

Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT): an ethical or political problem

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Abstract

It is a known fact that Strategic Arms Limitation Talks and other related talks on nuclear arms disarmament have failed to achieve a nuclear arms agreement among nations that will lead to nuclear-free World. It is almost impossible to accomplish this single task for more than 71 (seventy-one) years. Every scholar in the globe has an opinion towards nuclear arms limitation talks. It is tricky to say whether or not SALT is an Ethical or Political problem? This paper tries to answer this question. As a result, it is incorrect to treat nuclear weapons control, which exists in the realms of 'ought,' as a scientific or political problem that exists in the realm of 'is.' Moral expressions are in the regions of 'ought' above every fact and science, custom and tradition, despite the existence of several ethical systems.

Keywords:

SALT; Nuclear arms; Politics.

1 INTRODUCTION

Some researchers in nuclear arms talk think the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) is entirely a political matter (Power tussle between heads of state) or a scientific problem (considering how to control the power of atom). But the above is not the case. It is a misjudgment. This work appreciates the fact that war for free nuclear arms world is a battle for all, yet a moral philosopher should be among other categories of individuals involved in such negotiations. Talks emanating from such negotiations should have a complete moral foundation in line with ethical principles.

2 WHAT IS STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION TALKS (SALT)?

Almost immediately after World War II in 1945, scholars started to debate the necessity and morality of using the bomb on Japan cities. Each time the world gather to celebrate anniversaries of the bombing, it raises the question anew every year. A follow-up debate of issues on the morality of using the bomb is the problem of controlling the future use of this bomb. Today, so many talks and negotiations have been conducted to determine whether or not the bomb should be used again in the world. The talks have so much been given great concentration that the world is now contemplating the abolishment of the bombs. One major talk in this regard is the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT). SALT was two rounds of bilateral talks between the United States and the Soviet Union aimed at curtailing the production of missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons. The talks made provision for rules that also made the use of nuclear weapons seem circumscribed. The first treaty known as SALT I and the second, SALT II, were signed by the two parties in 1972 and 1979, respectively. Both were designed to restrain the arms race in strategic ballistic missiles armed with nuclear weapons (Luttwak, 1985; Luttwak, 1987; Luttwak, 1978; Luttwak, 2009)

3 SALT: A POLITICAL OR ETHICAL PROBLEM?

The political issue becomes a problem when it has to do with government or politics (Luttwak, 1987). These may include issues related to party politics or other issues as determined by the voting public. A lexical database for the English language defines political matters as a controversy debated within the political system. Everything from social issues such as abortion, to taxation and government spending, foreign policy and free trade (Snyder, Shapiro, & Bloch-Elkon, 2009). Political matters encompass just about everything political leaders talk in the executive council or assembly. If nuclear arms limitation and control which the SALT sets out to achieve is a matter of a code of conducts associated with how best to reduce the number of the atomic bomb on earth, what then makes it political? It is obvious that possible critics will come up to argue that a head of government initiated the Manhattan project and executed by a crew of scientists, military officers, and civilian workers. So, what then makes it a moral issue? It is important to note that what makes nuclear arms disarmament political is very weak compared to the argument that makes it honest.

Ethics is a study or science of good conduct (Ozumba, 2001). The term ethics comes from the Greek word *ethos* meaning customary. It means a customary way of acting or doing something in a certain way. The above meaning of ethics is not far from the one explained earlier as the science of good conduct. Now, when you talk of good conduct associated with how best to regulate the production and use of nuclear weapons, what field of study champions the course to see that such a dream is achieved? What field of study has basic tools to research code of conduct, which will comprise of a series of do and do not that will guide superpowers in the production and use of nuclear arms? It is obvious that ethics as a field of study can do a better job in that regard. In the beginning, according to the Holy Bible, man and woman were given a code of conduct which comprised of a series of do's and don'ts, believed to help him attain eternal bliss. However, with the fall of man and woman through sin and disobedience, they were deemed unclean. This account suggests that morality, the study of codes of conduct is as old as creation (Ozumba, 2001). At this stage of the argument, one should not express any doubt about whether ethics as a science of codes of conduct is the best field of human research to prescribe the right foundation to establish codes of conduct relevant to nuclear arms abolishment. This is where the SALT Treaty and many other nuclear arms treaties missed it. Negotiators of these treaties failed to recognize the role of ethics.

Applying moral philosophy to decision making is one critical decision-making process individuals' resort to ethical decision making (Ford & Richardson, 1994; Jones, 1991; Trevino, 1986). One major reason why the above claim is asserted as true is the fact that ethical decision making always presents men and women with a dilemma (Allen, 2012). For example, why should the world eliminate nuclear weapons knowing full well that they have served as a deterrent for both nuclear and non-nuclear states for 70 years? An ethical dilemma presents a situation with poor choices. This is a situation in which someone must choose one of two or more unsatisfactory alternatives. What happens when a patient rejects medical advice and makes a decision that may result in less optimal outcomes? Deciding to force the medication on the patient will amount to a disregard of the patient's right and privacy (Levine & Stagno, 2001). In this case, what will the nurse do? In these choices, it takes only a person with the consciousness of value neutrality in handling ethical dilemma to take a good and right choice. This is where the moral philosopher has a significant task it handles.

