

Deterence?

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other nations from aggression. No one would dare attack Britain if the British Navy had an overwhelming number of this super weapon. This would leave the British free to intervene in other wars, and to help maintain a pax Brittania.

However, soon after the British development of the Dreadnought, the Germans began to deploy their own Dreadnoughts. The British wanted to maintain superiority over the German Navy, so they began an intensive Dreadnought building program. The Germans followed suit. An expensive and frightening arms race had begun.

This was mistakenly perceived as a situation of mutual deterrence, and of stability in the realtions between these two great powers.

But war did come. Deterrence, if it had ever existed, broke down. The existence of huge numbers of Dreadnoughts did nothing to prevent a Croation nationalist from assassinating an Austro-Hungarian Duke. Furthermore, those awesome weapons of destruction did not prevent these two great powers from being led into war through a complicated system of alliance structures. In conclusion, the Dreadnought could not possibly deter war because its presence could not effect the events that caused the war.

Today, war between superpowers is percieved to be deterred by the existence of frightening weapons of destruction. These weapons are controlled by the superpowers in a situation which involves an unbelievably expensive arms race. But, as in the case of WW I, how stable is the deterrence situation, and how does it relate to other international events? The existence of these weapons has not prevented war. In fact, there have been at least 5,000,000 dead as direct result of war since 1945.

In the Middle-East, Iran and Iraq are at war. Geo-politically the region is of vital interest to many nations, for both their own economies and because of the East-West conflict. The French are selling weapons to Ba'athist Iraq. The Israelis are selling American-made spare parts and ammunition to the Moslem fundamentalists in Iran. Both the Iraqis and the Iranians are fighting the Kurds.

There is a real possibility of Soviet or American involvement over any number of issues, the most obvious of which would be the Iraqi bombing of Kharg island, or the Iranian shutdown of the Straights of Hormuz.

Obviously the situation is incredibly complex, much more so than the situation which saw the beginning of WW I. The possibility of American or Soviet involvement is a real and frightening possibility. If the superpowers become involved in a conflict situation, it will not end like WW I. Nuclear weapons will affect the outcome in a way that the Dreadnought could never have affected the outcome of WW I.

There is no proof that deterrence works. Evidence suggests that it leads to a false twisted sense of security which distracts attention from dealing with conflict as it becomes threatening. Reliance on nuclear deterrence is suicidal. Elimination of nuclear weapons may not lead to the prevention of war; but it will prevent the destruction of the earth when conflict breaks out. You must not rely on deterrence: we must disarm.


