

## **Realism and Apology Diplomacy in the conduct of International Relations: a Study of Hiroshima and Nagasaki**

Jean-Allens Umunna Iheonu

*Department of Political Science Abia State University, Uturu*  
And

Frank-Collins Nnamdi Okafor & Raphael Chukwuemezie Eze

*Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka*

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### **ABSTRACT**

Realism has been a strong tool in the conduct of international relations since the eve of World War II when world statesmen woke up to the realisation that idealism has failed as a tool in the conduct of international relations with its penchant for moral persuasion. The world realised that idealism was not only naïve, but also dangerous because it had led countries to abandon realpolitik, which might have toughened them to react more forcefully to the early stages of Germany's rearmament and thus, might have saved the world from a second world war. The United States have pursued realism ardently since she was forcefully brought into the war by Japan through her attack on United States Pearl Harbor which culminated in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. United States have refused to apologise for these bombings despite calls from many quarters to do so. United States' reasons for not tendering this apology include that she saved more lives than she took considering the fact that more lives would have been lost if the war was allowed to linger. The authors seek to establish that because of United States realism posture in international relations and other intervening variables such as her cultural norms on apology, the United States may never apologise for Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

**KEY WORDS:** Apology Diplomacy, Atomic Bombs, Conflicts, Hiroshima, Realism

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Conflicts are endemic in human nature whether at the family, communal, state or at inter-state levels. It is, however, when conflicts are not properly addressed and redressed that conflicts can progress into war, especially at the state and inter-state levels.

The world has witnessed many inter-state wars with their heavy toll on humanity. The world has also witnessed many conflict atrocities emanating from inter-state wars, intra-state wars and other international conflicts. Chalkley (2009) has detailed some of these conflict atrocities which include China's conflict atrocity against the United States, France, Russia and Japan during The Boxer Rebellion in 1900 and known as the Taiyuan Massacre; Russia against China during The Sino-Soviet War in 1900 and known as The Aigen Massacre; Germany against Belgium during World War I and known as The Rape of Belgium; Italy against Ethiopia during The Italo-Ethiopian War and known as the Mustard Gas; and the United States against Japan during World War II in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, amongst others.

The most atrocious of the conflict atrocities is, perhaps, the one that occurred during World War II, as stated above, in which the United States of America used the Atomic Bombs to devastate the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and in the process killing non-combatant men, women and children in cold blood. The United States of America has refused to or has not found it expedient to tender a diplomatic apology to Japan over this incident. Why?

#### **The Concept of Apology Diplomacy**

The major thrust of this work is the role of diplomacy, albeit apology diplomacy, on reconciliation of demands in the international system. Diplomacy to a large extent drives international relations. International relations is the interactions between and among states, and also includes the activities of non-state actors and their impact on the international system. Put more broadly international relations is the workings of the international system as whole (McClean and McMillan, 2003). This is in line with Waltz (1979) who states that the international system is the prime determinant of international relations.

What then is an international system? An international system, according to Holsti (1995), is any collection of independent political entities - tribes, city states, nations or empires - that interact with

considerable frequency and according to regularised process. Joseph Frankel in Guruge (2015) agrees with this line of thought when he states that the international system is a collection of independent political units which interact with some regularity. Agreeing with the above two, Hedley Bull in Hatsume (2016) hits it squarely when he maintains that an international system is formed when two or more states have significant contact between them, and have sufficient impact on one another's decision to cause them to behave at least in some measure as part of a whole. International system, therefore, is the pattern of international relations over a period of time, for instance, the Chou Dynasty, the Greek City-States, the Roman Empire and the contemporary international system that started in 1648, a fall out of the Treaty of Westphalia.

