



DEFENSE ACQUISITIONS AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

MARKO JOVANOVIĆ, GORAN VUKADINOVIĆ
SECTOR FOR MATERIEL RESOURCES MOD RS, Belgrade, ma.markoj@gmail.com

Abstract: *This paper defines the relations between defense acquisitions and international politics in the modern framework of international relations. The goal is to explain theoretical concept in which armaments acquisition can be scientifically defined and the impact this important subject has on relations between states in the 21st century.*

Keywords: *defense, armament, acquisition, international politics, international relations.*

1. INTRODUCTION

As the first human societies started to come across each other, conflicts between them started to occur. After the first states were formed they continued to clash and the latest events in the 21st century, unfortunately, shows us that those clashes are still happening and that they will continue to happen in future. War has been and still is an important tool of international politics and states have shown numerous times that they will use their power to achieve goals even if that leads to war and other types of conflicts.

A question "What are the causes of war?" has been frequently asked among scholars, especially after the First World War when humanity was shocked by the devastation it caused. Many different theories have been researched and developed trying to explain the causes of war. For example, the First World War has started after Austro-Hungarian Empire declared war to Serbia because the Austrian Archduke, Franz Ferdinand, was assassinated in Sarajevo and this event constituted the most immediate cause of war. When we take a step back, we can conclude that causes of war were much complex and more numerous. Less than ten years before the war couple of events have happened that shook the international relations between the great powers of that time. Austro-Hungarian Empire has annexed Bosnia (Annexation crisis 1908), Germany and France clashed over the control of Morocco (The Second Moroccan Crisis 1911), etc. Geopolitical situation of that time was complex and the great powers were preparing for war, what they needed was only a spark to pursue their goals by force. The explanation of this type of behavior of the great powers was best explained in [1] by defining the theory of offensive realism which argues that anarchy of the system of international relations urges states to compete with other states in obtaining more power. No amount of power is enough because other states also have power, offensive military capabilities, and states can't be sure that others will not use their power against them. This leads to a race between the states to become the most powerful state (hegemon) and clashes, conflicts and eventually

Wars will be the means used to obtain the power. We are now witnessing events across the world which confirms this theory and we can conclude that it is still valuable as a basis for research of international politics.

Bearing in mind the basic idea of the theory of offensive realism, that states are looking to obtain the biggest amount of power, and that war is not outdated as the mean to obtain power, conclusion is that states have to be prepared for war now and in the future. Obtaining military power is the most important part of the preparation for war and acquisition of defense materiel is the first step for boosting the state's military power. The goal of this paper is to define acquisition of defense materiel through term and definition, present some models of acquisition and explain the theoretical framework in which defense acquisitions can be defined in relation to international politics.

2. ACQUISITION OF DEFENSE MATERIEL

2.1. Term and Definition

As we have already stated in the introduction, one of the goals of the state is to obtain military power and the best way to do so is through acquisition of defense materiel. There are different ways to acquire armaments for armed forces and they differ due to economic and technological development of the state. Highly developed countries have the capacity necessary to research, develop and produce defense materiel and they rely on their domestic defense industry to acquire armaments for their armed forces thus being self-sustaining in this field. Other states don't have the industrial capacity needed to produce armaments and turn to other states in order to procure defense materiel from their defense industries. Those countries with developed defense industries, after equipping their own armed forces, look into the possibilities to deliver armaments to armed forces of other states. Motives for this could be financial but when it comes to selling and buying weapons it is never strictly financial. States can spread their influence by delivering armaments to other states and sometimes their goal could

be to increase the military power of other state, that is why lucrative motives can sometimes be casted aside and states sometimes donate defense materiel to other countries.

By explaining what we mean under term acquisition of defense materiel we came closer to definition of this term. Bearing in mind that the goal of this paper is to explain the theoretical framework in which defense acquisitions can be defined in relation to international politics definition of the acquisition of defense materiel for the purpose of this paper shall exclude all those elements of the acquisition which do not include at least two states. Also, besides the procedure of equipping own armed forces, we included the procedure of equipping armed forces of other states as mentioned above. Therefore, and in order to define the main subject of this paper we will try to give concise and precise definition as follows:

"Acquisition of defense materiel represents the process of procuring or supplying defense materiel between supplying state and receiving state with the goal of equipping armed forces of the receiving state."

