

## Arms Aid and American Arms Transfer System

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### Abstract

*Military aid was an important foreign policy tool during the Cold War. The superpowers tried to expand their influence through military aid, especially in developing and third-world countries. After the Cold War, military trade became more important than military aid. The United Nations also has a monitoring system for military trade and transfer, but it depends on the information the concerned countries provide. Hence, this research paper analyzes whether the transfer system is well established in the world's largest arms exporter, the US. The U.S. exports arms worth about \$200 billion and is responsible for more than 25% of the total global arms trade. Hence, to understand the global arms transfer system, one must also understand the U.S. arms transfer system. This research paper attempts to analyze the concept of military aid, its various names and dimensions, and especially the various methods available for military aid in the U.S.*

**Key Words:** America Arms Aid Arms Transfer Developing Countries Congress Foreign Military Sales.

Military aid can be granted, as well as sales, credit for sales, authorization for sales, etc. It can be any military exchange, from the direct sale of military equipment to the training of military officers, the manufacture of military equipment, or the transfer of technology. (Venkataramani 1982 p 417) Military aid is always beautiful and convenient for the recipient country because it assumes that it does not have to return this aid. The various forms of military aid create more difficulty in defining it because sometimes even civilian type of activity is military severe assistance. For example, the transfer of reactor technology for producing nuclear energy can be taken in this form. Because the plutonium obtained from the reactor can be used in atomic bombs. Although it is declared to be transferred in the name of peaceful use in producing energy, military aid is a multidimensional concept, and it should be seen whether the primary purpose of the transfer is military or security-related. Therefore, all such transfers can be considered military aid, whose objective is broadly related to military or strategic security. However, in general, military aid includes direct cash sales, complete assistance sales, hardware transfers, other types of light and heavy military systems, sale of military material at concessional rates, sales based on no profit loss, etc., or sales at a rate lower than the market rate, leasing of military equipment, (e.g., the submarine named Ghazi was leased to Pakistan by America), etc. can be considered as military aid. There is a definite difference between military aid and military sales. Aid implies complete assistance, while sales contain an element of profit. However, scholars believe that sales are sometimes only for show. It is done at such a concessional rate that it comes close to aid. Secondly, the most important fact is that military sales are always made to such a nation, which has generally been a natural ally of the donor. Therefore, favorable sales can be considered aid. Thus, military aid will be regarded as if -

- 1- If the military grant has been given,

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- 2- Military equipment has been sold directly,
- 3- Cash and technical assistance has been given for setting up a military production unit,
- 4- Facility of training of military personnel of the recipient country in the donor country, etc., has been provided,
- 5- Military or any such technology whose indirect purpose is military has been transferred.
- 6- Military experts and expertise have been transferred. (Avery: 1984 p.170)

Generally, military transfers are made by the donor country to increase its military influence in a particular region. In contrast, for the recipient country, it is a matter of prestige that it has received such advanced weapons. Military transfers are usually made on two bases: between members of a military alliance, such as transfers to NATO members, and transfers by a prominent donor like America to its declared and treaty-bound members, such as by America to NATO.

Secondly, the donor country transfers to its strategic allies, which are not treaty-bound with it but whom it considers crucial for its strategic objectives, such as transfers by America to Pakistan, Israel, Egypt, Latin America, South Korea, etc. Unlike economic aid, developed countries monopolize military assistance and sales. Military assistance can be provided only by a government that (1) is industrially rich because the military industry requires enormous capital investment. (2) Should be rich in terms of technical knowledge. Therefore, leaving aside China, it is clear that all the countries selling military equipment are developed countries with large and well-organized military-industrial complexes. During the Cold War, America, Russia, France, and Britain were the world's largest and top four military sellers. America is the world's biggest arms seller. In the four years from 1995 to 1999, it sold arms worth \$53443 million, which is nearly 50% of the total arms sales. (Bjorn et al Sipri 2000, p. 340-41)

