Why is there an arms race in the world?

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The world's richest entrepreneur, Elon Musk, recently predicted that World War III could break out within the next ten years. This is obviously a matter of great concern and has naturally sparked a heated debate. Musk's statement raises a fundamental question: is the massive surge in arms sales

leading the world toward a devastating war? This question arises from data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. According to this data, revenue from arms and military equipment sales by the world's top 100 arms companies has increased by 5.9 percent, reaching a record $670 billion. This growth has occurred despite sales disruptions, inflation, and an industrial recession. The state of arms sales is such that in 2024, the combined revenue of 43 US companies among the top 100 arms companies in the world increased by 3.8 percent to $334 billion. These include Lockheed Martin, Northrop, Grumman, and General Dynamics. Excluding Russia, 23 of the 26 arms companies in the rest of Europe recorded a 13 percent increase in arms revenue, reaching $151 billion. Arms sales have actually increased due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, its perceived threats to NATO countries, and various conflict-ridden countries, including the IndoPacific region. Only Asia and Oceania saw fewer arms purchases from the top 100 companies in 2024, a 1.2 percent decline compared to 2023, to $130 billion. The top two Russian companies—Rostec and United Shipbuilding Corporation—saw a 23 percent increase in combined revenue to $31.2 billion, despite a shortage of components due to international sanctions. Japanese and South Korean companies continued their growth, driven by European and domestic demand. The top five Japanese companies increased their revenues to $13.3 billion, and the South Korean companies to $14.1 billion. Similarly, West Asian companies' combined revenues reached $31 billion, while three Israeli companies generated $16.2 billion. Of these, three Indian companies increased their total arms revenue by 8.2 percent to $7.5 billion for the first time due to domestic demand.

Clearly, governments around the world are purchasing more weapons in an effort to become self-sufficient in defense. They are replenishing their depleted arsenals and making emergency preparedness purchases that were unthinkable until recently. Furthermore, the war in Ukraine has created a huge demand for artillery, drones, precision missiles, and air-defense systems. Israeli attacks on Gaza have also increased demand for unnecessary weapons and munitions. Rising tensions in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait are pushing countries like Japan, Australia, South Korea, and Taiwan to acquire long-range missiles, submarines, and next-generation fighter jets. Historically, the tendency to accumulate weapons has been seen before major conflicts, namely before 1914, then again in the 1930s, and during the final stages of the Cold War. Musk's prediction seems plausible in this light. And why not? When major powers modernize their militaries at the same time, miscalculations are inevitable. However, the surge in arms sales does not signal a countdown to World War III. The biggest difference here is in the intent. Most arms purchases currently underway are defensive, not offensive. European countries are purchasing weapons not to start a war with Russia, but to deter Moscow from any missteps. Similarly, countries in the IndoPacific region do not seek war with China, but rather to deter Beijing from unilateral action in Taiwan or the South China Sea. Furthermore, nuclear weapons remain a major deterrent for major powers. It is true that this does not completely eliminate the risk of nuclear weapons use. As conventional conflicts escalate, the threat of nuclear weapons use will persist. Diplomacy has not been very effective in the Ukraine-Russia and Gaza-Hamas conflicts, and the risk of proxy conflicts remains. The rapid use of sophisticated weapons such as drones, hypersonic missiles, long-range weapons, and AI-enabled surveillance makes the threat serious. Defense production is being promoted and security infrastructure is being developed. This means that countries should be able to take immediate action upon receiving a warning of war. The weakening of global home State Country Cricket Live Score Entertainment Business Download Live

Hindustan App to read latest Hindi News , Bollywood News , Business News , Tec… institutions like the United Nations, along with increasing competition among major powers, has created a fragmentation in multilateral diplomacy, negatively impacting the process of conflict prevention. In such a situation, the rapid increase in arms sales has increased the threat, but it is not necessary that this will lead to war. Weapons purchases by various countries are aimed at deterring imminent danger, modernizing, and strengthening their capabilities. The real threat lies not in a single country, but in the simultaneous accumulation of weapons by many countries. In a world where trust is eroding and crises are becoming more widespread than diplomatic dialogue, more effective crisis management is needed than ever before. Musk's prediction should be taken as a signal, as arms production is accelerating amid a deteriorating global security landscape, accompanied by a variety of undesirable activities. The surge in arms sales is a symptom of profound geopolitical turmoil and a shifting balance of power. The course of future world wars will be decided not only by the weapons and hardware being developed, but also by the decisions of the leaders of the day.

(These are the author's own views)