This definition covers different acquisition processes which include at least two states, supplier and receiver, and depending on position it can be procurement, from the receiver's point of view, or delivery, from the supplier's point of view. To further clarify this definition, it also includes delivery of armaments by the defense company from one state to another state because this process, having in mind it's sensitivity and international implications it can have, never happens without the authorization of the government of the defense company's state.

2.2. Acquisition models

States used to equip their armies with their own resources because conventional armament was simple to make and it was easy for the states to produce enough for their armies. Later when industrial revolution took place and technology developed fast, some states managed to keep up with the development pace and those states become suppliers while other states become receivers of defense materiel. In this paper we will explain models of acquisition when at least two states are involved and we will use different criteria to distinguish different models.

Money is the power that pushes the world forward and therefore it plays a significant role in armament acquisition processes. Therefore, we can distinguish two different models of acquisition depending on the fact if receiver state is paying for the armament or not: donation and selling. By donating defense materiel to other state and equipping its defense forces, the supplier enlarges the military power of the receiver and does not receive any financial benefits in return. Examples of donation of armaments can be found in Serbian history. During the second half of the 19th century, Serbia was preparing for the liberation from the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire donated 40.000 rifles to Serbia in 1862. Besides this donation, Serbian forces equipped themselves with 20.000 rifles more in 1867 and those rifles were

purchased from Russia [2]. Donation as an acquisition model still plays an important role in modern international politics. Some great powers have developed an institutional framework for donation of armaments, for example the United States of America has developed the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program under the auspices of the United States Department of Defense. FMF allows foreign armies to request defense materiel from the United States government and after thorough procedure the US government can finance acquisition of defense materiel by foreign states through grants or loans. This type of program represents an institutional approach to donation; the procedure is strict and could last long. On the other hand, after the Ukrainian conflict has started, we witnessed through news and other open sources information that procedure for donation of defense materiel could be very prompt when the goal is to quickly improve the military capabilities of an army involved in conflict. Therefore, donation as an acquisition model can have a very high impact on the international relations between involved countries. The fact that there are no financial benefits for the supplier implicates that motives behind the donation are strictly geopolitical such as providing more military power to other state and by that helping that state defend itself or threaten its rivals. Because of its possible implications on international relations, donation firmly depends on international relations between the country donating the materiel and the country receiving the materiel, as well as the countries with complex international relations with the receiver country.

Selling and buying of the defense materiel, on the other hand, is not solely connected with the international relations of the countries. Even though there are financial motives connected with selling and buying, when it comes to armaments international politics has to be involved. For example, when buyer buys some goods, he looks for quality, good price and his goal is to receive the goods as soon as possible. Seller, on the other hand, wants to sell the goods which he can produce quickly with reasonable funding, to get the best price for them and to get the money as soon as possible. These motives are all of the economic nature and they exist in the process of selling and buying of armaments but they are accompanied by geopolitical motives. States involved in selling and buying of the defense materiel have to analyze how this selling or buying could affect their international relations. Receiving state has to analyze the market and find potential suppliers because the supplier is going to look into the effects that this transaction has on its international relations, therefore supplier will not sell armaments to every state that requests it. Some elements of international relations of the seller and the buyer highly affect their decision to sell or buy armaments. For example, the seller will closely analyze and thoroughly examine the consequences of selling weapons to the state which is at war. This could be seen as an aid to one side in conflict and could roughly impact the seller's international relations with other states involved in conflict. With this possible outcome, seller will put its geopolitics motives above its financial motives in this type of processes. Modern international relations are

influenced by international institutions such as United Nations or Security Council and these institutions have the ability to impose sanctions on states. International sanctions can also have an impact on the selling and buying of defense materiel and vice versa, acquisition of defense materiel can cause the state to undergo international sanctions. Selling armament to a state that is under sanctions or embargo and opposing the decision of international institutions can cause measures against the seller, also buying from a state that is under sanctions can cause measures against the buyer. States are reasonable actors on the world stage and they make decisions which they believe would benefit them, therefore strictly financial motives such as earning money or acquiring the best model of armament are easily overcome by higher motives in connection with international relations of the country.