The Treaty of Westphalia was established to eschew schisms from the conduct of international relations. Nonetheless, the conduct of international relations has been, to a varying degree, cooperative, competitive or out-rightly conflictive (Ojo and Sesay, 1988). It is on the conflictive nature of international relations and the anarchic bent of international system that states come to hurt other states through their actions or inactions. Some of these actions or inactions may have grievous and disastrous consequences that sometimes leave the whole world astounded. When peace and normalcy eventually come back the psychological and traumatic upheavals of those hurt do not disappear. There could be a silent build up that would erupt into a volcano if past pains and grievances were not addressed and redressed. This redressing may come as gesture, soothing words, show of regret for past actions and commitment that such actions, pains and grievances will not be allowed to repeat. This is the purview of Apology Diplomacy. Diplomatic Apology is also known as Political Apology. Apology to Tavuchis (1991) is an expression of regret, remorse, or sorrow for having insulted, failed, injured, said or done something that wronged or harmed another party. He continues by stating that in such instance, one could say "What he said really hurt my feelings, but his apology sounded so sincere that I couldn't help, but forgive him". An apology to Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2015) is "the act of declaring one's regret, remorse, or sorrow for having insulted, failed, injured or wronged another".

An apology should not be seen as perfunctory. This is to say that it should not be done just as a duty or habit without any show of real interest or feelings. It should convey repentance that comes from within. This is because apology is not done as a lip service but rather performs important social functions which include the diffusion of conflict, avoidance of retaliation, facilitation of reconciliation and very importantly, especially in the conduct of interstate relations, the reaffirmation of the value of rules and obligations (Bilder, 2006). When there is tension in society, when everything and everybody is on the edge, an apology helps to diffuse the situation.

Political Apology is when apology is tender at the state level, that is, when the president or the head of state or his representative tenders an apology on behalf of the state for wrong done in the past or in the present. The questions that arise are: Can a people, an entity or a state apologise for a wrong done the distance past? What is the validity of apology diplomacy?

There has always been this debate whether or not states, people and entities can actually apologise for past offences. Chalkley (2009) in line with Baauchamp (2007) poses the question that when considering events in history long passed, such as the violence against the Knights Templar centuries ago by the Catholic Church, are the descendants of these Knights owed an apology as they claim they are? And, if so, can the present-day Vatican realistically offer such an apology? There are diverse views on this. But before we take a stand let us review what happened with the Knights Templar. The Knights Templar was a Roman Catholic Crusader order that was founded about 1120. They operated for nearly 200 years as a highly respected Christian military order that was endowed with military prowess and strict code of conduct (Turner, 2018). Turner (2018) states that "Due to special privileges granted by the Catholic Church, the Knights Templar became an extremely wealthy and powerful organisation throughout medieval Europe." With its enormous wealth the Knights Templar served as financiers to the royal courts of Europe. The Knights Templar soon fell out with the church. But by the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Christians, according to Turner, had lost the control of the Holy Land and with this, the original purpose of forming the order was gone. However, King Philip IV of France was highly indebted to the Knights Templar and was looking for a way to hit them. His opportunity came with the election of Pope Clement V, who hailed from France. Turner (2018) states that:

*In 1307 Philip arrested scores of Templar in France, accused them of various acts of heresy and sacrilege, and obtained their confessions through torture. He then urged other monarchs and Pope Clement to assist in rounding up all members of the order.*

Even though the Pope and the other monarchs initially opposed Philip IV, Pope Clement V soon took over the inquisition, arresting and burning the Knights Templar until 1312 when he officially abolished the order. The Templar's last Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, was caught, tried and burnt to death at the age 70 in 1314. The descendants of the Knights Templar have been asking for apology from the Catholic Church and in 2007 the Vatican published a transcript of the Knights Templar trial testimony which revealed that the charges of heresy against them were unfounded (Turner, 2018). Those against apology think that it is unrealistic to expect the very distant relations of those that wronged your very distant ancestors to apologise to you. According to Weiner (2006) in Chalkley (2009) the critics of apology diplomacy maintain that the sins of the

parents shall not be passed on to the children to defend. So to them the Catholic Church has no reason to apologise to the descendants of the Knights Templar.

On the contrary, proponents of Apology Diplomacy argue that institutions such as the Catholic Church are continuous and should be held responsible for their past misdeeds and thus required to apologise for them (Chalkley, 2009). And so are states which are also continuous. This was underscored when the Prime Minister of Britain, Tony Blair, apologised for the Irish Potato Famine in 1997 and the Irish Prime Minister, John Bruton, accepted the apology with a statement that while the apology confronts the past honestly, it does so in a way that heals for the future. It is on the premise of the proponents of the viability of Apology Diplomacy that this study is anchored.