Many factors are responsible for the transfer of military equipment -

- 1- Promotion of national interest,
- 2- Possibility of imminent danger to the donor and recipient country,
- 3- Donor's opinion about regional and global security and its vested interests,
- 4- Geographical location of the recipient country and its importance,
- 5- Ability to take advantage of the situation in the recipient country, such as General Zia-ul-Haq, who obtained the desired weapons from America based on his bargaining power after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.
- 6- Change in regional strategic conditions,
- 7- Economic acquisition and promotion of national interest are the biggest reasons for military transfer. Paul Rank admitted to the House Committee on Foreign Policy in June 1968 that "our role is to carry out

the broad objectives of American foreign policy through military aid and military sales. We do not sell arms simply for the sake of selling them." (Avery: *ibid*, p. 176)

Thus, military transfers are purely for the sake of fulfilling national interests. Throughout the Cold War, the mutual army competition between the superpowers and the strategic threat posed by it forced both superpowers to expand their spheres of influence through arms sales and aid. From the point of view of security and stability, capable and modern armies were considered the primary measure of security. Anti-communist policy was the cornerstone of American foreign policy throughout the Cold War. The U.S. arms policy shows that anti-communist thinking is the basis of American military transfers. Even after the end of the Soviet Union, the security crisis remains the basis of arms transfers. However, the reasons for this have changed. The threat now is terrorism instead of communism. What is the opinion of the donor country about security? Or how does it see the security of its national interests? In which areas of the world does this fact control its military aid policy? For example, from 1975 to 1979, American military aid to Pakistan was stopped due to its being of no use. However, after the Soviet intrusion in Afghanistan in 1979, America provided extensive military assistance to Pakistan. Apart from this, the question of security of the donor country's allies also controls military aid. For example, the main reason for military transfer by America to NATO members was their protection from the communist threat.

The geographical location of a country or region and the importance of that geographical location for the donor country also affect the military transfer policy. For example, the geographical location of West Asia, Europe, and South East Asia, as well as long-term strategic and trade interests in that region, are the factors that force America to adopt an active military transfer policy towards this region. Whereas America does not see its extensive interests in South Asia, this region has received nominal military aid compared to the other areas. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, America sees its long-term economic and strategic interests in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea region. Therefore, there has been an activeness in the U.S. military aid policy towards this region. NATO members are providing economic and military aid to this region. The U.S. and Turkey are assisting Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Due to the changed strategic circumstances, the recipient countries often prove good bargainers and get the desired weapons. Because they know that the interests of the donor country are in danger at this time and that they are helpless. Hence, extensive bargaining goes in favor of the recipient. For example, after the Arab-Israeli war, due to the oil embargo in 1975-76, OPEC countries received arms worth 9 billion dollars from the U.S. (Avery: 1984, p. 188) The U.S. was forced to sell modern, latest weapons like AWACS to Saudi Arabia. Similarly, in 1980, military aid worth 400 million dollars seemed like a farce to General Zia. Hence, he also successfully got the desired arms package from the U.S. Economic factors always play an essential role in arms trade. This fact is even more true in a large industrial country like the U.S. The massive military-industrial complex of the U.S. has had a significant influence on the U.S. administration, and there is a lot of pressure from its side for arms exports. Because innovation in the arms industry has a considerable cost, this is possible only through extensive research. Hence, due to the enormous cost involved in research development, the arms industry keeps the pressure on exports. The AWACS deal with Saudi Arabia kept 340,000 jobs alive in the arms industry. (U.S. Department of State: 1983)

During the Cold War, the primary source of military aid was the rivalry between the superpowers. The entire world was divided into pro-American and pro-communist camps. Bipolarity had become a common

rule. In such a situation, the superpowers provided military aid on a large scale to protect their global interests and maintain the regional balance of power. Despite not being a part of any bloc, even the non-aligned countries received large amounts of aid from the superpowers. Founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement, like India and Egypt, were receiving military transfers from the former Soviet Union and the U.S. Since the Camp David Agreement, Egypt has remained the second largest country to receive U.S. military aid after Israel.

