



Study about Disarmament, History, types and Need for disarmament

Dr. Umesh Kumar, Research Scholar,

Department of Political Science, Singhania University

Introduction : Disarmament means the reduction of arms and weapons through international treaties and agreements signed in between two or more states. It's an attempt to eliminate or radically reduce armaments. It can be distinguished from the concept of arms control, which entails restraint but not necessarily reduction in the number and kinds of weapons available to states. Most disarmament proposals are based on the assumption that weapons are an important source of conflict in themselves.

ISSN : 2348-5612 © URR



History of Disarmament:

Historically, disarmament has taken place in two contrasting ways. First, after a war, disarmament has often been imposed on the defeated state by the victor. For example, in 1919 the Treaty of Versailles limited the German army to 100,000 troops, thereby effectively eliminating an army that could be capable of offensive activity. A similar restriction was placed on Germany and Japan after the Second World War. But still the victors have been unable to remain united and unwilling to act together to enforce these prohibitions. Nazi Germany established training area and munitions factories in the Soviet Union after the First World War without suffering any penalties, and as the cold war intensified after 1945, a primary concern of US foreign policy became rebuilding the military might of Japan and West Germany. The other type of disarmament is voluntary disarmament, in which states seek to negotiate a mutually acceptable framework within which all parties will reduce the size of their military establishments.

Types of disarmament:

While the ultimate logic of disarmament points to the total elimination of all weapons, the main types of disarmament plans can be identified.

- A first type of disarmament is General and Complete Disarmament (GCD), which seeks the total elimination of all weapons. If this ever happened, the fundamental nature of international relations would be radically transformed.



- A second form of disarmament is regional disarmament. It seeks to reduce or to eliminate weapons from a particular geographic area. Over the last five decades regional disarmament plans have frequently taken the form of proposals for nuclear-free zones. A major barrier to the successful negotiation of such agreements is that, once a state in a region has acquired nuclear weapons, it is difficult to prevent others from doing likewise. This was the main problem that ultimately prevented the implementation of the often proposed South Asian Nuclear-Free Zone. Today, both India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons, and the proposal looks very unlikely to be implemented in the foreseeable future. However, the history of regional disarmament is not all hopeless.

Four main regional agreements remain in effect.

- In 1967 the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, also known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, was signed. This treaty prohibits the testing, possession, and deployment of nuclear weapons in the region.
- Similarly, the 1959 Antarctic Treaty bans the use of Antarctica for military purposes, including nuclear testing.
- In 1967 an Outer Space Treaty prohibited states from placing nuclear weapons in earth orbit or stationing them in outer space.
- In 1971 a treaty was signed banning states from placing nuclear weapons on the seabed known as Seabed Treaty.

While the existence of such treaties may provide supporters of disarmament with some hope that they can be extended, it should be pointed out that treaties such as those just mentioned are not strictly about disarmament. Rather, they represent agreements by states not to develop weapons that they were not planning to build in the first place and not to deploy weapons in areas that are of peripheral strategic value. Were these conditions ever to change, it is unlikely that the mere existence of such treaties would deter states from breaking them.

Kinds of disarmament:

Disarmament may be of various types, like

1. General & Comprehensive,
2. Local and General
3. Qualitative & Quantitative, etc.



1. General & Comprehensive:

General disarmament is the one in which all or most of the great powers participate but not with a commitment to do away with all types of weapons. On the other hand Comprehensive disarmament involves the control or prohibition of all categories of armaments. This is a total disarmament, a world free of weapons of destruction & annihilation. It also means the absence of armies, weapons, military training institutes and ministries of defence.

2. Local & General:

When the process of disarmament involves few or some nations, it is said to be local e.g. the Rush- Bagot agreement between US & Canada, 1817. General disarmament relates to efforts made by international organizations like the UN involving the whole world in the programme of reducing, limiting or eliminating arms.

3. Qualitative and Quantitative:

Qualitative disarmament is concerned with the reduction or elimination of only certain types of arms e.g. NPT. Quantitative disarmament, on the other hand, aims at an overall reduction of armaments of most or all types. It does not regulate the invention or use of any future arms technology.

Need for disarmament:

Need for disarmaments has been emphasized on various grounds such as –

1. It is argued that armaments are the basic cause of all rivalries among the states. Every state increases its arms and ammunitions on the ground of greater security leading to armament race paving the way for fear and suspicion in international politics which ultimately leads to war.

2. Disarmament is also promoted and defended on economic and humanitarian grounds. Developed countries use a huge amount of money on armaments which could be profitably used for improving the standard of life of poor people in underdeveloped countries. “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who are hungry and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed” – Eisenhower. Thus, the goal of disarmament is in the first place, to remove the threat of future



devastating wars & the extension of human civilization and secondly, to reallocate resources used for military purposes to peaceful, constructive and developmental purposes.

References :

1. K.W. Deutsch, The Analysis of International Relations, New Delhi, Prentice Hall, 1989.
2. P.Gilbert, Terrorism Security and Nationality, London and New York, Routledge, 1995.
3. F. Halliday, Revolution and World Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999.
4. H.J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, 6th Edition, revised by K.W., Thompson, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1985.