Political apologies are used to mend fences where states or people have shown regrets and remorse for wrongs committed in the past or in the present. Diplomatic apologies are used in bringing about reconciliations and straightening of relations in the international circle. It helps in reducing tension thereby preventing the escalation of conflicts. Apology diplomacy, nonetheless, is of the moral persuasion. How does it sit with the realist perspective in the conduct of international relations?

### **The Realist Theory**

Realism as a way of characterising international politics is not a new phenomenon. Realism as a school of thought has come a long way. The early scholars of realism include scholars like Thucydide, Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes (Lindemann, 2014). Later scholars are Hans J. Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, Michael Brown, Steven Miller, Fareed Zakaria and a host of others.

The realists start by noting that the world is made up of states which coexist in an environment of anarchy. The term anarchy according to Holsti (1995) does not mean chaos. Contrary to this he states that anarchy may be consistent with order, stability, and regulated forms of interaction between independent units. He went ahead to state that in international relations anarchy means that ultimately states can rely only upon themselves for their security and other purposes. This is because there is no superordinate authority that can manage the relations between sovereigns. In the process of states trying to create security for themselves, they may end up creating insecurity for others because of how other states perceive and interpret their actions. This leads to anarchy. As Holsti (1995:5) puts it:

*In international relations anarchy is often equated with insecurity, fear and war. Why? (Because) states must arm themselves to prepare for the contingency that some neighbour someday may harbour aggressive designs and attack. But in the process of a state accumulating arms for its insurance, other states will interpret these actions as potential threats to their own security. This process of action and reaction is called the Security Dilemma: the means by which one state provides for its security creates insecurity for others.*

We saw this play out in the build up to World War I which of course led to World War II and the eventual dropping of the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The realist perspective sees power as the most important variable in the analysis of international relations. The conduct of international relations to the realists is a matter of real politik and high politics and its outcome depends largely on the distribution of power amongst nations.

To Lindemann (2014) realism is essentially a philosophical world view that sees the power struggle among groups as a constant feature of international politics and is not optimistic about the prospect of world peace. Not that the realist school of thought favours war but it studies it to caution about its destructive impact and do all possible to forewarn states. Nau (2009) agrees with this when he maintains that the realist perspective focuses on conflict and war, not really because the realist school of thought favours war or believes that war is necessary but rather because they hope that by studying war, it could be avoided.

The assumptions of the realist perspective are in four core areas. These four core assumptions can be anchored on the fallout of the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia. First, people group themselves into states and the first most important outcome of the Peace of Westphalia is that the state is now seen as the most important unit in the conduct of international relations. The second important characteristic of the contemporary state system since 1648 is the absence of a central authority in the international system as was in the Holy Roman Empire System in which all power was centered in Rome. Because of this lack of central authority, states resort to self-help. This creates a sense of anarchy which makes every state very cautious of providing its own security. The third core assumption is that because states are the most important unit in the conduct of international politics and there is no central authority to checkmate the activities of states, states pursue their self-interest. And to successfully pursue their self-interest states need power which will ensure their survival and security in the face of other competing states in the international system that is fundamentally anarchical. Because of the foregoing, the fourth core assumption of the realist school maintains that states are always struggling for power which further makes the international politics more conflictive. Kegley (2009:27) sums it up thus:

*States are sovereign: they have supreme power over their territory and populace, and no other actor stands above them wielding the legitimacy and coercive capability to govern global system. Given the absence of a higher authority to which states can turn for protection and to resolve disputes, realists depict world*

*politics as a ceaseless, repetitive struggle for power where the strong dominate the weak. Because each state is ultimately responsible for its own survival and feels uncertain about its neighbour's intentions, realism claims that prudent political leaders seek arms and allies to enhance national security.*

Realism, as has been said, has come a long way. Intellectual roots of realism date back to the ancient Greek times where we had a scholar like Thucydides. From Greece it extended eastwards to China and India. Kegley (2009) asserts that writings on power politics can be seen in Kautilya's work, Arthashastra, which is an Indian treatise on statecraft written during the fourth century BCE (Before Christ Era). It can also be seen in the works of Sun Tzu, Han Fei and Shang Yang of ancient China. From there the momentum came to Italy whose foremost realist writer is Niccolo Machiavelli and to England as seen in the works of Thomas Hobbes.