### **Military aid system of the former Soviet Union**

There is no significant formal information available at any level about the military aid administrative system of the former Soviet Union. Since the Soviet system was highly centralized, it is still believed that the Politburo, the most powerful in the Soviet system, must have played the most crucial role in arms exports. In the former Soviet Union, the Defence Council was the highest body in defense matters. Not only were most of the members drawn from the Politburo, but the Party General Secretary was also the chairman of the Defence Committee. Arms transfer matters were formally dealt with by the Foreign Economic Relations Committee, which worked under the Defence Council. High-ranking military officers occupied all crucial posts in this committee. The Defence Minister, who was a member of the Defence Council, presided over the meetings of this committee and was answerable to the Defence Council. This committee received assistance and advice from other necessary departments and ministers for arms export and production. In the case of military transfer, it was decided who and what level of officer would talk to the buyer country according to the priorities of the Soviet allied countries, regions, etc. In the case of significant countries, this was decided at the head of state level. (U.S. Department of State 1983) U.S. Military Aid U.S. Military Aid is a set of loans, grants, programs, etc., used to help the allied countries of America and protect their and American interests. The United States assumes a posture to protect its global interests through this. The responsibility of formal policy decisions regarding arms transfer lies with the Foreign Secretary. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee decides financial allocation regarding arms assistance, the House Foreign Relations Committee, and the allocation subcommittee on foreign aid programs. In fact, in the American system, there is strict parliamentary control over executive decisions. Congressional control over financial matters is even stricter. At times, the administration has to face harsh Congressional criticism and reduced allocations.

### **The U.S. military assistance System**

It has several institutional arrangements for military assistance and transfers, such as -

F.M.F. - Foreign Military Finance, F.M.S.C.- F.M.S.C. Foreign Military Sales Credit,

M.A.P.- Military aid Program,

F.M.S.- Foreign Military Sales,

I.M.E.T. - International Military Education and Training,

P.K.O. Peacekeeping Operations,

E.S.F. Economic Support Fund.

**Foreign Military Finance**

Through this, the U.S. government provides its allies with long-term and short-term loans at concessional rates to buy American weapons. The Foreign Secretary makes policy decisions in this regard. While the Defense Secretary is responsible for the availability of equipment. Along with this, the Defense Secretary also looks after all the administrative arrangements for transferring defense material. (Francis: 1984 p 42) "Arms Export Control Act (A.E.C.A.) [22 USC 2751, et. q.], authorizes the President to finance the procurement of defense articles and services for foreign countries and international organizations. The F.M.F. enables eligible partner countries to purchase U.S. defense articles, services, and training through the F.M.S. or, for a limited number of countries, through the Foreign Military Financing (FMF/DCC) program of direct commercial contracts (also DCC Guidelines)." (U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency 2023)

**Foreign Military Sales Credit**

The U.S. government usually provides government credit to its allies for purchasing American weapons. Often, an arms supply becomes necessary in a particular area, but the concerned country does not have the necessary financial resources; in such a case, military transfer is possible only under this program. This transfer has often been done to countries like South Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Pakistan, the Philippines, etc. Congressional approval is also essential for this program. However, it is free from budgetary provisions. Between 1971 and 1976, more assistance was provided under this program than military grants. President Ronald Reagan used this program generously. In 1983, Israel and Egypt were provided military loans of 3 billion dollars, whereas only under this program was a total of 4.2 billion dollars of assistance. The Military Aid Program is a grant the U.S. government gives to purchase American defense equipment. (Francis: 1984 p 44) This was the primary source of American military aid in the 1950s and 60s. In the 1950s, aid was mainly provided to Europe under this program, while in the 1960s, American policymakers focused on Asian and Latin American countries. After the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, Pakistan received a large amount of American military aid. (Noel Koch 1986 p 45) Military aid remained an essential tool of American foreign policy until 1970. However, after 1970, the number of grants for American military aid kept decreasing. Because of America's misfortune in the Vietnam War, the American government had to face widespread opposition from Congress to military grants. As a result, sales became the primary tool of military aid instead of grants. During the Draper Commission, military grants were 8 billion in 1959, reduced to only one billion in 1982. (Wilhelm & Feinstein 1985 p 44)

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### **Foreign Military Sales**

This is the main instrument of American military aid policy at present. Under this, military equipment is sold to allied countries instead of grants. The American government also provides its allies with long-term and short-term loans and sales credit guarantees. F.M.S. rapidly replaced M.A.P. after 1970. The Foreign Military Sales program is the most significant part of the American military aid provided to NATO members Japan, all wealthy allies including Australia, New Zealand, and other trusted allies like Egypt, South Korea, and Israel. In 1980, the total American military transfer was 17.4 billion, of which 88%, i.e., 15.31 billion dollars, was transferred under Foreign Military Sales. Although President Bush has repeatedly advocated a shift in military assistance from grants after September 11, 2001, Foreign Military Sales (F.M.S.) still account for approximately 90% of total U.S. military transfers. (ACDA 1981)

