaak:

Rather than arguing over existing economic pie, it is more satisfying to co-operate and create more pies, for every one by means that individual parties would not have available, if they merely worked on their own.<sup>8</sup>

Conversely, the Zero-sum game – a pure conflict game or situation assumes that “Whatever one party gains, the other party necessarily loses and that co-operation is, therefore, irrational”.<sup>9</sup> A more appropriate model in international relations, is the multiparty non zero-sum game; for, as Zawodny reminds us, “We must recognise that some types of international conflict today can be resolved only by situations in which neither side loses and in which sometime both sides may win”.<sup>10</sup>

### THE COLD WAR AND INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Since the inception of the ideological conflict between the nuclear powers of international system, peace has continued to elude the world. In Berlin, Korea, China, Cuba, Vietnam, Middle East, Congo and South Africa, they were fracas between the mega powers on hand and the rivalry factions on the other and the world stood defenceless against imminent nuclear holocaust. The chief architects of the cold war were fanatically committed to maximizing their interests and sought by all means to minimize that of its opponent. Thus twice in 1948 and 1958, Russia pushed the global peace to the wall in Berlin. In those days, world war seems inevitable.

In Roy's opinion:

The cold war has been going on between these two rival blocs since the termination of the Second World War, and another war will be staged at the very moment when Soviet Russia and the United States would come into open clash.<sup>11</sup>

The Berlin crisis was so hot that it demanded the head of international peace on a platter. Spanier saw the situation thus:

The Soviet proposals had included the ultimatum that if West Berlin's status had not been renegotiated, *à la Russe* within six months, the Russians would place the East Germans in control of the rail roads and highways leading into western Berlin, if the East Germans then interfere with western traffic, the West would have to deploy force to block any blockade, and Khrushchev stated that any such Western attempt would meet Soviet resistance. The defence of West Berlin therefore posed the definite possibility of total war.<sup>12</sup>

The crises stopped short of catastrophe, doubtless because both sides exercised responsibility and both had a sharp appreciation that extreme policies could lead to mutual destruction.

In 1961, the erection of the Berlin wall – is one example of confrontation without resolution. Another is provided by the tension over Formosa and the offshore Islands; yet another by the Soviet suppression of Hungarian revolt; and another by the Western military adventure over Suez; others as to the Cuban crises, the tension over the Congo, and the conflicts in the Middle East etc. However the important point however is that, dangerous as these crises were, peace was preserved.<sup>13</sup>

In analysing the issue further, Spanier stated his opinion, rhetorically stating that: “What objective was worth the cost of total war, if Berlin was not, what was? Berlin was thus a crisis of massive retaliation, for the Soviet action questioned the very feasibility of our basic strategy”.<sup>14</sup>

There is no gain-saying that the War of Nerves between United States of America and Soviet Union Relations violated international peace. This is because the conflict inflated international tension, for according to Bulganin in 1957, “The international situation has recently seriously deteriorated. Dangerous attempts have been undertaken to undermine the relaxation of international tension already achieved and to place the people at the brink of war”.<sup>15</sup>

## War of Nerves Between United States of America and Soviet Union Relations on International Peace 1949 – 1975

The War of Nerves went as far as gravely affecting the United Nations. The structure of the organization has been based on two proportions – the necessity of relating function to power, and the belief that it would be possible for the great powers, particularly the Soviet Union and the United States, to sustain a broad accord in their relationship in the post-war period. But with the diplomatic rupture aided by the Cold War, both proposition proved untenable. The basic disagreement on innumerable issues between the two greatest powers made the security machinery ineffectual, and most of the crucial issues of division had to be determined by direct negotiation outside the framework of the United Nations.

The War also affected the domestic societies of the two great powers. In Soviet Union an authoritarian government could mobilize the community to effort, exploiting East – West competition and fear for the community's security. In the United States, with its democratic machinery and its more individualistic values, it was impossible to impose an official viewpoint directly upon the society, even if a government had wished to do so.

In furtherance, it will be naive to assume that a world besieged by impregnable stock piles of nuclear weapons and civil wars, religious conflicts and wars of attrition is at peace. The occurrence of these conflicts as in Korea, China, Vietnam, Congo, and Middle - East alludes to future outbreak of the total war for in the word of Major General Telenskii, "At any moment...mankind might be faced with the accomplished fact of the beginning of destructive atomic war"<sup>16</sup>. A world faced with the ultimate fear war is not peaceable. The employments of the weapons mean the annihilation of human being on earth.