Acquisition models can also be divided based on the fact what is being delivered, armament itself or the tools to produce armaments. If supplier delivers armaments, for example infantry fighting vehicles, we are talking about direct delivery. Direct delivery is the most common way of armaments acquisition and it allows the receiver state to have the weapons in its hands as quickly as possible accompanied by other materiel, spare parts, ammunition and necessary services. After direct delivery process is completed, receiver state's army has that weapon in its equipment; they have been trained to use it and to maintain it in future.

Indirect delivery, on the other hand, represents a model where supplier state transfers technology for development and production of defense materiel to receiver state or improves industrial capacities of the receiver state's industry for production of defense materiel. Indirect delivery doesn't have an immediate effect on equipping the armed forces of the receiver state but after some period of time the state receives the capability to independently produce that type of defense materiel making it independent on other state's desire to sell to it. There is also another positive effect of the indirect delivery and that is the possibility to sell that type of defense materiel to other countries in future.

Direct and indirect delivery sometimes interfere, when a country buys defense materiel that procedure can also include indirect delivery like transfer of technology. Offset is also common in defense acquisitions. Offset represents the model where buyer receives additional capacity in industrial or technological field while acquiring defense materiel. Offset is specific because the buyer does not pay additional money for increase in its capacity, but the price for offset is included in the price of acquisition. Lastly, offset is specifically defined in legislations of some countries.

Differences between direct and indirect delivery and their effect on international politics can be best observed when it comes to delivery of complex weapon systems and nuclear weapons. Indirect delivery of technology and capacities for production of complex weapon systems and nuclear weapons, thus providing receiver country with the capability to produce and use those weapons can have

higher impact on international relations. This is specifically important when it comes to nuclear weapons because direct delivery of nuclear weapons didn't happen before but there were cases of indirect deliveries of technology, dual use goods or equipment necessary for nuclear weapons production. Direct delivery of complex weapon systems to a country which is not under sanctions or at war could also raise eyebrows because it can disrupt the balance of powers, but indirect delivery always has more significant implications.

All of the models of defense acquisition mentioned before can have impact on international politics and relations but the effect depends on geopolitical situation in which the states involved in transaction are at the current moment. That is why we will try to further explain modern international relations in the following paragraphs.

3. MODERN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

3.1. Time determination

In order to determine what modern international relations, represent we have to determine the time which is the subject of our interest in this paper. The term "modern" implicates that we are referring to something new, something happening now or in the recent past. Having in mind that the paper is written in 2024, during the first quarter of the 21st century, it is appropriate to include the 21st century in the scope of this work. Regarding the 20th century it was hard to develop international politics and international relations during this period bearing in mind the two world wars that occurred and devastated the world followed by The Cold War and the period of bipolarity in international politics. The world was divided between two great powers working against each other in a frozen conflict that affected every part of the world and international relations between the states. Even though the world was devastated by two world wars and afterwards the states tried to avoid something like that in future by forming international institutions like the United Nations, international relations were promptly disrupted and various conflicts occurred during The Cold War. When The Cold War ended, states once again tried to articulate the future international politics through institutions and international agreements aimed at avoiding conflicts and arms race and improving international relations. With this explanation provided we are determining modern international relations to include period from the end of the Cold War (December 26th 1991) until today, and with the goal to be useful in future scientific researches.