Modern realist perspective however came at the heels of World War I as a result of the failure of world statesmen to preserve peace after the destructive effects of the world war. The war was blamed on the realpolitik played by major European powers. But the major thrust of the realist perspective came on the eve of World War II. After World War I the idealist movement came on board with the mission of removing wars from mankind. To achieve this lofty idea, the idealist school of thought advocates conducting global relations according to such principles as cooperation, morality and democracy.

According to Rourke (2008) President Woodrow Wilson of the United States was a leading idealist. Rourke went on to state that:

*(President Woodrow) Wilson argued, for example, that peace could only be restored and kept by a partnership of democratic nations. Wilson sought to bring that partnership into reality by helping found the League of Nations. The idealist vision also led to such initiatives as the Kellogg – Briand Pact, whose signatories pledged to renounce war as an instrument of national policy (Rourke, 2008:211).*

Rourke (2008) concludes by stating that the aggression of Germany and Japan who were signatories to Kellogg – Briand Pact of 1928 led many to agree that idealism was not only naïve, but also dangerous “because it had led countries to abandon realpolitik, which might have steered them to react more forcefully to such trends as the early stages by Germany's rearmament and, thus might have prevented World War II” (Rourke, 2008:211).

One of the first scholars of the realist persuasion who argued that idealism could not save the world from war was a British scholar, Edward H. Carr, who argued vigorously for realpolitik as a state policy. He captured the essence of the realist perspective in his 1946 book, *The Twenty Years Crisis 1919-1939*. In the same line of thought, Hans J. Morgenthau, an American scholar argued forcefully in his classical work, *Politics among Nations* (1948) that international politics like all politics, is a struggle for power (Rourke, 2008).

Politics according to Easton (1953) is the struggle for power, the acquisition of power and the consolidation of power for the authoritative allocation of values. Power on its own is the ability of one party or state to make another party or state do what it would not have done ordinarily by the use of coercion or threat of use of coercion to mount pressure on the target party or state to bend to the will of the aggressive party or state.

In power politics, states use military capability, economic power, propaganda and sometimes, terrorist acts, to pursue their national interest. This is political realism that supports self-help in international politics as against idealism which appeals to morality and respect for international law, pacts and agreements. Political idealism, as has been said, gave way to political realism after the destructive effect of World War II which left 55 million people dead. Statesmen and policy makers realised that those who rely on morality, sentiment and respect for international law, pacts, treaties etc. may be working behind the enemy's timetable.

Every state therefore became concerned with its survival which cannot be guaranteed on reliance on others' respect for morality and international law and treaties. Political realists therefore emphasise high politics which is the struggle for and use of power in the pursuit of national interest.

The tenet of political realism is that states must as a matter of priority struggle to expand their power base if they have to successfully pursue and maintain their primary national interest which boils down to security and survival. The realists maintain that the international system is anarchical and that states that are not ready to make use of self-help will have themselves to blame. Hans Morgenthau is, perhaps, the most powerful exponent of this perspective. He argues persuasively that power is the principal instrument for the realisation of national interest.

Realism along the way has developed two strands. These are the classical realism and the neorealism. The difference between the two strands is where they locate the root cause of conflict. Classical realist perspective locates it at human nature. Thomas Hobbes who is one of the most influential realist theorists is very pessimistic about human nature. He argues in the *Leviathan* that humans have the inherent desire to dominate which invariably pushes them to become enemies and which leads them to endeavour to destroy and subdue one another (Rourke, 2008). The essential characteristic of this condition according to Garner, Ferdinand and Lawson (2009) is anarchy. Garner, Ferdinand & Lawson (2009:352) went further to state that under this anarchy:

*Fear and insecurity dominate people's consciousness, driving individuals to seek the means of their own preservation above all else. Since domination is the only viable means of achieving one's preservation, the*

*inevitable result is the war of each against all. This scenario prompted Hobbes to open his most famous line, namely that life in the anarchy state of nature is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.*

Hans Morgenthau according to Rourke (2008) toes this same line of argument. To him the lust for power in humans is a ubiquitous empirical fact. Classical realism, therefore, contends that political struggle among humans is inevitable because people have an inherent dark side and so it is foolhardy to trust other countries and their people (Rourke, 2008). Rourke summarises this realist assumptions by quoting one realist, Mearsheimer John, who stated that “The sad fact is that international politics has always been a ruthless and dangerous business and it is likely to remain that way” (Rourke, 2008:21).