Zhukov, opine that: "The very existence of atomic weapons made it necessary to reckon with the possibility of their employment, because certain madmen, might go to the length of using them in spite of everything"<sup>17</sup>.

### THE COLD WAR AND THE ARMS RACE

The nuclear arms race began during World War II, when the United States were informed that the Nazi's may be building a weapon of mass destruction, the atom bomb. The United States realizing that if the Nazi's could possible develop this weapon, making them unstoppable, stated their own nuclear weapons, program, called the 'Manhattan Project'. The United States, won the first nuclear arms race when they tested the first nuclear weapon on the Alamogordo Bombing Range in New Mexico on July 16, 1945.

The World War II ends with the birth of the atomic bomb. Its emergence was one of the cardinal causes of the Cold War, its invention, employment and cancelation from the Soviet's by its inventors (Western Powers) strained the relationship between the communists and capitalists blocs. Thus, the modern nuclear arms race, which is the race between the United States, under Harry Truman, and Soviet Union, under Joseph Stalin, began in 1946, when the American representative in the newly formed United Nation (UN), Bernard Baruch, proposed that nuclear weapons be eliminated. The Russians refused this proposition and the arms race began. Soviet ruling body, "polit-buro" under Stalin, mounted pressures on the Soviet military scientist to produce within a limited time, an atomic weapon with the capability of scaring the traitor, mainly, the Americans and its allies under the supervision of the scientist Seigi Saldorov

Between 1945 to 1949, the United States enjoyed the monopoly of the atomic bomb, but on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1949, the Soviet Union successfully tested her first atomic bomb. The knowledge of Soviet possession of the atomic bomb, instilled fear on the Western bloc nations, especially Britain and America; who saw the turn of event as a heartbreak to their supremacy. Wart was in agreement with this view:

As the breach between the East and West widened to a state of unconcealed hostility during the late forties, there was one consoling factor which the Western powers countered as a solid guarantee of their supremacy should a general war again breakout: American monopoly of the atomic bomb. It was freely predicted that because of the backward state of Soviet science and technology, the secrete of atomic energy could be kept for many years; and there was those who knows little of the realities of soviet foreign policy except that it was Aggressive, claimed that the only deterrence to a Russian attack on Western Europe was the threat to the Soviet homeland posed by the United States. Air Force, armed with atomic weapon.<sup>18</sup>

Sequel to this turn of event a massive arms race ensured. Arms race and proliferation of weapon entered into the books of international politics of Cold War, where actors of international system plunged themselves into massive production and stock pilation of nuclear weapons. With each nation trying to out produce the other, or at least, ensured equilibrium of military capability leading to development of such phenomenon's as deterrence, real politik, political realism, position of strength etc. thence the continuity of international system became increasingly dependent on the mercy of nuclear weapons. Rhetorically, Spanier communicated the idea very vividly. He was very pessimistic about the future turn of events that can lead to all-out war:

If nations are willingly to relinquish their sovereign rights, might not some future quarrel spark off a global conflagration that would leave the world in ruins, its smouldering ashes a monument to man's scientific genius, and his malevolence towards other men.<sup>19</sup>

The Cold War made it imperative for nations to arm themselves with highly destructive explosives, whose employment will herald the end of the world. To this, Bradley contributed with better evidence:



## War of Nerves Between United States of America and Soviet Union Relations on International Peace 1949 – 1975

We have defiled our intellect by the creation of such instruments of destruction that we are now in desperate danger of destroying ourselves. Our plight is critical and with each effort we made to relieve it by further scientific advances, we have succeeded only in aggravating our peril. As a result, we are now speeding inexorably towards a day when even the ingenuity of our scientists may be unable to save us from the consequences of a single rash act or a lone reckless upon the switch of an uninterceptible missile.<sup>20</sup>

The Cold War and arms race relationship to international system made significant headway in the 50's and 60's on October 4th, 1957 the Soviet Union took the world unawares by spectacularly placing a 184 pound. This was following by the launching of the second sputnik, which was six times as large as the first; thereby making them enjoyed unchallenged leadership in the space. In 1960, France entered into the nuclear club of United States, Soviet Union, Britain, and Canada by successfully exploding a nuclear bomb. This in Wart's opinion "pointed up the dangers of an accelerating arms race".<sup>21</sup> Another conspicuous landmark in the arms race was the soviet launching of a five – tone manned rocket into orbit on April 12, 1961