3.2. Theoretical determination

Theories are important building blocks for scholars and choosing the right theoretical path is very important when we try to reach conclusion on some topics. We have already mentioned theory of offensive realism as a structural theory of international politics which explains the offensive behavior of states. Besides this theory there are other theories which have been developed as

foundations of the science of international relations. In order to enrich the scientific research, we need to provide a framework in which the research will take place, together with starting presumptions from which the conclusions are being derived. This means that researches need to think theoretically and apply theoretical presumptions and paradigms on which the future research shall be based. Two basic theories of the science of international relations that will be presented below are liberalism and realism with their variants.

Liberalism started to develop between the two wars as a counterpart to national-socialism which defined the priority of state in relations with an individual and advocated for the war to be valid mean for achieving goals. On the other hand, liberalism advocated for reason and moral in international relations, which liberal scientists believed could create better world in future. The ideas derived from liberal thinking were such as the idea of creating international institutions with the goal to form and protect the system of collective security. Then the idea of concluding international agreements and creating international legal tools for peaceful resolution of conflicts. Those who based their scientific work on liberalism also argued that developing economic cooperation between the countries and mutual economic dependence could lower the possibility of conflict between those states. There was also an idea that democratic states do not go to war with each other and that states which have McDonald's, a fast-food chain, do not go to war with each other. Because of the predominant idea of avoiding conflicts and wars, those ideas were sometimes described as idealistic.

Realism, on the other hand, presents a theory which accepts the fact that conflicts and wars between the states are not avoidable. States are trying to acquire the maximum amount power in the system of international relations, the same as they are trying to acquire the maximum amount of money in economic relations. There is no limit for the amount of wealth and there is no limit for the amount of power to be obtained by states. As given in [1], power is the currency of the great power politics and states compete for it. In order to obtain the maximum amount of power states interfere with each other and conflicts arise, therefore conflicts are not avoidable and wars are legitimate means of politics in international relations. This insight deriving from realism is directly in conflict with the liberal insights.

If we compare realism and liberalism, we can see there are many similarities between those two theories. Both theories are based on similar starting ideas and afterwards differ with each other regarding the conclusion on what are the causes that influence state's decisions in international politics. Basic characteristics of realism and liberalism are given in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Realism and Liberalism, basic characteristics

Theory	Realism	Liberalism
I	System of international politics is anarchic	
II	States are the main actors in international politics	
III	States strive to achieve their goals	
IV	States act in accordance with factors coming from the outside	States act in accordance with factors coming from the inside
V	Competition for power is the main goal	Political and economic cooperation is the main goal

When we analyze similarities and differences between those two theories, we can conclude that realists and liberals agree that international arena is anarchic and that states, as its main players, strive to achieve their goals. Then we have different conclusions on the idea why and how will states act in order to achieve their goals. When it comes to why realists point out external factors which affect the states like influence from another state and liberals emphasize internal factors like political system of that state (democracy). Another difference between realism and liberalism is on how will the states act when it comes to achieving their goals. Realists believe that the states will always compete for more power even when that means conflict with other states and liberals point out the idea that states will choose political and economic cooperation over accumulating power. Liberal theories gave different ideas to explain why and when will states opt out of accumulating power and avoid conflicts to enhance cooperation. For example, theory of liberal peace points out trade as an important factor and developed free market as a condition for peace, while theory of democratic peace argues that democracies do not go to war with each other, as we have already mentioned before. There is also an idea of neoliberal institutionalism which emphasizes the role of international institutions in keeping the peace between the states. Realists on the other hand start from the idea that every state in given circumstances will act the same and that it will pursue the maximum amount of power whenever it can no matter the political system of the state or free market. Achieving power is the main goal of every state and institutions and economic correlations will not stop the states in pursue for power, therefore conflicts are imminent. If we turn on the TV or read the news, we can see a brutal revelation that international institutions and economic correlation between the countries failed to develop peace and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Therefore, we can conclude that realism gives better basis for research of international relations in the 21st century and along with that we can conclude that realistic behavior of the states affects the subject of this paper, defense acquisitions.

When states compete for power, they try to enlarge their own military strength in order to achieve their goals easier and therefore they try to equip their forces with defense materiel through different models of acquisitions.