Neorealism or structural realism as it is sometimes called also sees politics as the struggle for power but however locates the cause of conflict rather at the international system which is anarchical in its unregulated structure. This sort of brings us back to the fallout of the Peace of Westphalia. This is forcefully captured by Zakaria (1993:22) in Rourke (2008:21) that the international system based on sovereign actors (states), which answer to no higher authority is anarchic, with no overarching authority providing security and order. The result of such self-help system is that each state must rely on its own resources to survive and flourish. But because there is no authoritative, impartial method of settling disputes – i.e. no world government – states are their own judges, juries and hangmen, and often resort to force to achieve their security interest.

If we should interpose the classical realist perspective with neorealism in their analysis of foreign policy behaviour of states we see that:

*The main difference between classical realism and neorealism is different emphasis placed on the structure of the international system. While Morgenthau’s main work “Politics Among Nations” introduced a realist approach to international politics that jumps between different levels of analysis Waltz (a neorealist) located his extremely parsimonious “Theory of international politics” solely at the systemic level. The ultimate objective of Waltz’s theory is to explain patterns and outcomes of international behaviour such as polarity, balance of power and alliance behaviour in the international system. In contrast to the classical realist, Waltz did not locate the source of conflict primarily in human nature and power-seeking individuals, but pointed to the anarchy structure of the international system to explain the recurrence of conflicts (Lindemann, 2014:4).*

Be that as it may, whether classical realism or neorealism, the fact still remains that man’s action whether at the societal level or at state and international levels is dictated by the quest for security and survival. The attitude of Germany under Hitler reflects this fact. The treaty of Versailles had laid Germany bare by dispossessing her of European territories and oversea colonies and imposed reparation on her which brought a lot of economic hardship on the country especially with the economic depression of the 1930s. Hitler’s lash out was more of a quest for security and survival of the German State even though there were some intervening variables such as quest for revenge, pride and prestige.

Japan, on the other hand, was an island with vast military capability but lacking in natural resources. It had no oil, uranium, aluminum, or nickel, very little coal, iron ore and zinc (Calvocoressi, 1982). This lack of resources and the need for her expanding population which could hardly be contained by little land mass made Japan a very aggressive country. Japan needed colonies for obvious economic reasons which would ensure her security and survival. Her joining the World War II on the side of Germany was to ensure that if they win the war and Germany was to control Europe with its attendant benefit, she, Japan, would control the whole of Asia and of course this would cushion her economic needs and extend her prestige and influence in the comity of nations. So in effect Japan’s aggression was for economic benefits that would ensure security and ultimate survival (Watson, 1981).

European major powers, Great Britain, France, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) realised that Germany’s, Japan’s and Italy’s aggression at the outset of World War II could only compromise their own security and survival. Their reaction was typical of the realist perspective position which reckons that any country working behind the enemies’ timetable is doomed.

### **Causes of United States’ Non-Apology over Japan’s Hiroshima and Nagasaki**

The use of diplomatic apology in the conduct of international relations has not been an easy thing. If not, the world may not have witnessed as many wars and conflict situations as have been the case. Records abound that there were many inter-state wars even prior to the thirty years European war that led to the Peace and Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. But since then the world has witnessed more wars and conflicts, the worst being World War I and II. The devastation of both wars has not stopped states warring against themselves.