"The Foreign Military Sales (F.M.S.) program is a form of security assistance authorized by the Arms Export Control Act (A.E.C.A.), as amended [22 U.S.C. 2751, etc. seq.], and is a fundamental tool of the U.S. foreign policy. Under Section 3 of the A.E.C.A., the United States may sell defense materials and services to foreign countries and international organizations when the President formally determines that doing so will strengthen the security of the United States and promote world peace. Under F.M.S., the U.S. government and a foreign government sign a government-to-government agreement called a Letter of Offer and Acceptance (L.O.A.). The Secretary of State determines which countries will run the program. The Secretary of Defense executes the program. It may be funded from the country's national treasury or U.S. government funds." (U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency 23)

"Foreign military sales (F.M.S.) are a central U.S. weapons transfer mechanism and a vital tool of U.S. foreign policy. Overseen by the U.S. Department of State and implemented through the U.S. Department of Defense, F.M.S. is one of many ways the United States promotes interoperability and strengthens an

unmatched network of alliances and security partnerships around the world. On average, allies and partners purchase approximately \$45 billion worth of U.S. weapons, equipment, and training annually through F.M.S., with F.M.S. purchases increasing 49 percent from 2021 to 2022. (U.S. Department of State F.M.S. 2023)

### **International Military Education and Training**

Under this program, the U.S. government trains military personnel, officers, and technicians of its allied nations in U.S. defense training institutions, etc. Not only is congressional approval necessary for this program, but its funding is also by budgetary provisions. Therefore, this program is also permanent. This program was also cut down during President Carter's arms control policy. In 1972, 22000 foreign military personnel were trained in the U.S.; in 1982, this number was only 3000. (Wilhelm and Feinstein 1985 p 45-46) In 2002, the Bush administration funded this program with 5 million. Out of which 6.6 million have been allocated to the Middle East. In the Middle East, 200000 dollars have been allocated to Algeria, 259000 to Bahrain, 1.2 million to Egypt, 1.8 million to Jordan, 60,000 to Lebanon, one million to Morocco, 275000 to Oman, 25000 to Saudi Arabia, one million to Tunisia and 250,000 dollars to Yemen. A total of 1.8 million dollars have been allocated to five South Asian countries under this scheme. Of these, 125000 dollars have been allocated to India, 650,000 to Bangladesh, 225,000 to Maldives, 225000 to Nepal, and 225000 to Sri Lanka. This program is a complementary scheme of the U.S. military equipment sales scheme, which provides a double benefit to the U.S. defense industry. Because training fees are received separately from the sale of defense material, the most modern American and complex defense equipment can neither be used nor maintained without proper training. (Kurata: 2001)

### **Peacekeeping Operations**

After the end of the Cold War, peacekeeping operations emerged as a new tool of military intervention. In recent years, peacekeeping forces have been recorded in many places worldwide, such as Bosnia, the Sub-Saharan region, East Timor, Afghanistan, etc. It is worth mentioning that the most significant part of all these peacekeeping forces is NATO, which is under the leadership of America. America and Turkey are considering deploying a peacekeeping force in the Caspian Basin region of the Caucasus region under the leadership of NATO. In 2002, the Bush administration allocated 844 million dollars for the peacekeeping forces. Of this, 50 million will be spent on peacekeeping forces stationed in the Middle East. (Kurata: 2001) In the Middle East, the United Nations interim peacekeeping force is present in the Golan Heights of Syria and Lebanon. United Nations peacekeeping forces are also present in many countries of the Sub-Saharan region.