Realistic theories, which are based on the before mentioned assumptions, differ in definitions of what is the cause for the states to compete for power. Realism is based on the security dilemma, which is a situation in which actions taken by one entity in order to increase its own security cause reactions from other entities, which in turn lead to a decrease rather than an increase in security. The first mention of something similar to security dilemma occurred in relation with Peloponnesian war (5th century BC) when Tukidid wrote about this war and explained that Athens' growth in power generated a disturbance in Sparta, causing the war in the end. Classic realism points out the personality of humans and their inborn trait to strive for power. When a person becomes a state leader that inborn trait is carried on onto his decisions and the leader act in the way to fight for more power for his state. Thomas Hobbes, in his work *Leviathan*, wrote about the individuals and their conflicts with the idea that individuals live in an anarchy so they unite in a state in order to transfer the power to the state (*Leviathan*). But afterwards the conclusion is that conflicts and competition for power are then transferred to the states. Defensive realism argues that states have to fight for power in order to ensure their survival and when this is achieved the states try to control the situation and keep the balance of power. Offensive realism, the theory already cited in this paper, also emphasizes that the fight for power is necessary in order for the state to secure its survival. The difference between offensive and defensive realism is in the fact that offensive realism does not recognize the balance of power as a possibility. States strive to obtain the maximum amount of power no matter the fact that maybe at that moment that state is the most powerful. The goal of the state is to become hegemon, therefore the most powerful state in the world.

As explained before, our vision is that offensive realism has the best chance to explain the system of international politics now and in the future, therefore we will try to present the theory of offensive realism in more details. Basic hypotheses of offensive realism were first set by John Mearsheimer in [1]. The first hypothesis is that the system of international politics is anarchic in the way that in this system states play the most important role and that there is no higher authority above the states which can control their behavior and prevent clashes. International institutions and international agreements and other legal documents failed in creating a sustainable system of checks and balances between the states. The second hypothesis is that all states posses' military power, some of them bigger amount and some of them smaller amount of it. Use of that power in order to achieve goals defined by that state can jeopardize other states. The third hypothesis is that no state can be certain of the goals defined by other states therefore it can't be certain what means will other states use in order to achieve those goals. Intentions of one state are a mystery for other states, and this is one of the best reasons why intelligence

and espionage exists. The fourth hypothesis is that the main goal of all states is assuring their own survival and with this goal states are similar to every other individual. Finally, the fifth hypothesis is that every state is a reasonable actor on the world stage taking actions which are aligned with its goals. When you take all five hypothesis or assumptions, they produce two important occurrences in international relations between the states. The first occurrence is the sense of fear and mistrust between the states which brings us back to security dilemma mentioned earlier. Because of this, states understand that the best way to ensure their survival is self-help and that the ultimate goal should be to become the hegemon, the most powerful state in the system. In order to achieve this the states not only try to upgrade their own power but they also try to minimize the power of other states and to prevent other states to become the most powerful one. If a state succeeds in this and becomes a hegemon that will ensure its survival on a long-term basis and achievement of its goals.

Because of the anarchy that rules the system of international politics, one state with the highest amount of power could define the rules and dictate the actions. This idea dictates the behavior of states in modern international relations and urges them to obtain more and more power and the most important power of them all is the military power.

4. CONCLUSION

Theoretical determination of the international relations provided us with clearer view of the causes, motives and actions taken by the states. We are aware that we live in an unstable world where wars are being fought at every moment. Complex geopolitical processes have broader influence on every aspect of our lives in the 21st century than ever before. Events that happen far away across the globe transfer their effects rapidly to every corner of the world because of the relations and connections between the states and individuals. In this global world we need to pay more attention to causes and implications which occur from some events and all of the main aspects of everyday life, business, trade, cooperation etc. we have to observe from the height of globalization.