The above notwithstanding, whether a state would apologise diplomatically or not, most of the time, depends on cultural background. For instance Lee (2005) states that Wagatsuma and Rosset (1986) argue that cultural norms explain the Japanese tending to apologise when one’s actions have resulted in the significant injury to another and the United States inclination to refrain from apologising or to deny responsibility in the very same situation. This cultural norm also affects the legal system as to whether one should apologise or not. Recognising the importance of apology as an ingredient in settling disputes, Japanese legal institutions have reinforced the societal use of apology and integrated it into their justice system. Haley (1998) according to Lee

(2005) maintains that the culture of Japan is such that all of society, including the bench and the bar, accepts and demands an apology from a party causing harm or injury to another. This is the opposite of what happens in the United States. For Lee (2005) the United States societal inclination not to apologise is matched and perhaps shaped by a legal culture that advises clients not to apologise for fear that it may be used against the apologisee as an admission of legal liability.

Wikipedia (2016) agrees that western individuals and institutions are less willing to apologise, more likely to focus on the mens rea (the intention behind the offence) and on the justification of the offence, while Asian peoples and institutions are more willing to apologise unconditionally, more likely to zoom in on the consequences of the offence, and see it within its broader context.

The Western attitude to apology is exemplified by the United States' President Bill Clinton's statement in 1995 that the United States owes Japan no apology for dropping the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In fact, he stated that President Harry S. Truman was right in using the bombs.

In line with this, successive United States governments have refused to apologise to Japan for dropping the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in spite of the call for it from many quarters. There are further reasons why United States of America has refused to tender apology over the nuclear bombardment of Japan. These are as follows:

### **The United States' Realism Posture**

The United States of America right from the birth of the country has pursued realism in her international relations. Even before the actual birth of the country in 1789, the colonies that eventually came to be known as the United States of America had to fight a war of independence with her colonial overlord, the Great Britain, and in the face of all odds, came out triumphant. In that war of independence, the Americans held no bars even though they were fighting their not too distant relations. They had a mission that needed to be accomplished and they did accomplish it.

At the birth of the nation, the United States knew that they had to consolidate the new nation without external distractions. For a long period of time they pursued a policy of isolationism. Isolationism, according to Chaturvedi (2006), is a doctrine which propounds that; a state may best promote its own interest by keeping clear of international politics. The United States pursued this policy for a long time but was practical enough to know when her national interest was threatened from the happenings outside to warrant the policy of interventionism rather than isolationism. The most important issue was to protect her national interest. This of course is the purview of realism.

The United States despite her policy of isolationism realised that international society and by extension international politics is anarchic and that self-preservation requires the abandonment of moral inhibitions. In line with this, Russett, Starr and Kinsella (2006:269) state that in realism

*"... rightness in foreign affairs depends solely on the ends sought rather than on the means employed to obtain those ends: It is possible to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate goals in world politics, but if a state's goals are just, then they ought to be pursued by whatever methods are available".*

The United States pursue her foreign policy in line with this. Who determines what is just and unjust in the international system? Any cause or course that protects a state's national interest is just to that state.

Political realism is power politics. Political realists, according to Eze (2017), believe that if you seek first the kingdom of power, every other thing will be added unto you. Power, to the realist, is the capacity of a state to use its tangible and intangible resources in such a way as to control the behaviour of other states. Eze went further to state that:

*Political realism argues that moral principles which apply to local or domestic life cannot be considered in international political actions – that if an action increases national power, it is moralistic, if not, it is amoral or unethical (Eze, 2017:35).*

So in line with political realism, the United States does not see anything wrong with using the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to bring an end to World War II thereby putting an end to the human misery it had engendered.

Moreover, it is not really that the United States is averse to apologising for her misdeeds. Instances abound where she has apologised. For instance, the study has earlier reported that the United States found it expedient to apologise to China in 1999 for accidentally bombing the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. This happened at a time the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was attacking Serbia to put a stop to the ethnic cleansing of Albanians from Serbia province of Kosovo. This accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy occurred on May 7, 1999 and the day after being May 8<sup>TH</sup>, 1999, NATO's Atlantic Council, led by the United States, issued a statement expressing its deep regret for the costly mistake. The United States' Under Secretary of State, Thomas R. Pickering, on June 17, 1999, went a step further to make a detailed oral presentation in Beijing to Chinese officials, explaining that the bombing was indeed a mistake. The United States thereafter made a payment of \$4.5 million to China as reparation to the families of those who lost their lives and those that sustained injuries (Bilder, 2006; Howard-Hassmann, 2012).