### **Economic Support Fund**

Although the Economic Support Fund is not a source of military aid, the way it has been used till now makes it clear that, to the maximum extent, it is related to the political and strategic goals and objectives of the United Nations. (Swell and Conty: 1988 p. 98) E.S.F. is a program under which the U.S. government provides concessional loans to its allied countries to correct the balance of payments. Apart from this, this head also allocates the projects administered by the Agency for International Development. But some doubts related to the E.S.F. administration point towards its military objectives -

1- This allocation is also provided to those countries that are either defense allies of America or necessary to protect American strategic interests. As a result, the total US ESF. 51% of the allocation (in 1983) went to Egypt and Israel alone. Moreover, if Pakistan, Lebanon, Turkey, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Jamaica are also included, this figure becomes 88%.

2—The repayment of E.S.F. is also very flexible and concessional. Generally, this loan is for a maximum of 40 years at a rate of 2 to 3%. The F.M.S. scheme's interest rate is 8 to 10%, with ten years of repayment.

3—Most notably, in the E.S.F. scheme, the loan is usually given in cash, which the buyer often uses for many purposes, even the purchase of arms. Because political implications are evident in its allocation; for example, in the Philippines, 65% of the E.M.F. allocation was spent on developing the area around the American military base.

"In support of the 1979 amendment to the Philippines-U.S. Military Bases Agreement, the United States provided the Philippines with \$200 million in economic assistance funding in fiscal years 1980-1984. At the request of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, G.A.O. reviewed the assistance program and found that there were problems in implementation. Problems arose, in part, from disagreements between the U.S. and Philippine governments over how much control the United States should have over the aid. In June 1983, as a result of a review of the agreement, the United States pledged an additional \$475 million in Economic Assistance Fund aid in fiscal years 1985-1989." (E.S.F.: 1984)

A 1982 study showed that only 19 cents of every dollar allocated to the E.S.F. was spent on approved purposes. (Postman 1984 p 6) More than 65% of the E.S.F. Plan allocation is in cash, which is not unlikely to be used for military purposes, especially if the donor country does not object. Reports from A.I.D. (Agency for International Development) clarify that most of its work is related to security purposes. (Butler and Brush: 1985: p 372) In addition, a study presented by the Center for Strategic and International Studies also clarifies that E.S.F. was used for security purposes in many cases.

## **Conclusion**

There is rigorous parliamentary control on the U.S. defense aid and arms transfer program. Only budget can be spent; secondly, the President's powers are defined. Who will work in what way in the various methods of arms transfer? What are the powers of the Defense Secretary on it, or will it start from some other department? How much power does the President have to spend at his discretion? What things will the President keep in mind before approving? Are all these things defined and thoroughly established? In case of violation of these, the executive has to face criticism and may face congressional investigation. Apart from this, there are various congressional acts which also keep controls on arms transfer; for example, when arms are transferred to a developing country, the President has to give a written guarantee that that country is not involved in a nuclear arms program. The President had to do so under the Pressler Amendment before giving military aid to Pakistan. As is well known, the U.S. Congress has unlimited powers of investigation, especially the Senate. Various Senate committees have taken a harsh and critical view of defense transfers.



Apart from congressional control, the U.S. executive also has robust accounting arrangements. Recently, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kalin Kahl said about the aid provided to Ukraine that till February 2023, the U.S. has provided assistance of 31.7 billion dollars to Ukraine, and other allies have provided assistance of 19 billion dollars. He said in front of the House Armed Services Committee of Congress that although they focus on fulfilling the needs of Ukraine, they have always prioritized accountability; for this, they have used such methods according to their standards and practices. Defense Department Director General Robert P. Starch also said in the House that five inspection projects related to arms transfer have been completed. He said OIG has over 20 prescribed audit methods and actively works for the Defense Criminal Investigation Service and fraud prevention. It works professionally in countries including Ukraine, where American arms are transferred, and ensures the prevention of their misuse. (Vergu :2023)

On the contrary, countries like Russia and China, among the top five countries in the world arms trade, do not have any established system of arms transfer, sale, and monitoring, nor do they publish it. In any case, these countries are authoritarian countries where the will of the parliament does not matter much. Therefore, parliamentary control has no meaning there. Therefore, the American arms transfer system is important because it also presents a role model of how arms sale, transfer, and monitoring structures should be lawful and organized in an industrial democratic country and how effective parliamentary control should be. From this point of view, the American arms transfer system is under congressional laws, and monitoring, and accountability, which is not beyond public criticism.

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