The situation in the international scene was worsened by the soviet break of the informal moratorium on the nuclear testing, \*\*Wart concisely said that:

Apart from further pollution of the atmosphere with radioactivity, the Soviet violation of the truce aroused fresh tremors of apprehension about the unstable "balance of terror" and aggravated the already grave tension between East and West.<sup>22</sup>

Corollary to Soviet deviation, Kennedy order the resumption of underground testing and further intensify American effort in space technology. He was convinced that "a second rate, a second place effort was not consent with his country's role as a world leader and a great power whose reputation was based to a very large extent on its industrial – technological abilities".<sup>23</sup> Subsequently, he ordered a review a various space projects in which America could surpass Russia, the most likely seemed to be landing a man on the moon, and in May, the president announced that this objective would be achieved before the end of the decade". In July, 1969, the first man stood on the moon. While, they talked of having come on behalf of all mankind, their shoulder patches read "U.S.A."<sup>24</sup>. There is no gain – saying that the cut – throat competition amongst actors of international politics for supremacy in the production, perfection and stock pilation of nuclear missiles will affect international system in one way or the other. The issue at stake during the arms race period was not only the possession of nuclear weapon but the accuracy of the delivery system. This was what Herbert Kim was advocating. When he stated that,

The primary focus of the arms race was to develop an effective first strike capability. First capability is the ability to effectively disable the enemy's military and political forces making retaliation Impossible. Once each side had reached what they saw as a second strike force. This force would let the nation surprised by a nuclear attack to retaliate with a full nuclear force.<sup>25</sup>

The war of nerves between the communist world and their capitalist counter parts between 1949 and 1975, gave the international community something to worry about. The fate of global peace during the Cold War era, the emergence, spread and escalation of the ideological combat amongst the principal actors of international system was a turning point in the annals of human existence in the world.

### CONCLUSION

This research has tried to examine 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.

The game theory helped me much in dispelling the mist that beclouded the Cold War and my understanding of its obvious impacts on international peace. During the course of this research, the analysis showed that the protagonists of the Cold War, behaved in a typical player's manner. There were moves and counter moves, during the Berlin blockade and counter strategy of airlifting and the Soviet adventurism into Cuba and the resultant American threat of nuclear attack on Russia, if the missiles were not removed. There were also bluffs as in Khrushchev's threat of nuclear attack on the West, if they did not move out of West Berlin within a given date. There was also room for negotiations. I found out, that throughtout, the Cold War, the actors resorts to negotiation when their strategies, moves and counter moves were exhausted like in the Berlin blockade, Korea War, Cuban Crisis and even Vietnamese debacle.

I concerned myself with investigative analysis of the War of nerves between United States of America and Soviet Union relations on international peace. I concluded, from my findings, that the Cold War violated international peace and polarised the international 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:

## War of Nerves Between United States of America and Soviet Union Relations on International Peace 1949 – 1975

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>26</sup>

### END NOTE

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- <sup>4</sup> Spanier p. 16
- <sup>5</sup> A. R. Isaak, *Individuals and World Politics*, California: Duxbury Press, 1975, p. 125
- <sup>6</sup> J. K. Zawodny, Stanley Hofimann, *International System and International Law: World Politics*, xiv, U.S.A: October Ltd., 1961, p. 207.
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- <sup>9</sup> Isaak p. 186
- <sup>10</sup> J. K. Zawodny, “Man and International Relations” in Palmer N. D., and Perkins H. C., *International Relations: The World Community in Transition*, 3rd Ed, Delhi: Krishan Nagar, 2004, p. xx.
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- <sup>12</sup> Spanier, *American Foreign Policy*... P. 142.
- <sup>13</sup> Richard Holme Spanier et al, *Civilisation*, Volume II: Journey to The Modern World, California: CRM Books, Del Mar, 1973, p. 466.
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- <sup>20</sup> K. Bradley, In Fleming Denna S.: *Issues of Survival*”, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1972, p. 41.
- <sup>21</sup> Wart, *Soviet Russia in World*... p. 465.
- <sup>22</sup> Wart, *Soviet Russia in World*... p. 465.
- <sup>23</sup> Spanier, *Games Nations*... p. 103.
- <sup>24</sup> Spanier, *Games Nations*... p. 104
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