Again, there is the Ehime Maru incident in which the United States also apologised to another state in order to resolve diplomatic issues. CNN.Com (2001) and Struck (2001) reported that the United States submarine, the USS Greenville collided with and sank a Japanese fishing research trawler, Ehime Maru, while it was surfacing and in the process killed some young Japanese students who were training aboard the vessel. The United States president, George W. Bush, immediately sent a special envoy, Admiral Fallon, to hand deliver a letter to the Japanese government, expressing the United States apologies and regrets.

Other incidents of United States diplomatic apologies to other states abound but what is noticed is that the United States apologises only for incidents that occurred by happenstance or by coincidence. But when an incident is thought out and executed by the United States, she does not apologise. She sees the carrying out of such incidents as important to her national interest. That is why she refused to apologise for the US spy plane incident in which a United States spy plane flew on a covert intelligence gathering mission over Union Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR) and was shot down and the pilot captured. The USSR demanded for an apology which the United States refused to tender.

It is therefore in line with this policy of not tendering apologies for incidents that were properly conceived in her national interest that made the United States not to apologise for the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This follows her realism posture in the international system.

### **Japan's Attack on Pearl Harbor**

While the World War II was raging, Winston Churchill, Britain's Prime Minister made several overtures to the United States to assist in the war against the Axis Powers. The United States, because of her policy of isolationism in international politics, was not keen to join the world war from the outset. But as the Germans were rampaging through Belgium and France, and heading for the channel ports in 1940, Winston Churchill was reported to have told his son, Randolph, "I think I see my way through. Of course we can beat them. I shall drag in the United States" (Hastings, 2009).

Winston Churchill had no doubt that the only thing that would make Allied Powers victory against the Axis Powers possible was the United States aid. He went ahead to woo, flatter, charm and strong-arm the United States to join the war against Axis forces to no avail. But while he was not getting any success from this effort, fate was building up positively for him from unexpected quarters.

On December 7, 1941 at about 7.48 am Japan launched an unexpected attack on Pearl Harbor, a naval base in Hawaii with 353 aircrafts that included fighters, level and dive bombers, and torpedo bombers that came in two waves, launched from six aircraft carriers. The loss to the United States in both human and materials was colossal. According to Wikipedia (2018) the United States' eight Navy battleships were damaged with four sunk. Three cruisers, three destroyers, an anti-aircraft training ship and one minelayer were also destroyed in the attack. Most importantly, one hundred and eighty-eight United States aircrafts were destroyed with 2403 Americans killed and 1,178 others wounded in that singular attack. The Japanese on the other hand lost only 29 aircrafts and five midget submarines. Only 64 Japanese servicemen were killed.

This unprovoked and surprise attack came as an immense shock to the United States and was responsible for the United States entry into World War II. It was the day after, 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1941, that the United States declared war on Japan and on 11<sup>th</sup> December, both Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. From this date the world war took a new turn.

What Winston Churchill was sweating for was given to him by Japan on a platter of gold. Japan had inadvertently provoked the United States into World War II. Pearl Harbor was meant to cripple America's naval and air power not only so that America would not join in the World War II but also to ensure that with the incapacitation of the United States, Japan could have her way to move into Dutch East Indies and Malaya to conquer territories that could provide important and much needed natural resources such as oil and rubber (History on the Net, 2016). But the attack worked against Japan's interest for as History on the Net (2016:1) puts it:

*The attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941 caused America's entry to the war which led to eventual launch of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, an outcome that spelled disaster for the Japanese.*

The United States use of Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, although not strictly a revenge mission for Pearl Harbor attack, is something the United States does not regret and would not apologise for. Has the United States not often stated that she used the Atomic Bombs to stop the war and cut short further human misery on both sides of the war? But when pushed to apologise, many in the United States would remind the world that after all Japan attacked the United States first, causing the United States casualties that were equally horrendous.

### **No Ban on Nuclear Weapons prior to 1945**

Another reason why the United States does not find it expedient to apologise for Hiroshima and Nagasaki is the fact that there was no ban on the use of nuclear or chemical weapons prior to the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Law does not work retrospectively.