Defense acquisitions, as one of the forms of business, trade and cooperation between the states we ought to observe from the global point of view among the international relations. International relations influence defense acquisitions and defense acquisitions influence international relations and international politics. Because of these effects of the defense acquisitions, they attract more and more attention in the modern world. The first of all is political attention, defense acquisitions are always under the eye of states and their political background and effects are thoroughly observed. Media are also turning their full attention to defense acquisitions especially in the era of modern conflicts that happen today. Newspapers, magazines and TV shows report about the realized or possible acquisitions of armament and in the world dominated by internet numerous You Tube channels and forums discuss about this topic frequently. We can also say

that interest of ordinary people for this subject is increased and the possible reason why individuals are interested in this topic could be the question why is someone arming its defense forces and what could be the intentions behind that.

When we perceive that acquisition of defense materiel has become the point of interest for both media and individuals than we can undoubtedly conclude that states and international institutions are highly interested in this subject as the main actors of the international politics. After The Cold War the international institutions tried to regulate armaments acquisitions with international agreements and other legal documents. For example, Missile Technology Control Regime is an informal political understanding between states which aims to control the proliferation of defense materiel in relation to rocket technologies and it was later broadened to include unmanned vehicles and weapons of mass destruction. Then we have Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe which was negotiated and concluded between the NATO and the Warsaw Pact states with the aim to limit the conventional armed forces in Europe and to define an obligation for the member states to destroy their surplus defense materiel. Russia suspended its participation in this Treaty in 2007, in 2015 Russia halted its participation and withdrew from the Treaty in 2023. This withdrawal was followed by United States and its NATO allies suspending their participation in the Treaty. This example showed that even though many international treaties and agreements, formal and informal, were negotiated, concluded and signed but they never succeeded in establishing control over the state's actions in defense field. Even without formal withdrawal, many states violated the norms of the treaties they signed which lead us into conclusion that the system of international politics failed to define and construct the norms which will regulate this area.

When we take into the account the importance of defense acquisitions in the 21st century and the inability of international system to control this area, we can conclude that defense acquisitions will continue to influence the international relations in future. Because the war has been and will be the tool of international politics, military cooperation will be the most important form of cooperation between the countries, with defense acquisitions as the most important element of this cooperation. As it was given in [3], Machiavelli concluded in his work "The Prince" that without the force, armed force, no state can be permanent. In order to achieve its goals, the state has to obtain military power and the best way to obtain military power is through procurement of defense materiel. Acquisition of defense

materiel in today's world where the theory of offensive realism prevails allows the state to expand its political influence by increasing its military power or by increasing military power of other states. Even if the state is not at war and if it never uses war as the way to achieve its goals, defense acquisitions allows the state to expand its influence through other means, for example economic or diplomatic. Strong military power has another effect on international relations which is called deterrence. Other states will probably give up on their plans for invasion or plans to attack another state if that state has strong military power. States, as reasonable actors, will analyze the possible outcome of the planned invasion and if there is a higher chance that they are going to be defeated or to suffer losses they will give up on that idea. If a state deliver armament to another state, the strength of the receiver state will raise and its chances of deterrence will be higher. Positive effects of delivery of armaments could also be financial because defense industry is highly profitable field which can enrich the economic power of the state. There are also negative effects of defense acquisitions when delivering or acquiring of defense materiel can negatively impact international relations of involved countries.

Finally, we can conclude that effects of defense acquisitions could be highly positive or highly negative and they can quickly resonate between this far ends of the scale. The effects can start between two states but they can easily spill over on regional or even on a global level. Defense acquisitions are and will be an important tool of international politics, therefore states and institutions should try to find the way to regulate this field. Until international institutions succeed in developing the system which will be the framework for future relations between the states regarding the defense acquisitions, states need to develop their own regulatory system. This system has to include the possible effects of the acquisition of defense materiel to the state's international relations, thus giving the opportunity to the future decision makers in this field to consider this important correlation when procuring or supplying weapons.

References

- [1] MEARSHEIMER, J.: *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Čigoja štampa, Belgrade, 2009.
- [2] PERIŠIĆ, S.: *Geopolitika i Srbi*, Filip Višnjić, Belgrade, 2022.
- [3] SIMEUNOVIĆ, D.: *Teroija politike*, Udruženje nauka i društvo, Belgrade, 2002.