The SALT confronts humanity using an ethical dilemma. It confronts humanity with complex alternatives, whether to or not to live with atomic bombs? The world is faced with possible risk on each side of the options. On the one hand, if the world decides to live with the bomb, it faces the risk of extinction any day this bomb is used again. On the other hand, if the world decides to abolish the bombs, this decision presents the challenge of how the bomb can be eliminated; what it will cost and how long it will take to achieve it. This same problem poses the problem of personal gain and ambition. Now, it is a decision for the world powers to know whether they are ready to give up their nuclear arms arsenals for complete disarmament or decide to keep them and face extinction another time it is used. How possible will it be for a country like North Korea to give up its nuclear program, if the United States refuses to do the same? These are the possible challenge the second option will present. Ethics is the branch of philosophy that takes care of this situation.

Ethical principles transcend all political and scientific principles. It does not respect personal ambition. It is neutral and postulates how the man should live his life regardless of times and conditions (Uduigwomen, 2006). The answer is given in human conduct (how we should live?), is given in general terms above cultures, traditions, and politics since it cannot do so for each person individually. These answers (moral commands) are out there, waiting to be discovered and analyzed by a moral philosopher (Uduigwomen, 2006). This is why this paper argues in the affirmative that the SALT treaty is not entirely a political problem, rather an ethical one.

Another important reason why the SALT treaty is not a political problem is the claim that politics is a business of interest and supremacy. It is a known fact that politics is a business of interest and supremacy. Democracy, defined as a free and equal representation of people often experienced by vote for representatives of the people by the popular number of the people show that democracy is nothing more, but a business of interest for the majority democracy (Pious, 2009). This is not far from what is going on in the political arena. Political scientist studies political behavior involved in political activities. And studies have shown that some other factors influence the political behavior of people. They include social pressures, individual psycho-structure, personal emotional attachments to parties or leaders and the rational self-interests of voters. The case is different concerning moral decisions.

Ethics discovers the general or universal principle to guide human conduct (Uduigwomen, 2006). This principle is not 'particular' rather it is general. It transcends every level of human weakness and wickedness. It is pure from all form of emotional attachments, social pressures, and other individual psychological products. Ethics is relevant to human life because of the need to answer certain questions that apply to all rational beings (Uduigwomen, 2006). Ethics helps man to think better about the moral question by exposing the logical structure of language in which these thoughts are expressed (Hare & Hare, 1963; Wolf, 1993). This is another reason why SALT is an ethical problem. For the world to have an ethically good treaty and right such treaty must be free of all of the individual psychological products. And for that to be achieved the world must start approaching talks on strategic arms with a new mindset. That mindset is 'ethical mindset.'

It is often believed that the SALT should be part of the political agenda of a political party's election manifesto. Almost all the presidents of the United States during election time always make promises to give the world the best nuclear arms summit ever. This should not necessarily be the case. Although there is nothing wrong about such a gesture, this work asserts that such a gesture should not necessarily be the case. This is because of the after effect of such actions. One such effect is that it makes nuclear arms disarmament a "one man thing." By the time talks resume on arms disarmament everybody becomes answerable to that 'one man' whether his action and response conforms to the principles of morality or not. When Harry S. Truman assumed office, the Manhattan project became a 'Truman thing.' When Richard Nixon took overpower, all negotiations revolved around his ambitions and dreams for a nuclear-free world. Same was seen in 1981 when Ronald Reagan assumed office as the president of the United States. It is obvious to all the achievement gained in the leadership style of these heads of states, yet the SALT suffered a setback in their actualization of nuclear arms talks and negotiations as it gave no quality attention to the importance of achieving nuclear arms treaty grounded on ethical principles.

Another problem associated with making the SALT 'a one-man thing' is that political challenges can affect its outcome. A practical example is the defeat of Democrats in the 1968 presidential election of the United States and the attempt made by President Jimmy Carter in March 1977 to set aside Vladivostok accord and plunge into deeper cuts, to abandon earlier basis upon the SALT II negotiation stood. The SALT negotiation as any other nuclear summit should not be seen as a matter for heads of states and governments alone. It may have been so for years; this work is calling for a re-think and change of such traditions.

4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, negotiations of codes of conduct associated with nuclear arms are more significant than just a few states or governments. It is a matter of codes of conduct involved in world security. It is a matter to be handled by moral

principles, not political principles. Political leaders do not set codes of conduct, but moral philosophers do. Political actors do not have the professional skills to design foundational moral principles to guide nuclear negotiations, but specialists in the field of ethics do. Morality respects no person, bows to no political ambition and stands above all human immoralities and weaknesses. Moral obligation is expressed in terms of 'ought.' Just as 'is' is a connective in logical propositions, so is 'ought' indispensable in ethical statements (Ozumba, 2001). Thus, it is wrong for us to handle the control of nuclear arms which dwells in the 'ought' realms as a scientific or political problem which dwells in the realm of 'is.' Even though there are different ethical theories, moral expressions are in the realms of 'ought' above every fact and science, custom and tradition.

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