According to Wikipedia (2018) “the law of war is a legal term of art which refers to the aspect of Public International Law concerning acceptable justification to engage in war and the limits to acceptable war time conduct.” The rules of war therefore, are a set of international rules that sets out what can and cannot be done during an armed conflict (ICRC, 2016).

The rules of war prior to 1945 did not include the ban on the use of nuclear weapons because man before this period had not invented this weapon of mass destruction that is now threatening the annihilation of the species. The rules of war which were enshrined in the Geneva Convention of 1864 and subsequent Geneva conventions has been ratified by all the 196 states that make up the international community. But since the advent of the Atomic Bomb, the rules of war have included a restriction on the types of weapons to be used in warfare whether on land, air or sea. According to Legal Dictionary (2018:1):

*Military forces may not use arms, projectiles, or other materials calculated to cause unnecessary suffering, such as weapons that leave fragments of glass and plastic in the body. The United Nations has condemned thermal Nuclear Weapons because of their propensity to inflict unnecessary suffering and their inability to discriminate between combatants and non-combatants or military and non-military targets.*

The efforts to ban the use of nuclear weapon have been ongoing by the United Nations. It was only as late as July, 2017 that 122 states out of the 196 that make up the international community approved the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The treaty, according to Iaria (2017:1):

*...prohibits state parties from engaging in a full range of nuclear weapon related activities. These include efforts to develop, test, produce, manufacture, acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, as well as the use or threat of use of these weapons.*

So, if the United Nations is just securing approval of just 122 states for the ban on the use of nuclear weapons as late as in July, 2017, it is difficult for the United States to tender an apology for the use of same in 1945 when there was no prohibition for the use of nuclear weapons. With the United States legal, political and cultural background, the tendering of apology on Hiroshima and Nagasaki becomes a tough proposition.

### **Japan’s Non-Apology for Pearl Harbor**

The United States of America, because of her policy of isolationism in international politics did not get involved in the early days of World War II in spite of all the pressures coming from Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of Britain. The United States wanted the European powers to settle their differences on their own accord.

All this was to change on December 7, 1941 when Japan launched an unexpected attack on Pearl Harbor, a United States of America naval base in Hawaii. The massive attack destroyed so much of United States’ military equipment with about 2403 people killed and about 1178 wounded.

It was this incident that brought the United States of America into World War II but before the United States eventually enter the war against Japan and the other Axis powers, Emperor Hirohito of Japan had informed General MacArthur that he was prepared to apologise for the incident but never did (Wikipedia, 2018).

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of December, 2016 Japanese Prime Minister paid a historic visit to Pearl Harbor, expressing his sincere condolences to the more than 2400 United States personnel who died at the Pearl Harbor attack but did not tender a formal apology just like President Obama did not tender a formal apology when he visited Hiroshima even though he expressed the United States condolences for those who lost their lives in the incident (Deutsche Welle, 2016).

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor preceded the United States of America’s dropping of Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And if Japan has not found it expedient to apologise to the United States of America, it will definitely be difficult for the United States to apologise for Hiroshima and Nagasaki that was a later event.

## **II. CONCLUSION**

Realism as a tool in conduct of international relations gathered momentum after World War I. Modern realist perspective came at the heels of World War I as a result of the failure of world statesmen to preserve peace after the destructive effects of the world war. However the major thrust of the realist perspective came on the eve of World War II. After World War I the idealist movement led by President Woodrow Wilson of the United States came on board with the mission of removing wars from mankind but the aggression of Germany and Japan who were signatories to Kellogg – Briand Pact of 1928 led many to agree that idealism was not only naïve, but also dangerous because it had led countries to abandon realpolitik, which might have toughened them



to react more forcefully to the early stages of Germany's rearmament and, thus might have saved the world from a second world war.

Realism anchors on a state's use of every available means to pursue her national interest which ultimate goal is security and survival. In the realist perspective the end justifies the means. The United States pursued this course of action in the war against Japan. And also for the fact that Japan attacked her first and did not find it expedient to apologise, the United States would find it difficult to apologise for Hiroshima and Nagasaki which was a later event.

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